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NORTHWEST news

FOR SALE

Queer vendors at Portland Saturday Market

by Patricia L. MacAodha

Daylight emerges slowly around and under the west end of the Burnside Bridge, catching on lumps of metal, plastic, wood, canvas and other materials. Now-skeletal shadows will soon be raised up and fitted together as the newest weekend edition of the 31-year-old village of tents and booths known as Portland Saturday Market.

"It's very diverse and very inviting for anyone to come there," says vendor Patty Kelly. She and her partner, Sayde Thoreson, operate Doodlebug Duds, offering products such as colorful pet bandannas, beds and pet carriers. They have a number of venues for the items they sell.

As the six-year market veterans set up their booth, Gina Nash is busy with her own setup.

Nash creates lanterns, candleholders and other art objects out of recycled tin containers. Her studio, Experienced Materials, is the workplace where she creates, Monday through Friday, what she has been selling from her market booth for the past seven years.

The sounds of setup merge with the smells of breakfast and prep cooking by vendors in the

Brasher, hauling out and hanging up the brightly colored tie-dyed clothing they market from Out of the Closet Artwear. Although they have a thriving online business, their primary sales venue is the market, where Weinhaus has been on the organization's board for nine years. They prefer the spectrum of vendors at the market and find the environment friendly and supportive. In all their years here, "We have never experienced overt homophobia, just the preacher" who sometimes proselytizes to the market community from the bridge ramp.

As *Just Out* talks with these vendors, whether they have been here 17 years or four, like artistic photographer Verone Flood, the same image emerges: of a vending community with a widely diverse nature. "We have every



Sayde Thoreson (right) and Patty Kelly sell items for the privileged pooch.



Gina Nash turns that old tin can into something beautiful.

market's International Food Court. The market won't open until 10 a.m., but it takes a lot of work getting ready for the hordes of visitors—more than a million each year—who make Portland Saturday Market one of their regular stops. Since its small beginnings in 1974, the market has become a widely known tourist destination in Portland.

Almost every weekend for the past 17 years has seen Rhia Weinhaus and her partner, Zekra

their friends and that their sexual orientation would be insignificant to the other vendors and the shoppers. Flood visited the market before moving to Portland and went back "a couple of times to purchase gifts and enjoyed the atmosphere."

She saw the opportunity to sell her photographs "at a reasonable price. Galleries and shows that I had been in typically took a large commission."

type, from very conservative to barely on the planet," according to Nash, but they have all learned to get along, to create a unified presence and to support one another.

Three of these vendors say they were encouraged to try Portland Saturday Market by friends, though not necessarily friends who were queer or vendors. What all seemed to know was that the environment would translate to good sales for