



"Palio," a stunning photograph by U.K. artist Pete Kelly, is on view this month at Lunar Boy Gallery.

Activism in Astoria

Queer community building is under way in Astoria. This winter, the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) state council organized a north coast chapter. Patricia Keeney, who volunteers as PFLAG Oregon's special projects and outreach coordinator, said, "We wanted to enhance our presence on the north Oregon coast, so we began to connect with local businesses and individuals." Through serendipity, Keeney connected with Dinah Ureel, editor of *Hip Fish* newspaper and longtime north Oregon coast gay rights activist. Ureel offered to cover the new PFLAG chapter in her newspaper, and newly relocated Mike Duncan hopped onboard.

Duncan returned to his hometown of Astoria after living in Bellingham, Wash. As the parent of a transgender son, he was a dedicated and relentless member of the PFLAG chapter in Bellingham. Although he is a full-time student, Duncan is the contact person for anyone interested in the new chapter. He can be reached at pflagdad@hotmail.com.

To assist with funding the chapter, the Portland Gay Men's Chorus will perform a benefit concert in Astoria. A date has yet to be determined, but according to outreach coordinator Aron Larson, the event will likely occur in late April.

Although distance separates many members of the sexual minorities community along the north coast, the infrastructure has always

included a number of key community members seeking to organize queers for social gatherings and political gain. The disbanded North Coast Pride Network maintained monthly queer socials, community programs and a monthly newsletter. According to Ureel, a former member, the organization disbanded for lack of interest. As senior members of the North Coast Pride Network took on outside responsibilities, the group dissolved.

However, with a revived interest in community building, a new group has emerged. The Lower Columbia Pacific Region GLBT Group has built relationships with local businesses to offer social activities specifically for the purpose of reigniting an organized queer presence along the coast. The organization is planning "Dance for Equality: Domestic Partnerships in Oregon." For the date and location, e-mail hipfish@charter.net.

"Astoria is a great place to be out," said Judi Lampi, Warrenton resident and member of the Lower Columbia Pacific Region GLBT Group. "We are very well accepted by the general population."

In the aftermath of Measure 36, this language may be unsettling to many, remembering that there is a fine line between acceptance and inclusion. However, compared to many small coastal towns, Astoria is a remarkably tolerant location with an emerging diverse and organized queer community. 10



Astoria's waterfront trolley is a hit with tourists.

How Queer Is Astoria?

In 1811, Gabriel Franchere, a well-known explorer, found the first documented Kutenai lesbian among the Kutenai Indian tribe.

Astoria is the oldest settlement west of the Rockies. Chances are there were gays. Technically, Astoria is the oldest gay settlement. A stretch?

Astoria is Oregon's Hollywood. *The Goonies*, *Benji the Hunted*, *Kindergarten Cop*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III*, *Short Circuit*, *Come See the Paradise* and *Free Willy* and *Free Willy 2: The Adventure Home* were filmed there. It seems that Astoria is the perfect background for camp classics.

Astoria boasts its own Uppertown Firefighters Museum, the Columbia River Maritime Museum (featuring pirates and sailors) and antique shops around every corner. This is a gay man's dream. For the ladies, book yourself a nice yurt and spend the day hiking.

That phallus looming in the sky is called the Astoria Column. The Astoria Chamber of Commerce states, "[It] presents a spectacular view of the city and surrounding rivers, bay, forest, mountains and Pacific Ocean." The first words of most visitors are, "Oh, wow!" because it looks like a giant penis!

With steep hills and Victorian homes, Astoria has been dubbed the "Little San Francisco of the Pacific Northwest."

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DragonFire Studio and Gallery
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Lunar Boy Gallery
1133 Commercial St., Astoria
www.lunarboygallery.com

The Rosebriar Inn Bed & Breakfast
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