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# northwest

## Jeweler Carries Only the Finest

John Ponce, the man behind Jewelry by Ponce at 3288 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., is a third-generation jeweler who recently moved to Portland and opened his store in February. "My parents were into manufacturing charms, but I went my own route," said Ponce, who said he carries only higher-grade gemstones.

Being the best, only and first seems important to Ponce. He said he was the first to design the Gay Pride ring. Ponce, who opened his first store in 1983, has toured all the big Pride festivals, where copies of his original design abound. With more than 400 rings for men, Ponce claims to have the largest selection in the country. A man with a one-karat diamond on his nipple, Ponce also claims to be the only act in town to sell handmade, high-end body jewelry.

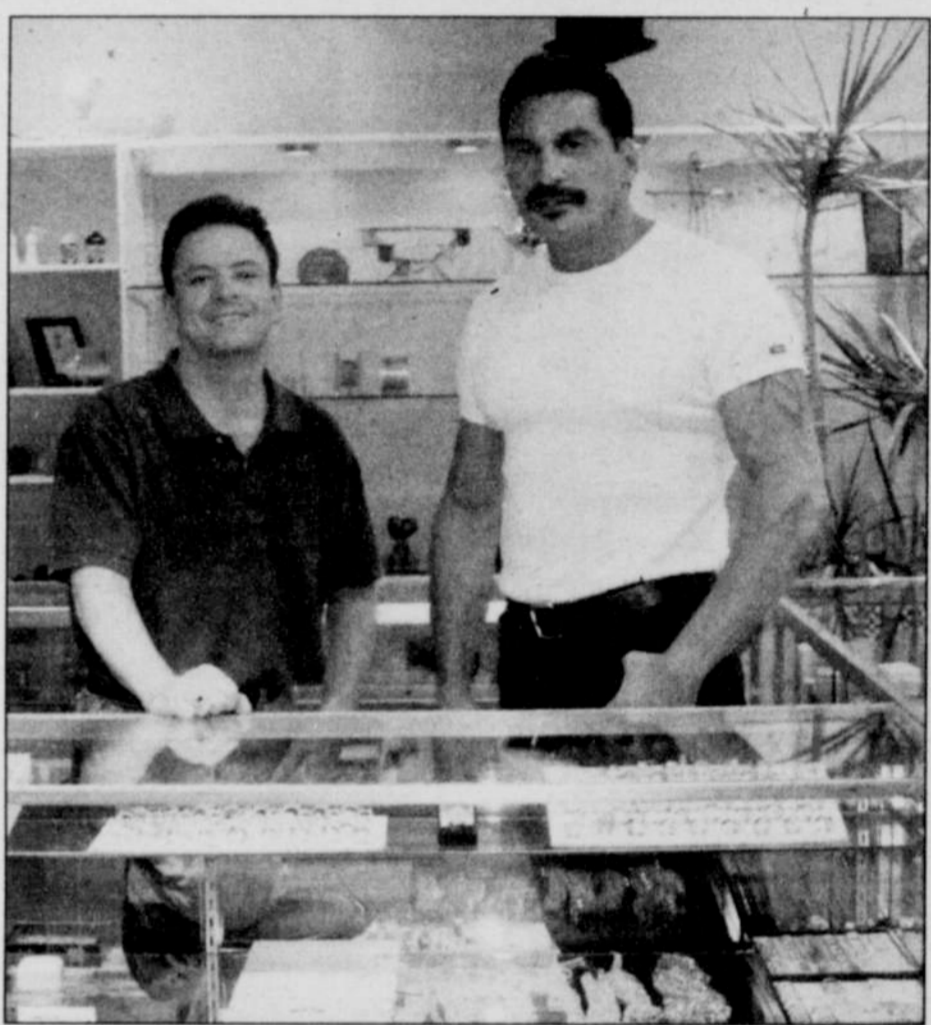
The retail space, a warehouse turned elegant gallery, has a living room area where people can sit and look at the jewelry while sipping a cup of coffee. "We don't pressure anyone to buy anything," said Ponce. "We believe that after looking around, you'll understand we have the best." This is made clear when looking at his collection of Tanzanite. Ponce claims to have the highest grade in the country of this bluish-purple stone found only in Tanzania.

Jewelry by Ponce carries more than a half-million dollars worth of loose gemstones with which to create original pieces. All of the gold in the store is still based on 2004 prices. "Gold has doubled along with gas prices, but I won't change the tags till they're sold out," said Ponce. While the quality is impressive,

Ponce also places importance on customer service. "This is a place where people can feel comfortable and know they're being given the highest quality at best prices," he said. "And we're family!"

The store is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. For more information call Ponce or store manager Michael Quebbenan at 503-233-3698 or visit [www.jewelrybyponceportland.com](http://www.jewelrybyponceportland.com), which is still under construction.

## business watch



John Ponce (right) and Michael Quebbenan staff a solid-gold jewelry store on Hawthorne.

## Bringing Comfort Food into Modern Times

Christopher Pierce might own the new hot restaurant on Alberta Street, but he's lived in the neighborhood for 15 years. "I bought a house that originally had transients living in it and crack dealers on the corner, and I paid \$40,000 for it. I sold it to build [Francis Restaurant]," said Pierce.

"I wanted to be part of the transition and help bring jobs to my neighborhood."

The 72-foot frontage of the modern-designed building at 2338 N.E. Alberta St. is Pierce's outlet for providing well-crafted food in a comfortable environment. With 66 feet of windows, patrons can people-watch while enjoying what Pierce calls eclectic American cuisine with a twist.

Pierce spent 15 years in five-star hotels and resorts creating ice sculpture and cooking before getting a degree in art history and sculpture. "Since I'm an artist, I try to use my space on Alberta the best I can to support artists in the



Francis owner Christopher Pierce is part of Alberta Street's transition.