

By KATHERINE LACAZE  
FOR COAST WEEKEND

**T**he Astor Street Opry Company invites everyone in the community to be an angel and come support the organization while reigniting the spirit of the 1950s and '60s with an interactive recreation of the classic television game show "I've Got a Secret."

The sixth annual Be An ASOC Angel fundraiser is slated for Saturday, Oct. 20, and promises a meal from Fulio's served on TV trays, dessert from Table 360, live and silent auctions, and the chance to interact with a few beloved characters from Astor Street's iconic melodramas, such as "Shanghaied in Astoria."

Replicating the format of the TV show, the characters will share their secrets with the audience. Four panelists will then ask "yes" or "no" questions to try to guess each secret, according to Michael Desmond, the company's director of communication, marketing and technology.

"The secret can be anything," he said, adding that guest stars are encouraged to pick "something that is interesting but not easy to guess."

The panelists, who will be selected through a drawing for which attendees may purchase tickets, will be given a hint to guide them in asking questions. Because the audience is in on the secret, the questioning and guessing can become entertaining and humorous to watch, Desmond said.

Judith Niland, who was actively involved with Astor Street for about 32 years and is temporarily consulting for them after a management change, described the game show as "sort of an improvisational comedy," because of the Q-and-A format.

Each time the organization puts on the annual fundraiser, she said, they include an entertainment piece since they are, after all, a theater troupe. The performance feature helps draw in a crowd, and it's "definitely 'us,'" Niland said.

### 'Angel' investments

Before and after the live entertainment, which starts at about 7 p.m., audience members can bid on silent auction items. The live auction — featuring Rusty House as the auctioneer — will conclude the event.

Chuck Meyer, who created the fundraising committee after the company purchased the building it currently occupies, started the Be An Angel fund-



From left: Patricia VonVintage, Paula Fisher, Michael Desmond and ChrisLynn Taylor will be part of the show this year at the Be an ASOC Angel event.

COLIN MURPHEY  
PHOTO

### IF YOU GO

**Astor Street Opry Company's Be An ASOC Angel fundraiser**

**When:** Doors open 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 20

**Where:** ASOC Playhouse, 129 W. Bond St.

**Admission:** \$25 per person or \$40 for couples

**For information,** visit [asocplay.com](http://asocplay.com) or call 503-325-6104. Tickets are available on the website or at the door.

raiser several years ago. Although he is no longer on the board, he volunteered his efforts for this year's event. Dena Tuveng, the sponsorship manager, is another key organizer.

When soliciting donations for the auctions, Meyer focuses on items that give people experiences, such as gift certificates to local restaurants, hotel stays, downtown Astoria packages, private lessons with artists, and even

services from professionals, such as lawyers and accountants. He finds these items are more appealing because "that way you don't end up taking something home."

The fundraiser is crucial in helping the volunteer-based theater sustain itself. Meyer estimated the money they bring in from the event covers about 25 to 30 percent of the theater's annual operating costs.

In general, the community support demonstrated through the fundraiser helps keep the company running, said Niland, who has taken on many roles during her time with the theater and also wrote "Scrooged in Astoria" and "Lewis and Clark, or How the Finns Discovered Astoria."

"We like to call ourselves a home-grown community theater organization," she said. Another aspect of the company's success, she added, is its inclusivity, which "gives people the chance to explore the craft of theater without a lot of fear or judgment."

Because the Astor Street has operated more than three decades, members from multiple generations of the same family often take part in productions, Meyer said. Also, every show they produce is family friendly.

"It's a good, fun community asset," he said. **cw**