

SO LONG, SUSAN

CAP's feisty, sometimes controversial executive director is headed for new challenges by Patrick Collins



Susan Stoltenberg

Susan Stoltenberg's supporters describe her, in nearly heroic terms, as a woman who pulled an agency out of financial ruin and set it on a path of fiscal wellness. Her detractors say she is blunt, insensitive, even single-minded. It is difficult to find middle-of-the-road opinions about her. People seem to either love her or hate her.

On April 2, Stoltenberg steps down as executive director of Cascade AIDS Project, which provides myriad services related to HIV/AIDS.

She has headed CAP for nearly four years. Upon her exodus, she will leave behind not only an organization very different from the one she inherited, but a different configuration of the epidemic as well.

"When I took this job in 1994, our primary clients were very well-educated, middle class, primarily white gay men," she says. "They were dream clients, in that they accepted the information we gave them exactly as it was intended. Now the client base is much more mixed. There are more women, and way more clients with either chemical dependency or mental illness issues, or both. The epidemic has a very different face than it did five years ago."

Another major difference, says Stoltenberg, is the emergence of protease inhibitors—drug treatment "cocktails" that have lengthened the lives of many infected people.

Many care providers, she says, have had to shift their focus from death and dying to health and well-being.

"The AIDS Walk has become such a vigil," she says of CAP's annual fund-raiser. "I think it's important to remember. I think those who have died would want us to remember. But I think they would also want us to celebrate the fact that we're still here, and that so many people are doing so much better."

With that in mind, Stoltenberg has made arrangements to combine the AIDS Walk with the Portland Marathon.

"People are healthy again," she says. As for the health and general well-being of CAP, Stoltenberg adds, "I'm proud of how this place has come along."

When Stoltenberg joined CAP in May 1994, the agency was in fiscal upheaval. A former staff member was accused of embezzling a considerable amount of money, though

Stoltenberg says she still doesn't know exactly how much, due partly to the fact that the agency didn't emphasize accounting procedures.

What she did know was that the agency lost not only cash but a lot of trust as well.

"What I had to do was go out and re-establish good relations with the community," she says, adding, "We didn't just survive this. We grew from it."

Despite being proud of the agency, Stoltenberg wishes things sometimes could have gone more smoothly.

She says "People think I over-emphasize budget and development.... I go after private funding, and it's cut-throat. Without the money we can't fund the programs, and without the programs we're not an agency. That's the bottom line."

Then there was the sticky scenario around unionization. (CAP employees recently joined the Oregon Public Employees Union after 14 months of contract negotiations.)

"It was very stressful," Stoltenberg says of the negotiation period. "They vilified me from the beginning. I was immediately attacked as being inflexible."

The whole process, she says, represented CAP's evolution from a small agency to a larger one. There were 21 staff members when she assumed her position; there are now 38.

The agency's total revenues went from \$828,924 in 1994 to \$1,853,060 in 1997.

"In the past, loyalty to the agency was everything," she says. "Every decision was made by consensus. When we started going after larger chunks of private funding, that model of management was no longer an option. I needed to be sure that we had people in positions who were completely qualified, and I didn't make a lot of friends along the way."

Stoltenberg is looking forward to her new position as the executive director of the local Susan G. Komen Foundation chapter, which allocates funds for breast cancer research. She is excited, she says, about handing out the money rather than hunting for it.

"But," she says, and her voice softens, "I have been moved, profoundly moved, by the acceptance I've been shown by this community. I feel like I have been welcomed for what I'm doing rather than who I am, and I will never forget that."



BEFORE YOU INVEST YOUR MONEY, INVEST IN A PHONE CALL.

For the first time in 16 years, a great number of taxpayers can benefit directly from the major Taxpayer Reform Act of 1997. It's important to start planning now to take full advantage of these new opportunities. Make the call so we can discuss further what it all means for you.

FLOREID WALKER
(503) 238-6036
1-800-487-6626
Voicemail: (503) 291-7713
<http://www.waddell.com>

Waddell & Reed
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Let us show you what a Roth IRA can mean to you!

Experts agree: your retirement future is up to you... not Social Security, not your employer(s), and not the government.

But we can help you learn more about the new Roth IRA and how it can fit into your retirement planning strategy. We will explain:

- Contribution limits
- Possible investment strategies
- Withdrawal provisions
- Converting your old IRA into a Roth IRA

Waddell & Reed
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Call today for a free consultation.

Floreid Walker - Senior Financial Advisor
500 N.E. Multnomah, Suite 278
Portland, OR 97232
(503) 291-7713

Member SIPC

The Community's Home Loan Resource



Colleen Weed

- ▶ New purchase
- ▶ 100% equity loans
- ▶ Pre-qualification by phone or fax
- ▶ Residential, commercial & investment property
- ▶ Appointments at your convenience
- ▶ Refinance/cash out
- ▶ Pre-approved loans

"I'm available when you are!"

Office: 297-9900 Evenings/Weekends: 780-1561

MORTGAGE Advocates

9900 S.W. Wilshire Street • Portland, Oregon 97225