

In the beginning, three friends had a concept. They wanted to establish a coffeehouse that would become a neighborhood "safe place" where each and every person who walked through the door could feel comfortable.

When it came time to name the space, the decision came naturally, and 3 Friends Coffeehouse was born.

Today, co-founder Randy Rapport is the sole proprietor of the establishment, which is located at 201 S.E. 12th Ave. The original goal remains the same, however.

Rapport, who is gay, is pleased that his business has become a beacon of sorts for the sexual minorities community, a place where people can go "outside of the bars." Groups such as Young Men's Coffee Talk and Lavender Lounge use the establishment for their weekly meetings. But Rapport says what makes him most proud is the fact that everyone feels comfortable at 3 Friends.

"We opened it for the whole community," he says. "We wanted it to be inclusive...not exclusive for just a single group of people. We wanted the people who lived in the neighborhood to feel comfortable, but we also wanted to create a space where two men, two women or a man and a woman could kiss without having to worry about it."

Customers think Rapport has accomplished his goal.

"I really do like coming in here," said a man who identified himself as Jim. "It's a nice place...the people are friendly, and the coffee is great."

LaRee, a state of Oregon employee who was grabbing coffee during her break, said she not only comes in to enjoy the atmosphere but also to visit with Rapport's dog, Bodhi, who often accompanies him for short periods of time when he runs down to the coffeehouse. The pooch

GOOD TO THE LAST DROP

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PHOTOS BY MARY DAVIS

Proprietor Randy Rapport has achieved his dream of creating a neighborhood "safe place"

often is seen sitting out front, greeting people as they enter. "People do come to just see Bodhi," Rapport says.

What also attracts people to 3 Friends is the menu. Rapport says everything that is served is of the highest quality they can provide, including the coffee, teas (20 varieties are shipped in from San Francisco), pastries (from a small local bakery), sandwiches (three cheeses on every one) and salads. The organic cookies and scones are specially made just for 3 Friends.

A major change recently took place at

3 Friends when Rapport acquired a liquor license allowing him to sell beer and wine. However, he says he does not want that to change to atmosphere of the place.

"Yes, we've added beer and wine, and we've put in a pool table," Rapport says. "But the environment here remains a cafe. We want families to still feel welcome. We want everyone...young and old, gay and straight, male and female, to feel comfortable."

Rapport also credits his six employees

for the establishment's success. From the beginning, the owners did not spend a great deal of time running 3 Friends, instead choosing to hire people to manage and operate it. "I have been really lucky to have such a great group of people working here," Rapport says.

Opening a coffeehouse was certainly not among his earliest plans. Rapport spent seven years as a child psychologist but became "burned out" and needed to do something else for a while. However, he

says he plans to return to the field at some point.

Although Rapport is certainly happy with the success of the business, he insists he is "not doing it for the money." He has no plans in the works to open any more locations or to create a chain of 3 Friends Coffeehouses.

Rapport does note that he has a "couple of ideas" for business ventures he might try but that for the time being he simply wants to keep improving the establishment. He wants to make sure the comfy couches and cozy tables continue to be filled with people soaking in not only some heavy doses of caffeine but also the atmosphere.

"I support the cultural breakthrough of acceptance," Rapport says. "That's what we are trying to accomplish." ■

3 FRIENDS COFFEEHOUSE is open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, from 7 a.m. to midnight Friday, from 9 a.m. to midnight Saturday and from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday.



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