

*COLUMN*

**Close to Home: Club nurtures people with a passion for pictures**

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Courtesy Portland Camera Club

A group of Camera Club members takes part in a planned shoot.

Cameras have become so ubiquitous, you might think newborns will soon be issued one at birth. We have cameras on our mobile phones and laptops. Gone are the days of bulky apparatus and expensive darkrooms that made photography an expensive pursuit. Cameras now come in sizes, prices and capabilities that would have been unimaginable 10 years ago. A picture taken moments ago can now be seen by countless viewers across the globe almost immediately.

But despite technological leaps, most of us aren't getting the most from our cameras. We just point and click; if the image isn't blurry we're satisfied by what's been captured.

The Portland Camera Club has been refining the art of picture-taking for more than 100 years and serves as a vehicle to meet photographers both

amateur and professional. The club is also a chance to socialize and go picture-taking with like-minded individuals.

"With digital photography becoming so popular, we've had to tailor more of our programs to beginners," Mike Cempa, club president, said. "Many folks with slightly more sophisticated digital cameras want to go beyond simply shooting in auto mode."

"We welcome anyone with a passion or interest in photography," adds Mike Leonard, vice president. "What we hear quite often, which we try to dispel, is folks saying they don't have a good enough camera."

Leonard says good results can often be achieved with even the cheapest of cameras. As a case in point, the home page on the group's Web site shows a shot of Portland Head light at sunset taken by club member David Kirkwood.

"That was taken with a disposable camera that literally cost \$1.99," said Leonard. "So in that case, if you've spent more than \$1.99, perhaps you're overqualified in respect to equipment."

With around 70 members, many niche areas of experience reside in the club. Everything from shooting flowers to portraits to nighttime photography is represented. "We're all willing to share our knowledge," says Leonard.

Of course, members like to get out and about, too. A club shoot at Old Orchard Beach took place last Saturday morning. Gilsland Farm, the Maine Audubon headquarters in Falmouth, is another frequented spot, as are the urban sights of Portland's Commercial Street.

Trips farther afield are usually planned during the club's summer recess. Windjammer Days in Boothbay Harbor is one such event.

"We'll head up and shoot the boats coming in, grab something to eat, watch the parade, and then shoot the fireworks over the harbor at night," said Leonard. "We make a day of it."

The club often selects opportunities to try out certain techniques. During the Yarmouth Clam Festival, Leonard says the bicycle race is a great chance to practice panning and shooting with a low shutter speed for interesting effects.

The club started holding weekly meetings in September that will continue until May. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. the first four Mondays of every month at the American Legion Hall in South Portland. Guest speakers and photo contests are common. Everyone from high school students to senior citizens are welcome to join PCC, one of the nation's oldest camera clubs; meetings began back in 1899.

An upcoming calendar of events can be found on the club's Web site. An introduction to layers in Photoshop happens Nov. 16. Nov. 23 features a presentation on matting photos, as well as options for creating your own Web site and online gallery. Karl Schatz, director of Portland-based stock agency Aurora Photos, will be guest speaker on the Nov. 30.

Membership is \$45 a year and prospects are welcome to come and sit in on a meeting at any time before committing to membership. The club is not just for Portlanders; members hail from Naples, Oxford, Minot, Bar Mills, Buxton, Topsham and Harpswell.

"It's great to meet other folks who are interested in the same things you're doing," said Leonard. "It helps foster creativity. On your own, it can be tough, but after a meeting you leave with a heightened sense of wanting to go experiment with your camera."

To find out more about PCC visit [www.portlandcameraclub.org](http://www.portlandcameraclub.org).

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