

Phila Weekly
**Homophobia Mobilizes
Powelton** 12-1-99

Powelton Village residents, who have begun putting up rainbow flags as a sign of solidarity, are still waiting for Drexel University to take action on a series of homophobic incidents in the neighborhood. As reported in the November 10 issue of *PW*, a gay neighbor's rainbow flag and flagpole were vandalized, and a group of college-age men stood outside his house shouting gay slurs. Things got even stickier in Powelton in late October, after neighbors confronted a group of students chanting "Ho-mo!" outside the house of **Ed**

Hermance, owner of Giovanni's Room, the venerable Center City gay and lesbian bookstore. One in the group, a Drexel student from a nearby house, later insisted the incident had nothing to do with the rainbow flag hanging on Hermance's home. The taunting was a "joke," he said, directed at one of the Halloween party-bound group who was dressed in drag. According to residents, an initial meeting on the incident called by Drexel attracted few from the University. At a second meeting, a Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission rep was invited to mediate, but backed out when an official complaint was filed with Drexel. Hermance, who was at that meeting, says it appeared the staff of the school's Office of Multicultural Affairs knew nothing about his complaint, which seems to have gotten lost. "But besides that," says Hermance, "if the subject is student misbehavior, why do you need a mediator? I was very surprised they were there." Says **Ben Dugan**, president of the Powelton Village Civic Association: "Everyone thought the meeting was badly organized and a waste of time." Dugan says he is now awaiting a statement from University president **Constantine Papadakis**, promised for this week. "We consider these incidents hateful and really scary," says Dugan. "And on a more practical level, we think this is a public safety risk. We think this could blow up into something."

—EILS LOTQZO