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From the Oct. 2007 Issue

When Tim Miller walks home from work in the evening, he can look up into the windows of artists' lofts on the streets around his Portland, Oregon office and nearby home. And the air starts to fill with eclectic grooves, the sounds of free spirited artists and the aromas of restaurants drawing in their evening catch. This collective creative energy, wafting through Portland's Mississippi neighborhood, is part of what drew Tim from the East Coast. And its ever-changing artistic and cultural diversity is what keeps him there, for both personal and professional reasons.

This enclave of entrepreneurial Bohemians and more traditional businesses turn to Tim for his tax and accounting expertise. But before you picture a suited man in the midst of hip urbanites, please understand that he is a part of this community, too... even if his primary art may be that of a tax professional with a law degree. For it is through these services that his practice helps clients be more successful at developing their own crafts, whether oil on canvas, sculpture, music, culinary or retail in nature. Not that he is lacking in his own creative artistic abilities, however. Tim and his girlfriend, Anjali LeBoeuf, study oil painting under the tutelage of their "maestro," nationally renowned artist Alexander Rokoff (www.rokoffstudio.com), who teaches "a classic Rembrandt style of painting that is subdued yet strikingly beautiful." Tim also studies acrylic painting under Daniel Work and participates in multiple ecstatic dance groups.

With

an office on the banks of the Willamette River, the practice Tim started in 2000 has developed a core constituency of artists, alternative businesses and individuals, and other creative types who rely on Affiliated Tax Pros

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and, even more curiously, by way of the IRS. After earning a B.S. at the University of Indiana and completing legal studies at the D.C. Law School in Washington, D.C., wanderlust led Tim through Minnesota, Virginia, South America and eventually to Oregon, where he freelanced as a legal researcher for immigration attorneys and then joined the IRS where he taught tax law internally for the agency. Tim received his EA credential while working for the IRS and, with his friends in the creative community frequently asking for assistance with their tax issues, he realized there was an opportunity to develop a practice by helping these non-traditional businesses.

“Artists and musicians have the same compliance issues that other businesses have, but their work is often so engrossing that they can’t find the time to properly manage their finances,” Tim says. “We help them take care of the business aspects of their art so that they can concentrate on their creative passions.” His services have no doubt helped the March Fourth Marching Band (www.marchfourthmarchingband.com), which is embarking on a national tour this fall. This motley troupe of about 25 musicians and performers includes a full horn section, a bass guitarist, stilt walkers, fire performers and dancers. Another client, Vermilion Films (www.vermilionpictures.com), recently won the Audience Award at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival for its new movie, “Hear and Now.”

Tim relied only on word-of-mouth marketing, and the need for his services was quickly apparent as the practice has grown to serve more than 400 individual and business clients. Tim says that one of the most beneficial services the practice offers new clients is a Business 101 consultation. “We have the best new business startup program in Portland because we guide clients through everything they need to know,” he said. “People starting up a new

business come in, and we help them establish the appropriate entity, obtain

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Affiliated Tax Pros has also embraced technology internally to enhance client service, especially virtual collaboration and the move toward a paperless process. This has been a benefit not only in terms of increasing efficiency, but is also more environmentally friendly, an aspect greatly appreciated by clients (and potential clients) in the Pacific Northwest.

The firm earned an “about average” score of 150 on the Productivity Survey, which is sure to go up as they continue to employ integrated applications in their practice. The Productivity Survey is a free online tool that helps tax and accounting practices assess their use of technology and workflow processes and provides actionable recommendations for improvement. The survey is located at www.CPATechAdvisor.com/Productivity.

“We’re always looking for ways to be more productive in our business, but we’re also concerned about our effects on the environment,” Tim said. “It was obvious to me that we could be more green by not using tons and tons of paper, so we took a more technological approach, using high-speed scanners and using electronic media and communication whenever possible.” Technology also plays an integral role in keeping up with remote clients in California and Hawaii, whom Tim took over from a retiring practitioner. Tim hopes that one day the firm’s growth will allow for a satellite office on the beach in Maui — “an accounting resort,” if you will.

Although he has yet to make it to Hawaii, Tim likes to spend weekends on the coast crabbing with friends, sailing on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, and cooking for dinner parties, a passion that occasionally leads him and friends out on expeditions for wild culinary mushrooms. In addition to a backyard garden at home, he and his coworker friends keep potted herb gardens at their office space, which also includes a full kitchen and a barbeque on their deck over

the Willamette River. The deck also has a sculpted steel hanging basket fire

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the practice recently hosted its annual client appreciation party, which drew 200 to 300 people to its deck area, with live music from the March Fourth Marching Band and Solovox (www.solovox.com), “a one man, electronica-funk-groove-keyboard” artist who is also a client. The neighborhood’s mascot, Napoleon, a wild urban rooster, provided security.

In an era when many cities are increasingly sprawling outward resulting in less interpersonal relationships, Tim notes that his home is different. “Portland is made up of a lot of local and very different communities, so residents can pick their own town within the city, and each of these neighborhoods has a unique flavor. Most people who live here are friends, and our businesses are interdependent. We eat, listen to music, dance and drink together, and celebrate life.”

So it seems that Tim has found much more than his professional niche in Portland; he has found a home in the city’s Mississippi neighborhood that feeds his creative needs while also enabling him to help those around him.

Technology

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