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PICTURE OF COMPASSION



Chelsea Granger co-owns and co-directs LightBox Photographic Gallery with her husband, Michael, in downtown Astoria.



Chelsea Granger with her dog, Penelope. Granger handles office administration and assisting customers at the Clatsop County Animal Shelter.

Submitted photos



As co-director of LightBox, Chelsea Granger collaborates on curating exhibits and handles much of the production work during the hectic two-day periods in which one show is taken down and another put on the walls.

Chelsea Granger and her husband, Michael, first came to Astoria on a day trip in 1996, when they moved from Hawaii to Oregon. "It was always in the back of our minds as a place we'd like to live one day," she says of Astoria.

They returned in 2007. "We love it here," Chelsea Granger says, "and we appreciate that Astoria has so much to offer." The Grangers founded LightBox Gallery in 2009, as Granger says, "to promote creative and alternative photography on the North Coast." LightBox was also intended to be, and has become, a place where photographic artists come together to share their experience and their vision.

In the years since, Granger has found another way to contribute to the community. For the past four years she has worked for the Clatsop County Animal Shelter.

"I am lucky to work with my two great loves, photography and animals," she says.

As co-director of LightBox she collaborates on curating exhibits and handles much of production work during the hectic two-day periods in which one show is taken down and another put on the walls. She handles the installation of new work, which can be up to 50 prints to change each month. The gallery provides scanning, restoration and printing services as well as photographic exhibits, all of which often require framing for the client. "Framing is my department," she says.

Granger is a fine art photographer, creating signature dream-like images with a vintage plastic lens camera. Matting and framing her own work, she came to specialize in conservation framing, which uses the finest archival quality materials. "I'm a bit of a perfectionist, and good presentation is

essential," she says.

Sometime after moving to Astoria, Granger visited the Clatsop County Animal Shelter to inquire about volunteering, and there happened to be an opening for a staff position. She now handles office administration and assisting customers, which often involves taking animals who are being surrendered or come in as strays. "There's a lot of multitasking, and it can get really busy," she says. "I often try to unwind at lunch by walking a shelter dog, which does us both good. My motto has always been, 'Never pass up an opportunity to show compassion.' At the shelter you're given that opportunity every day."

the arts

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Story by DWIGHT CASWELL

Granger says that people often tell her they could never work at the shelter, because it would make them too sad. "The reality," she says, "is that yes, it can be sad, but it's equally rewarding. Animals come to the shelter under many different circumstances; some adjust in no time, others take a lot of work.

"Thankfully they are given that chance at Clatsop County shelter. It's a wonderful and nurturing environment for the animals that end up there, and you can see the change in them and how they can thrive as a result of the great care they are given. The reward comes from seeing an animal that may have come from a horrible beginning, and see what they

VOLUNTEERS WELCOME

Clatsop Animal Assistance is always in need of volunteers, who are vital for the well being of the animals, which improves chances for adoption. The shelter is open from noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday. Find further information at www.dogsncats.org or call 503-861-7387

MORE INFORMATION

LightBox Gallery is at 1045 Marine Drive, Astoria. For further information go to lightbox-photographic.com. Photographs by Chelsea Granger are at lightbox-photographic.com/members/Chelsea

become when they're adopted and loved by someone. How do you top that?"

The animals at Clatsop County Animal Shelter get a second chance largely due to the volunteers at the shelter. "They're simply an amazing and dedicated group of people," says Granger. "We're also fortunate to have the help of Clatsop Animal Assistance, the nonprofit that pays the medical care for the shelter animals, so they get all the treatment they need to get healthy."

Granger says that one of the hazards of the job, "is falling in love with the animals, and I have often fostered those that are too old or sick to be adopted."

It strikes some as odd that Granger is involved in two such disparate jobs. Photography requires a pristine, dust-free environment; the animal shelter is quite the opposite. Nonetheless the two jobs do, on occasion, cross over. LightBox Gallery does, of course, welcome dogs, and Granger says, "It's always great to recognize a former shelter dog who's out with their new family for an art opening."