

and LCC, there are definite academic appeals about this town. "School keeps me here," says Birch, who studies sociology at LCC. "The college system is cheap compared with other states." Birch also says that through school, a job at Allan Bros. Coffee, and involvement in the Lord Leebrick Theater, Eugene has provided her an active social life.

Sebastiane Powers, a 37-year-old artist, and Ana Hewitt, 36-year-old co-owner (with

great relief for me."

Like Sue Hartman, Berman heads up a social group for Eugene lesbians, The Lesbian Connection (TLC). TLC had its heyday in the late '80s, rallying against the Oregon Citizens' Alliance and political initiatives "to put us all on an island somewhere..." she says. But what started as a politically active social group of more than 100 members has dwindled to a dozen or fewer.

# 'We're gay, not perverts.'

— Ana Hewitt

Powers) of Dane Security, have been together since '95 and married since '97. Eugene, says Powers, "... has been a cocoon bubble of safety." Homeowners in the Laurel Hill area for a little over three years now, Powers and Hewitt are remodeling a house they share with four dogs and a cat. They have established a network of friends through their neighborhood, the Eugene music scene (Hewitt rocks with band Station Wag) and dog parks — "Dog park people are good people," says Powers.

"When we go to music shows," she says, "it's so great to see the younger lesbians holding hands and kissing. It just wasn't like that for us when we were that age." As for ill-conceived notions that the mainstream might have about lesbians and lesbian couples, Hewitt simply says, "We're gay, not perverts."

## Cosmic & Magical

Bonnie Berman, originally from Boston, *absolutely* chose Eugene as her home. In 1987, she says, "I fell in love with the Saturday Market. A friend took me to breakfast at Keystone, and it felt like a time warp back to 1967. It was wonderful. I thought Eugene was cosmic and magical. This place just turned me on."

Berman came to Eugene for both its tolerance and accessibility. She appreciated being able to be out as a lesbian, but maybe more importantly, she appreciated that she could get around town — Berman suffered severe injuries as the result of a terrible car crash in 1971. "There were so many things that were accessible here, and that was a

"We ask that all women come without substance abuse, smoking or alcoholism ...," she says. "We are definitely going down, down, down." But Berman remains firm in what she believes is appropriate public behavior for adults.

Though she hopes that TLC will see a revival, she is actually quite fired up about another project she's involved with that allows gays and lesbians to get together for a vice-free common interest: The Rainbow Kennel Club. "It's a very campy group," Berman says. "We have a dog show once a year." Gays and lesbians collaborate on the show to decide the group's "Most Butch," "Most Outrageous," "Most Femme," "Most Adorable." Actually, says Berman, "Every dog wins most adorable."

"We used to have just lesbians do it and we called it 'Dykes and Dogs,' but now we're open to gays *and* lesbians, and their dogs. We would include cats," Berman explains, "but cats just aren't into it ..." (The show this year will be Sept. 28 at the Alton Baker off-leash park.)

## Home Safe

While there's no way to generalize the lesbian experience, it's safe to say that issues of diversity and tolerance more directly affect this segment of the population in ways that they don't affect the average heterosexual man or woman.

The study in *Population Today* rated Eugene as one of the top 10 cities where female couples choose to settle down. And yes, the women interviewed for this story agreed that Eugene's hippie-liberal reputa-



Ashley Birch

Todd Cooper

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