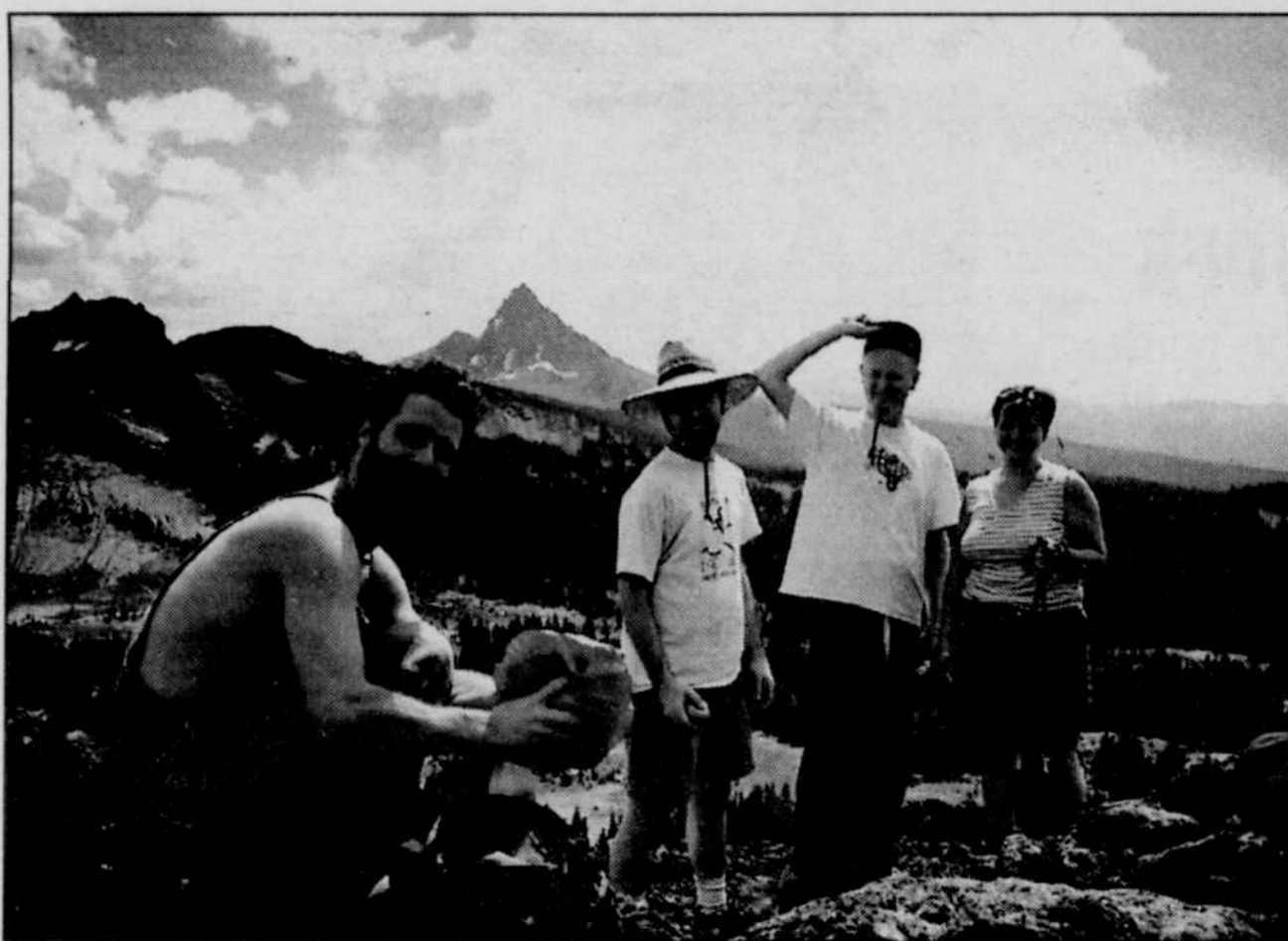


GROUPS



High on Tipsoo Mountain

Picture an older coastal house on a wintry day, a view of the ocean with waves crashing below and friends from throughout Oregon sitting down to a sumptuous breakfast at a big table. In the afternoon everyone takes a long hike, maybe eight or 10 miles in the misty mountains, returning for hot showers and a carefully prepared dinner. This is followed by games and conversation—no television, no radio, no phone, no newspapers. The next morning the group gets up late and shares another exquisite breakfast.

That picture comes to life during Funky Kabin Weekend, an annual event sponsored by Eugene's OUTdoor Group.

Kim Smith, who co-founded the organization in 1987, says most of the members are gay men. However, he emphasizes: "In the begin-

ning it was mainly men, but we definitely have women and transgendered participation. We want to be representative of the community."

Smith and the other founders, most of whom

events, such as camping in the Steens Mountains, often are planned for Labor Day and Memorial Day weekends.

For a typical outing, participants meet at a coffee shop for conversation followed by a medium-length hike of five to eight miles, never more than two hours from Eugene. Most activities are attended by 12 to 15 people.

A special December outing known as Naked Christmas involves a trip to Cougar Hot Springs preceded by breakfast and followed by a stop at a home along the McKenzie River for pie and coffee. Smith acknowledges the event is held in part for those who want to have fun on a holiday that might be difficult without special friends.

The group also travels to other parts of the state, hooking up with locals in towns such as Coos Bay, Lakeview, Pendleton and John Day. Smith, who maintains a list of 400 names, distributes information about upcoming events via a quarterly e-mail as well as through the HIV Alliance of Lane County newsletter.

Jane Dodd has been part of the organization "since I moved to Eugene, maybe eight years ago. It is one of the friendliest groups I have come across. Everyone is totally inclusive."

Fresh-air fiends find fun

Eugene group organizes all kinds of outings (no, not that kind!)

BY SUSAN DETROY

since have moved away, modeled the organization after Portland's Adventure Group. It can serve as a place for new arrivals in Eugene to start a connection to the larger community, he explains.

The Funky Kabin Weekend, this year scheduled for Nov. 30, is just one of many events held by the group. All activities are planned during potlucks held two or three times a year at members' homes, with 20 to 25 enthusiasts in attendance.

Activities include biking, hiking, skating, winery tours, shopping, mushroom hunting in an undisclosed location as well as cross-country ski trips with stops at hot springs. Bigger

Dodd enjoys the comfortable atmosphere, sense of fun and "variety of outings. We even occasionally do movie nights, watching a campy movie and making remarks."

Kent Culby and Tim Smith met at a planning potluck in 1991, went out for coffee the next week and eventually became life partners. They recall an adventurous stay at a beach house supposedly haunted by a sea captain, perhaps explaining why they heard doors opening and closing all night long.

Tim Smith says participating in the OUTdoor Group is like going on vacation with a family. "It's about community...making connections...and having a place to relax outside our culture's homophobia."

One event the couple remember fondly is the bring-your-own-iron Waffle-a-thon, a weekend gorgefest. Tim Smith believes participating in the group provides a healing experience, a com-

munity place where "we can get to know one another in a relaxed, nonsexual, friendly way."

He adds that it gives newly out people a place to go first, without pressure to perform or act in a certain way. "We can be 'normal' guys having 'normal' fun."

Members agree the group provides a place to be with friends, to have adventure, to be who they are, to share the goodness of life with friends and to create a positive family feeling. **J**



Eugene OUTdoor Group members escape homophobia



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