

GOOD NEIGHBORS

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and teasing about it from the girls...from about 14 until I was 17 and graduated from school."

She left Ohio in 1977, moving to California with her husband and son. Nine years later she and her son moved to Oregon. She soon settled in St. Johns, purchasing her home there in 1991.

In 1989 she was in a car accident, which led to the first surgery the following year. Wearing a neck brace during the recovery period, she was forced onto public transit.

"I got on a very crowded bus one morning," she says, "and there were no empty seats. A woman stood up and offered me her seat. We talked during the bus ride, and every day after that she saved me a seat on the bus."

At a Christmas party in 1992, McBride finally told the woman, Kate, "that I was gay and that I was attracted to her." They began "seriously dating" in March 1993 and have been together ever since.

McBride claims 1993 as the year she "officially" came out. She had been working as a human resources administrator and was "immediately dismissed from my job. They said they didn't like my shoes."

She drifted for a while and worked at various types of jobs: bank auditor, United Parcel Service loader, apprentice carpenter. Through the latter position she got into the toy-making business.

"There was a lot of scrap lumber, new stuff that was just being thrown in the trash," she says. "I kept bringing it home until I had a garage full of the stuff."

One Christmas McBride's son gave her a scroll saw, "and I started cutting up shapes. I was making ornaments, desk accessories, household gadgets."

A customer asked her if she could make a toy



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

McBride got into the toy-making business after a brief gig as an apprentice carpenter

called a "Jacob's Ladder." McBride made a dozen of the items, selling them out "within an hour at Portland Saturday Market. I was on my way."

McBride also has been involved in

leadership with children

since her son became a

Cub Scout at age 7. "I was

a Cubmaster for 4 1/2

years, long after he had

moved into Boy Scouts.

[But] when the Boy Scouts

decided they didn't want

gays in their ranks, I quit."

McBride has continued to

work with other children's

groups and has been asked by

school representatives to talk to

students about her toy-making

business. She often donates

items for fund-

raisers and to vari-

ous organizations.

"I feel that children are our lega-

cy," she says, "and we need to be

very much involved in their

education."

She takes seriously what

children say and what they don't

say. "I watch them as they play,"

she says, "and learn a great deal

about life. I have also learned a

valuable lesson about not giving

up when things look grim."

McBride is impressed with

the way children teach them-

selves how to use toys, not giving up until they reach mastery. She even has watched kids with disabilities benefit from the items she makes.

"I have seen an autistic child

suddenly come out of his shell

with a toy he can hold in his

hand," she says. "It's worth a

lot to see these things."

The recent spinal

surgery, which involved the

removal of bone spurs and

addition of a metal plate,

required McBride to spend

several weeks out of commis-

sion, but she is working toward

total recovery. And what

about her future as a

volunteer?

"I expect that I will continue with

the Christmas Market for some

time," she says. The parade

and her Portland Marathon

aid station on North Willamette

Boulevard are also in the plan.

Long-term, she would like to

be able to write a grant "to

start a youth organization to

teach kids how to do some of

the old crafts." She has been

recruiting wood carvers, quil-

ters and glass blowers and

hopes "to be able to connect

at-risk kids with something

that they can take with them

into the future." □

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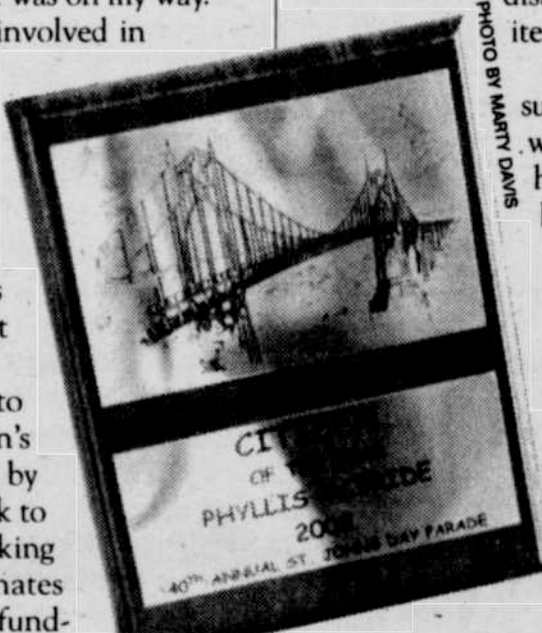


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

McBride Citizen of the Year

By CLINTON YAMMO

With two nominations and a majority of the votes from the St. Johns Parade Committee, Phyllis McBride was named St. Johns' Citizen of the Year.

McBride coordinated the new St. Johns Christmas Market for the last five years, served as a scouts leader and as a mentor for the Big Sister Program and builds wooden toys for kids.

"It's very rare to get one person nominated twice... that was pretty special," said Parade Committee Chair Barbara Legge.

McBride said the honor was unexpected. "I don't know yet," she said about how she felt. "I think I'm still in shock. I'm pleased but I'm not sure how I'm supposed

to be feeling right now."

One of McBride's two nominations came from Laura Woodruff.

She brought back the Christmas Market that was sorely missed for a couple of years and this is just a small way to say thank you," Woodruff said.

PINO-KEE-O's, McBride's toy business



McBride

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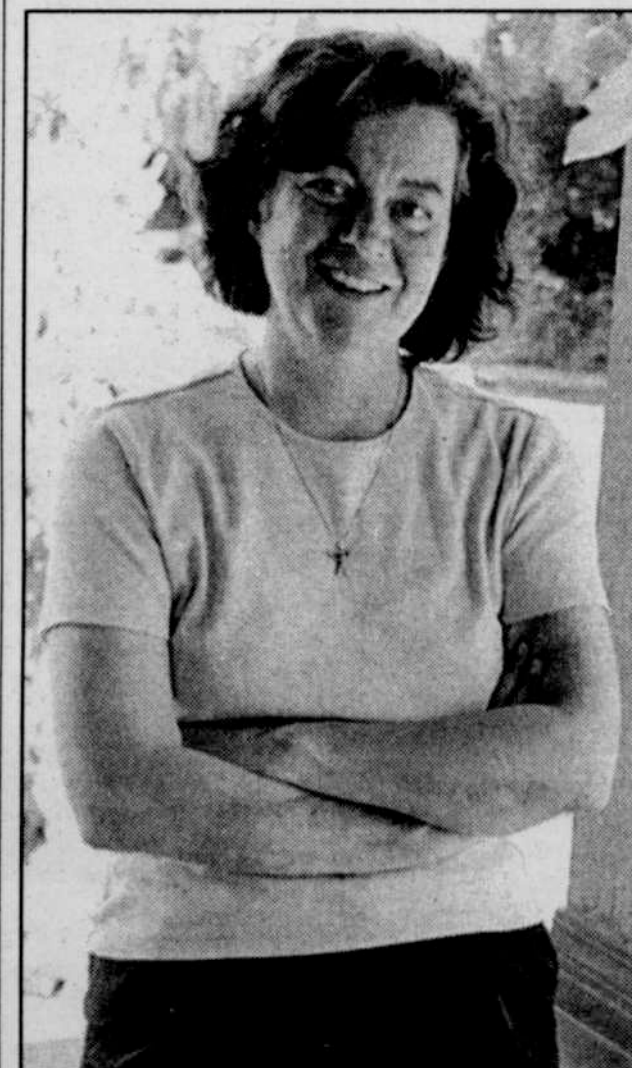


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

"I do want to give back a little," Cushing says