

# Got Pride!

## Welcome to Family Pride 2004

**W**e've taken a fresh approach to our "Family Pride" profiles this year. We've added two essays from our readers on the meaning of Pride: Tivo Salazar, a young Hispanic man originally from eastern Washington, shares the memory of his first Portland Pride festival, and Ashley Austin shares her hopes and enthusiasm for her first-ever Pride at age 30.

We also continue our tradition of introducing you to a dozen unsung heroes in our queer community. What these individuals reveal is the ever-changing face of the community, the new directions in which we're headed and the paths we've traveled to get here.

Our cover model, Johnny Mozzarella, aka Maryanne Cassera, represents much of what Portland Pride is all about: she defies gender norms, she is active in her community, she is a mentor for others, plus she is playful, sexy, courageous and just a *little bit* naughty.

So read on, take stock of the meaning of Pride and learn how regular queers like you are transforming our world in exciting, everyday ways.

### Maryanne Cassera

**M**aryanne Cassera may well be the most sought-after lesbian in Portland. When she dons her drag king persona, Johnny Mozzarella, the girls go as wild as if a lesbian Elvis had just swiveled her hips for the very first time.

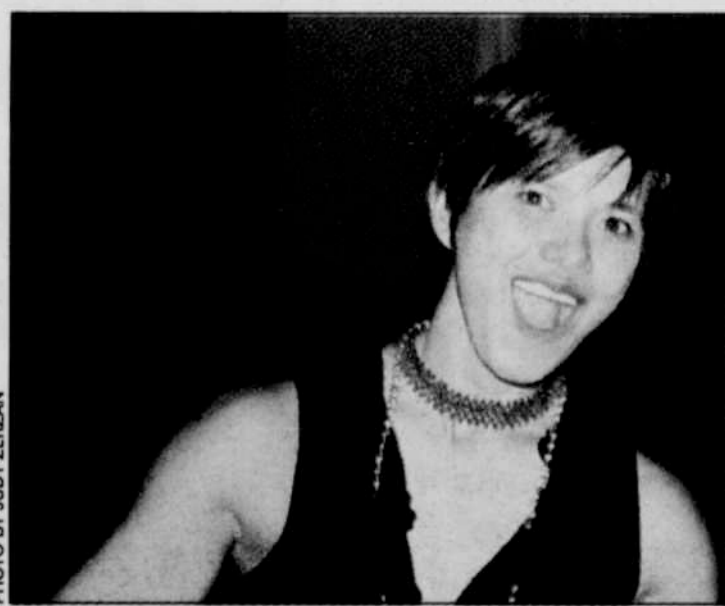
Johnny has that androgynous *je ne sais quoi* that makes women swoon. He's a smooth operator, a ladies man, raunchy without being rabid and, as Cassera likes to say, "kinda cheesy." (Pun intended.)

"It was important to me to stay away from the hard, hypersexualized kind of drag king," says Cassera, commenting on how she devised Johnny. "I wanted something fun."

The 31-year-old Oregon native is gleefully surprised by Johnny's success. She made him up last Halloween, all slicked back hair and little black soul patch. By stroke of fate, she was able to join Portland's drag king troupe, DK PDX, that same month.

Cassera says the troupe's spirit is "fun and community-oriented." They playfully mock masculinity and throw lesbian twists into old heterosexual roles. Also, she says doing drag allows her to "toy with the notion of how a lesbian is 'supposed' to be."

A health unit coordinator at Oregon Health & Science University and nursing student by day, Cassera leads a sort of double life. But she likes it



Maryanne Cassera

that way. Nursing, a traditionally female career, allows her to express her caring side. Doing drag lets her be the performer she's been since childhood, when her family dubbed her "Mary-ham."

Cassera came out as a lesbian when she was 19 at Portland State University. She says she had many important mentors at that time who made coming out comfortable. Now she wants to play that role for other young queer women. And if that means being a

bit of a celebrity, well, she's not complaining.

Being a star inspires all manner of subversive, junior high antics on behalf of her fans. Some have scribbled "Johnny Mozzarella is hot" on bathroom stalls and manufactured "I [heart] Johnny Mozzarella" T-shirts, and one fan is writing a song about her favorite cheese ball.

A lesser king might crumble under all the attention. Not Mozzarella, who purrs, "I'm enjoying the ride."

—Meg Daly

### Graham Turner

**A**t a time when it is all too easy to lose one's optimism, it's refreshing to meet someone like Graham Turner. The 19-year-old is home from his first year at Macalester College in Minnesota, where he is involved in the queer student union and takes classes in gender studies.

