

ing is vital to them, as well. The domestic and business partners opened their shop, Stereotypes, on May 19—just two days before the Broadway Stroll.

"Did you know that women have better hearing than men?" Wilmsen asks me. This, I respond, I did not know. "It's true. You'd never know women had ears or brains by walking into your typical stereo store."

If you hadn't figured by now, Inman and Wilmsen specialize in home audio equipment, a profession historically dominated by men. "I can also tell you that the stereo business is not any easy place to come out," says Inman, who has worked in the home audio business for 10 years. "It's nice to be part of a group where we can be very out."

As for community-building, Wilmsen says she'd like Out on Broadway to assist with the restoration of the Metropolitan Community Church, 2400 NE Broadway, which caters to sexual minority worshippers.

"It's a historic landmark, you know," says Inman. "The church is very important to this neighborhood and our community. We want to be able to help any way we can."

Out on Broadway has a loosely knit member-

**G**ay and lesbian business owners throughout the Portland metro area are finding their place in the sun thanks to the Portland Area Business Association.

PABA, which will celebrate its third anniversary in October, has about 200 mostly gay and lesbian members, though the group is also open to the community's "friends in business."

"We like to refer to ourselves as the Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce," says PABA vice president Fred R. Elledge, a Smith Barney Inc. stockbroker who co-founded PABA in 1992 with Deborah Betron of Bridgetown Realty and Rick Schmidt of Marketing Strategies.

Like Out on Broadway, the nonprofit group's aim is to provide members with networking opportunities and provide support and visibility to gay and lesbian businesses.

"PABA stands for the Portland Area Business Association, but 'PABA' is also an ingredient in suntan lotion," Schmidt told me shortly after PABA had formed. "We thought it was kind of symbolic that we use that acronym because gay and lesbian businesspeople in Oregon have largely gone unrecognized by both our own community and the community at large. We're now finding our place in the sun thanks to PABA."

Vera Katz; former Portland Police Chief Tom Potter; U.S. Bancorp's chief economist, John Mitchell; and Bill Naito, owner of many prime Portland properties.

"We invite speakers to come and talk with our group. We don't pay them, but we do give them a gift," says Elledge. "I think for many of our speakers, most of whom are not gay, this is a really an eye-opener. They're seeing a part of the gay and lesbian community they've never really seen before, and that's good."

With a chuckle, he adds, "We recently called [Oregonian columnist] Margie Boulé to ask her if she would address PABA. We were told to contact her agent. We did and she said that Margie would speak for a \$350 fee. I thought to myself, 'For goodness sake, we're not asking her to sing Broadway showtunes.'"

To meet members' growing needs and busy

indicates PABA members are different from the population at large with respect to earning power: 23 percent reported earning more than \$75,000 annually; 6 percent reported a yearly income of \$65,000 to \$75,000; 11 percent made between \$55,000 and \$65,000; 15 percent reported an income of \$45,000 to \$55,000; 13 percent made between \$35,000 and \$45,000; 18 percent made \$25,000 to \$35,000; and 12 percent reported earning less than \$25,000.

More than 80 percent said they owned their own business; 22 percent said they had a doctorate, 26 percent reported having a master's degree, and 37 percent said they had a bachelor's degree.

"I really want people to know that this group is open to everyone, and we've provided avenues to allow people to become members," says Elledge. "Our annual membership fee is \$95, but we have a \$45 rate for nonprofits and students, and a \$1 rate



PABA board members (left to right): Patti May, Susan Nestor, David Woosley, Fred Elledge, Bill Coniff, Brian Marki, D. Lynn Walser, John Lopez and Colleen Weed. Not pictured: Sandy Mort.

ship of about 20 entrepreneurs and is in the process of cementing its structure and nonprofit status. There is no membership fee. Like many fledgling organizations, the group is grappling with tough questions, such as who can become a member. Currently, Out on Broadway is only open to businesses owned by sexual minorities, though Marki says membership may ultimately be open to gay-friendly businesses as well.

In the meantime, Barreto and Marki say they hope Out on Broadway helps shatter stereotypes about gay men and lesbians and the lives we lead.

"Here you have a wide variety of gay men and lesbians representing a whole host of professions. These are talented, hard-working people who make a real contribution to the neighborhood around them," says Marki. "The OCA would rather depict us as perverts. Our existence shatters every stereotype they put out about us."

"I also think we're helping to shatter the stereotypes that many people have about Northeast Portland," says Barreto, who lives in Southwest Portland. "This neighborhood is extremely diverse and very accepting of the gay and lesbian presence here. During the Measure 13 campaign, there were No on 13 signs everywhere. To be honest, I didn't see that in my [home] neighborhood."

"There was no group for gay and lesbian businesspeople in the Portland area back in 1991 when we began researching the possibility of starting such an organization," explains Elledge, who moved to Portland from Los Angeles in the early 1990s. "Gay businesses in Seattle have a very strong business organization known as the Greater Seattle Business Association. We used that as our model."

In October 1992, PABA held its first official meeting. Since then, says Elledge, PABA has been hosting monthly luncheon meetings which are typically held at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Portland. At each gathering, participants introduce themselves and the businesses they represent. The list of PABA members includes a broad array of professionals: attorneys, graphic designers, dentists, printers, realtors and chiropractors, just to name a few. Many own their businesses, while a handful belong to larger companies.

"We're picking up an average of five to six new members each month," says Elledge.

At each luncheon, an invited speaker makes a presentation. The speakers' roster has included Col. Greta Cammermeyer, who has been leading the charge to overturn the military's ban on openly lesbian and gay servicemembers; Portland Mayor



Out on Broadway members Teri Inman (left) and Sherry Wilmsen

schedules, PABA hosts "After Hours" get-togethers, which may be held at a particular member's workplace, giving that member an opportunity to showcase his or her services. PABA also produces a monthly newsletter and a slick, comprehensive PABA member directory created by member Mark Christian Smith, owner of Graphica Pacific Design.

PABA members have gone whitewater rafting together, shared meals at restaurants and enjoyed wine-tasting tours.

"We want to make networking as fun and easy as possible," says PABA president Bill Coniff, 34, who works for Pacific Gas Transmission Company. "We also want to make it as inclusive and accessible as possible."

According to Coniff, PABA's membership is reflective of the state's total population in that it is predominantly white. A survey of PABA membership conducted a year and a half ago, however,

for anybody with a disability. We want to cover the spectrum as best we can."

Both Out on Broadway and PABA—which are fully supportive of each other's goals—say they'd like to increase their visibility in the sexual minorities community and the broader public during the upcoming months. PABA is an official supporter of Portland Center Stage's production of the gay-themed *Comfort and Joy*, which is set to open Dec. 8. Out on Broadway, meanwhile, plans to host other events similar to the Broadway Stroll. Both groups say they want to develop a relationship with the Portland Chamber of Commerce, whose goal is to promote a healthy regional business climate.

PABA luncheons are held the second Monday of each month, and cost \$12.50 for members and \$17.50 for nonmembers. Mayor Vera Katz is the scheduled speaker for the Sept. 11 event. For more information about PABA, call 241-2222; to contact Out on Broadway, call Marki at 249-5659.