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Socketeer Realizes Dreams

The ability to accessorize is what separates us from the animals. And while glittery baubles and stylish scarves have been hogging the main stage through the decades, the era of socks has arrived.

And we're not talking about tube socks.

Sock Dreams, an online company conceptualized by Portlander Monique Natosi, will make quite a splash at the Pride festival with oodles of styles, looks and patterns.

This is Natosi's first time participating in Pride.

She runs Sock Dreams with her husband, shipping master Shawn Natosi, and identifies her sexuality as "open minded."

Natosi stepped up to Pride in a major way for a newcomer by donating \$5,000 as a sponsor of the event. "The best part of having a successful business is being able to help other people," she said.

The sock biz boomed for Natosi not long after opening in 2000. The dream stemmed from her dissatisfaction with selection of socks available. Natosi is a sucker for over-the-knee socks that stay up, fit well and have hip colors and designs.

As a buyer and manager for Trader Joe's grocery store for 12 years, Natosi became a whiz at finding what she wanted on the market.

Natosi's hunting expeditions for crazy socks—tote socks, booties, fishnets and styles exclusively for men—changed dramatically when she connected with a mill in the South in 2004 that began producing her unique designs. The Dream Stockings series is exclusive to Sock Dreams, designed by Natosi with lots of input from her staff and customers.

The business model of operating an online-only store with the perk of free shipping is about to expand. Natosi is hashing out details on a lease in Southeast Portland and plans to open a tiny storefront in the fall in addition to her Web company.

Sock Dreams is also close to adding a private labeled line boasting "the thickest, longest socks available anywhere outside of Japan, and they'll be made for us right here in the U.S.," she said. This addition is also slated for the fall.

Natosi is proud of another new addition to her company—health insurance. It was important to her to provide health insurance to her seven employees, some of whom are queer, with domestic partnership benefits. The insurance kicked in last month.

Besides conceptualizing and tracking down sock-related innovations such as sexy sock garters and arm warmers, Natosi enjoys life by shooting abstract photos, walking her pooches in her Sellwood neighborhood and cooking comfort food.

For more information visit www.sockdreams.com.

Home and Garden on Display

Home and Garden Television (HGTV), the very addictive bastion of home improvement, is back for another go at Portland's Pride Festival.

This is just one of 17 Pride festivals and gay film festivals the network is participating in this year.

Another television addiction is *The Price Is Right* (turn to Page 66 for clarification), which is well known for that wild game of

gravitational chance, "Plinko." The HGTV booth will host its version of "Plinko," but it's only a 6-foot-tall board. (Sorry, ladder lovers.) Players drop a chip from the top of the board, and the chip lands in one of five spaces at the bottom—each corresponding to different prizes: an HGTV canvas backpack, an HGTV water bottle holder or an HGTV pen.

"The network has consistently supported the LGBT community across the country doing 24 events last year, 19 events in 2005 and 20 events in 2004," said Tom Legan, president of Legan Promotions, the gay promotions agency for HGTV. "This is the third year HGTV is returning to Portland, and the response from attendees in previous years has been very positive!"

The weekend after Portland Pride, HGTV will be at eight Pride festivals around the United States promoting its breakout hit reality show *Design Star*. The second season premiere airs 10 p.m. July 22, then the show continues at 9 p.m. Sundays. The winner of the competition gets his or her own show on HGTV. Last year's winner, David Bromstad, is openly gay and hosts HGTV's *Color Splash*.

PABA Represents at Pride

The Portland Area Business Association, the Rose City's gay chamber of commerce, will have a suite of booths at Portland Pride. On June 16 and 17, you can visit the booths of the following PABA members: Corey Kaster of Farmers Insurance with Stacey Mills of Affinity Realty and Matthew Clarke of UBS Financial Services; Ainsworth

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Monique Natosi of Sock Dreams is one of the homegrown sponsors of Portland Pride 2007.