

# LAFERRIERE EXTRAORDINAIRE **Business group leader is committed to excellence**

by Sarah Leimert

**A**ntoinette Laferriere has dedicated her life to helping people achieve their financial dreams. She is a born leader and an analytical thinker—as well as a very busy woman.

Between owning and managing a business and serving as newly elected president of the gay chamber of commerce, Laferriere still manages to find time to cook, ski, golf, play tennis and fly-fish. She also serves on the board of a manufacturing company and mentors a young executive. Where she finds time to eat, sleep and walk the dog remains a mystery.

A native Oregonian, Laferriere created Griffon Financial Group out of a need for a career change but also out of a strong desire to help people. The company, which offers financial services to individuals, families and businesses, has a mission to “provide excellence in retirement and investment management to help people achieve their dreams.”

Laferriere’s dedication to the people she serves is admirable. She says she entered the business to bring a more upbeat, personal flair to money management, instead of allowing it to remain a chore people dread facing.

“I recognize that financial management isn’t just about money,” Laferriere says. “It’s about how folks feel about the people who help them manage it. I’m honored to be trusted in that role.”

Because Griffon operates independently, it is able to advise clients without pressure or incentives to sell proprietary products. Laferriere characterizes the company as possessing “large-firm stability, resources and expertise with small-firm personalized service and accessibility.”



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

**Antoinette Laferriere hopes to see tremendous growth in the gay business community despite the recession**

She takes very seriously the trust that must be extended for a client to reach out and request her services. In her experience, Laferriere says money is such a private issue, many people are not willing to discuss it with anyone. When a client comes to her for assistance, she responds with utmost sensitivity.

“I believe that my most valuable service is also the most intangible: access and attention,” Laferriere says. “I strive to be readily available, listen perceptively and skillfully address the full spectrum of each client’s financial concerns—including those

they might be reluctant to share with anyone else.”

Laferriere is not only the president of Griffon, she also leads the Portland Area Business Association. The inclusive professional organization allows opportunities for greater success in the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community through networking. Founded in 1992 with more than 100 charter members, PABA brings together people who want to build their businesses by forming new connections.

Laferriere had been a board member since May and was elected president in August. The leadership change happened quickly because of a death in the family of her predecessor, Mark Miller, who was forced to step down as a result.

Although leading two organizations can be overwhelming at times, Laferriere is excited about both roles and appreciates the opportunity to be involved.

“I would love [my tenure as PABA president] to be a time when businesses grow tremendously, even in the face of these difficult economic times,” she says. “The opportunity during [these] times is to gain market share, and that’s what I would love to see our member businesses do.”

As president of PABA and owner of one of its member businesses, Laferriere is in a prime position to promote networking in the community. Being somewhat new to the organization,

she also brings a fresh perspective to the process of developing policies and programs.

“My vision for PABA is that the organization is an integral support system for the GLBT business community,” Laferriere says. “The primary way I see that happening is through increasing member value. We developed a member survey to poll our constituency...we will use the information given to us by the membership to develop and implement programs.”

PABA is gearing up to hire an editor for its newsletter and is in the process of revamping its Web site. Laferriere is busy with all the changes but is settling into her new role quickly and easily.

She also has the help of PABA Vice President Meg Grace, Secretary Larry Foltz and Treasurer Scott Ringsage. The other board of directors members are Joel Corcoran, Rick Edmundson, James Giardina, Richard Matthews, Richard B. Schneider, JoEllen Shannon, Christine Voigt and D. Steven Witte.

Laferriere and her partner enjoy golfing and camping when they can find the time, and they celebrated a commitment ceremony last March. Clearly, she is driven by the same core values that drive Griffon—integrity, excellence, partnership and abundance—as she works to strengthen Portland’s business community. □

For more information about the PORTLAND AREA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION call 503-241-2222 or visit the Internet site [www.paba.com](http://www.paba.com).

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