

Paul Starr, executive director of the Cascade AIDS Project, on the front lines of AIDS work since 1986, striving to maintain the quiet at the center of the storm.

"At first you come here [to work at CAP] and you have so much energy, and you really want to help. People don't come to work here unless they're really doing it from their gut.

"Then you start seeing your job expanding around you, you start seeing all the incredible needs that are there. You go through a period where it's too much, it's overwhelming. There's a lot of guilt, sometimes, about not being able to meet the needs that you see.

"And then, hopefully, you get to a point where you kind of pull back and begin to accept your own limitations. You begin to understand that Cascade AIDS Project can't take care of AIDS in Portland. It can do pieces of it; you can take care of pieces of people's needs. But you won't be able to heal it; you won't be able to cure it. You won't be able to stop people from dying.

"...One reason I wanted the job [was] to see if there's some way to do it, to be in a leadership role in the middle of the incredible turmoil that this disease creates and maintain a real sense of integrity and purpose and peace, all at the same time."



Karen Harding, owner of the Cup and Saucer Cafe, creating a neighborhood oasis, learning the challenges of the business by meeting them, taking time (on the good days) to sniff the coffee.

"We didn't do breakfast at first. We did only scrambled eggs for breakfast on the weekends. There were nothing but problems. I don't even remember what we thought we were doing. We didn't have a hood. We didn't have a grill. The first winter, the whole cafe froze. The windows froze, the pipes froze in nine places and we had to close for four days.

"I don't know everything there is to know about a feminist way of doing things. I know I don't let people call my wait people 'waitresses.' I know that when the women in my cafe are given a bad time on a sexual level, I confront it and I allow them to confront it. I don't say, 'Now, just be quiet.'

"Most of the time lately, even through the hard things, I love my cafe. I love it. It's got a long way to go, but I think about how bored I would be if everything ever felt done...I hate being away from the place. It's my favorite place to be in the morning."



John Baker, chair of Oregon's Right to Privacy Political Action Committee, approaching the issues with an eye for balance, working to nudge electoral politics in gay positive directions, bit by bit.

"A lot of people will disagree with me, but I think that Ballot Measure 8 was almost a win rather than a loss. We gained so much — an opportunity to be able to tell people in the state who lesbians and gays are and what we want out of life, which is obviously the same things everybody else wants. A chance to live our lives safely and securely and as enjoyably as possible.

"Now we can do a dinner and raise \$50,000. I think that indicates that people are very supportive of what we do and what the gay rights movement means.... Years ago people thought that a bunch of left-wing crazies and socialists were staffing the gay rights movement. I'm sure there were such people. Most of us are probably to the left of George Bush. But basically, we have been very, very responsible in the last 15 years. People realize that. That's why we can do a benefit and get 700 people to attend."



Donna Russell Red Wing, facing the challenges of leading the Lesbian Community Project, trying to boost visibility, treasuring the existence of LCP.

"I think that this organization exists and is accessible to all lesbians is important. In a city like Worcester [Mass., where she lived previously] certainly there were support services, but there is no place folks can come anytime they want and meet other folks or sit around and read or talk. The fact that LCP exists is the most important piece of all.

"I do think that visibility in the community is going to be a real challenge. Enlarging and expanding what we can offer to people. For

me, the challenge is to understand not only the project, but the community. To be out there, to meet people, to find out what people want.

"For the first time in our lives, my partner and I have decided to live exactly as we choose, and that includes being here in Portland. That includes working in a position like this. That includes making some breaks. But I think they're healthy ones."



John Forsgren, Art/AIDS coordinator, designer, working to make inroads through art, raising consciousness along with funds.

"There was some criticism of the 1989 Art/AIDS benefit because we didn't use the word 'gay,' that somehow we avoided the issue of gay people being affected or involved. We weren't trying to avoid. We were trying to involve other people.

"As far as Art/AIDS goes, the attitude had been that it is gay people who are sick, so only gay people should be involved. A woman I was talking to asked me, 'Isn't this really the gay community's job to do this?'

"And my response is, 'Don't deny me the rest of who I am.' I am a gay person but I'm also a son, and a lover, and I am a professional and a friend.

"All of those things are a part of who I am, just as they're a part of who everybody else is.... Don't deny me the rest of who I am if you're not gay. Don't deny the human bond between us."



La Verne Lewis, business woman bending the rules, crafting her store, Crone Magic, in her image of the world, in which the things that are meant to happen, do happen, in which signals and signs come to those who keep their eyes open.

"I like the fact that [my job] doesn't feel like work. When I come to Crone Magic, it feels like a natural part of what I'm supposed to do in this life cycle. I enjoy meeting the different people who come to the store. Someone will walk in the door and say, 'I don't know why I'm here, but I'm supposed to be here for a reason.' Or people will say, 'I've lived in this neighborhood for five years and I never saw your shop. For some reason, today I saw it and came in.'

"When things get low, for some miraculous reason, new artisans come in here with artwork that will boost sales, or a large order will come in. Each time I reach a crisis, I know that because the universe takes care of what is healthy and needed, something occurs in the cycle.

"I pass that on a lot of times to other women. The law of prosperity is to concentrate on the doing and the thought, to put the money aside for the time being. If it's supposed to happen, then it will. When you start hitting obstacles, it means you're on the wrong path, that you should switch and try a different approach."



Cliff Jones formerly education coordinator for the Cascade AIDS Project, now an advocate for Legal Aid, working to change the practices of oppression outside, heal the scars of oppression inside.

"I see the white gay community self-absorbed by AIDS. People of color within the gay community are the most disenfranchised related to AIDS. There's not a mandate that one can rely on that there will be broad-based, culturally sensitive HIV education and services.

"Racism is a human issue. There are challenges for people of color and for white people. When I talk about racism I want to talk in a way that's empowering, that makes people say, aha, I understand that, I want to do something about that. Rather than in a way that makes people heavier, more hopeless, more helpless.

"My perspective about humans is that the thing that holds us back most is the way oppression has been internalized. The way, as gay men and lesbians, we go around thinking that we're not good. We haven't cleaned up how we were hurt."