

RETURNS

“It also allows people who aren’t sure of themselves to see that there is a support system here. It offers a sense of inclusiveness, education,” she said, adding: “You don’t need to be gay to be involved in Pride.”

She said that events like Pride are “important for people who are marginalized. Whatever segment of our community that’s been marginalized — whether it’s women, gay or immigrant — it’s important that we band together to do this.”

When Adolphson was a kid, he never imagined today’s Astoria. He gets emotional thinking of last year’s inaugural Pride.

“I was so happy when the first Pride parade happened here in Astoria. It was amazing,” he said. “A small minority watched and made snide comments, but I just thought, ‘Why are you here?’”

That day was followed by the news on June 12 that an ISIS-inspired had gunman murdered 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. “We went from this wonderful high to crashing down,” Adolphson said.

The Q Center and community members hung black ribbons over their downtown Pride decorations and organized a vigil.

“We had to do something,” David Drafall, treasurer of the Q Center, said. “It was just devastating to everybody.”

GROWING UP GAY IN UNIONTOWN

Adolphson, a member of the Finnish Brotherhood, was raised as an only child in Uniontown. Growing up on Alameda Street, his favorite thing to do was grab his bike and visit all the old ladies in his neighborhood.

While Adolphson was accepted and loved in his own neighborhood, he faced bullying at school.

But, because of a supportive environment within his tight-knit family and Finnish community, Adolphson came out at 15 at his mother’s encouragement.

“My mother told me I was gay at age 15,” he said. “I was initially mad at the suggestion. She didn’t put me down. In fact, years later, when I was



DANNY MILLER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Passengers aboard the Astoria Riverfront Trolley gaze out at the Astoria Pride Parade attendees marching on the Riverwalk in June 2016.

in beauty school, I brought my first boyfriend home, and she was giddy with excitement.”

Shortly after graduating from Astoria High School in 1966, Adolphson moved to Portland, swearing that he would never again live in his hometown.

But he soon returned to take care of his mother, who was dying of cancer. He later moved back to Portland, but, again, found his way home to look after his grandmother.

He missed the Portland culture and the supportive gay community. Starting a career in Astoria, a logging and fishing town with many conservatives, was challenging.

“Sometimes I was spit at, and had cigarette butts thrown at me,” he recalled.

‘TOO OLD TO HATE’

In 1976, Adolphson opened up his hair salon, “165 West Bond,” and, in 1980, bought a home in Astoria. The decision to open a hair salon and become a small business owner was also not easy.

“My mother was a hairdresser, so I was practically born in the salon,” he said. “But my dream was actually to be a landscape architect, but it was too much schooling. I thought I might as well do what I know and be

making money in 13 months.”

Adolphson has a reputation for being quiet and personable with his clients, and is an excellent listener. Many Astorians have sought out his hairdressing chair over the decades. A small minority of clients have anti-gay views, but Adolphson takes them in stride.

“I welcome everyone. I’m too old to hate; it hurts me way more than it hurts them in the end,” he said. “Trump supporters keep comments to themselves, but I see what they post on Facebook, and it’s hurtful. It’s hard — I try not to bring politics into it, but I’m human, and at certain times I can’t help but say something.”

ASTORIA’S EVOLUTION

Adolphson has witnessed the striking change in his hometown. “We started to get great art galleries, nice restaurants, and now there’s something fun happening all the time. Over the years, it’s gotten to be a really nice place to live,” he said.

Adolphson noted that 1992’s anti-gay Oregon Ballot Measure 9, was, ironically, a big factor in changing Astoria.

The measure, a proposed amendment to the state constitution, would have prohibited the government from using funds or properties for

ASTORIA PRIDE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, JUNE 9

- “Cocktails with the Queens”

Doors 6 p.m. Cocktail hour 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., The Liberty Theatre, 1203 Commercial St., tickets \$20 (includes small plates and complimentary beverage), live Bossa Nova

- Pride Gala

Doors 7:30 p.m. Show 8 p.m., The Liberty Theatre, 1203 Commercial St., tickets \$30, \$25, \$15 (purchase at box office or libertyastoria.org)

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

- Pride Block Party

1 to 7 p.m., foot of 21st Street (park in lot at 23rd Street and Marine Drive), free, all-ages, live music, drag performances, sustenance, alcoholic beverages, nonprofit booths, pop-up shop, kids’ activity are

SUNDAY, JUNE 11

- Pride Riverwalk Parade

10 a.m. day-of registration (preregister at facebook.com/astoriapride and lcqcastoria.org), 12:30 p.m., begins at Columbia Maritime Memorial Park, free, open to the public



DANNY MILLER/THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Ashleigh Naslund shares a laugh with others while marching in the Astoria Pride Parade in June 2016.

activities that treat homosexuality as normal. The initiative was ultimately defeated, but it reminded people of the bigotry and misconceptions that remained widespread.

“Sometimes bad things bring out the best conversations,” he said. “It really got people talking; it created an important conversation in our community, and that changed Astoria, I think.”

In today’s Astoria, the support has been overwhelming since Pride kicked off in 2016, one year after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide and

two years after Oregon courts did the same for the state.

Adolphson said he never expected the response to Pride to be so big. “Our community just continues to give and give and give,” he said, somewhat shocked at the amount of money and support pouring in. “It made me so proud to be an Astorian.”

For more information about Astoria Pride, visit the event’s Facebook page, or the Lower Columbia Q Center website: lcqcastoria.org.

Daily Astorian reporter Jack Heferman contributed to this story.