

FRED MILLER
by Jack Turteltaub

Fred Miller, executive vice president for retail and distribution services of Portland General Electric, sits in his 17th-floor office with a panoramic view of downtown Portland, the Willamette River and the Lloyd District. An Oregon native since he was 6 months old, the married man has a vision for society that matches the expansive view from his desk.

Miller is a strong supporter of equal rights for sexual minorities because he thinks it is a question of fairness. He takes issue with the past efforts of Lon Mabon and the Oregon Citizens Alliance to discriminate legally against the community.

"That's not the way you treat people," he says. "You don't single out a group of people and treat them differently."

Miller notes that his work experiences and world travel probably have helped teach him that "as you look at a lot of different cultures, you realize that no one is right. If somebody—like Mabon—thinks they're right and everybody else is wrong, then that's a problem."

Miller received his Ph.D. from Michigan State University, was a teacher, then worked for several decades in Oregon's state government. He had a distinguished career serving under four governors: as energy director for Bob Straub, as transportation director for Victor Atiyeh and then as executive department director for Neil Goldschmidt and Barbara Roberts.



Fred Miller delivers a pitch for cash during the Oregonians Against Discrimination Luncheon on April 10

PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS

When he worked for the state, he notes, "Not one of the governors ever asked me what party I belonged to." Perhaps that non-partisan spirit also contributed to his breadth of vision and his commitment to looking past differences.

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—Fred Miller

Miller started working for PGE in 1992 as vice president for public affairs and community involvement, drawing on his experience as an administrator and a political mover and shaker. During the past 10 years he has tried to keep the corporation—in spite of two buyouts and its current ownership by Enron—focused on maintaining Oregon's quality of life.

In addition to giving his own money to defeat anti-gay ballot measures, Miller has translated his passion for fairness and his commitment to helping others through his work with Equity Foundation, a sexual minority organization dedicated to "building communi-

ties that embrace the dignity and worth of all people." He has set up five funds—one for himself; one for his wife, Karla Wenzel, a Portland Public Schools board member; and one for each of his four children—to get

everybody in his family involved. It appears to be working: His wife is trying

to close the "achievement gap" in schools, while his two older children, both in their 20s, directly help others, one as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Ivory Coast and the other as a tutor for Friends of Children, a Portland nonprofit that mentors at-risk kids. He is clearly proud of his family's charitable efforts.

As Equity's largest donor, he won the inaugural John Grigsby-Jim Vegher Investments in Dignity Award during a banquet held Feb. 25 on the Nike campus. To put the contribution in perspective, executive director Matthew Nelson says Miller's charitable work supports an Oregon that "welcomes and affirms all people, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities."

Nelson calls Miller "the consummate philanthropist. He challenges those around him to become involved, whether they are family, friends or colleagues at work." □



Miller mingles with Equity Foundation board co-chair Liz MacDonell (left) and comedian Lily Tomlin during the Investments in Dignity Awards Gala on Feb. 25



PHOTOS BY MARTY DAVIS

Geri Washington (above) protests Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia's Feb. 10 appearance at Lewis & Clark College; Washington consults with Kathleen Sullivan (center) and Susan Drew during a No on 9 Campaign rally Oct. 19, 2000



GERI WASHINGTON
by Tom Stevenson

To Geri Washington, the rule of life is quite simple: Everyone deserves to have a decent standard of living, and that includes respect for who they are.

She follows her personal belief in her work as a Portland Jobs with Justice organizer. And she follows it in her own daily walk through life, which includes showing endless support for the queer community.

"There are many things in our lives that we have to fight for," Washington says. "One of those fights should not be among ourselves that creates division. When that happens, nobody wins, but when we stand together, it is then, and only then, that we win justice for all."

Washington says her personal drive stems in part from the fact that she is a woman of color who comes from the South.

"It is a promise I made to myself that I would never participate in, nor contribute to, hatred that targets an individual, group or community," she says. "This promise I take seriously, especially when it comes to my brothers and sisters who are part of the GLBT community because, again, an injury to one is an injury to all."

Washington is one of those folks who stays busy away from work as well. She and her supporters ran a grassroots campaign in 2000 that

helped her beat a 12-year incumbent and earn a seat on the Multnomah Education Service District board.

That same year she served as deputy campaign manager for No on 9. She says her work against the anti-gay ballot measure proved to her once again that the queer community is welcoming to all.

"It has not been difficult to come in from the outside" as a heterosexual, she says. "I had a wonderful experience in my work" on the campaign.

Working with kids is another key reason Washington remains active.

"What inspires me most to stay involved with the sexual minorities community is the youth," she says, noting she has seen the struggles they face as they deal with coming out. "Youth are a priority for me because they are our present and our future. I put so much work into this because I believe that if I can help eliminate as many barriers to their becoming adults...well, I'll be there."

The bottom line, according to Washington, is about respect. She says the sexual minorities community has shown her nothing but the utmost respect, and she believes it is her duty to do the same. Her advice to others in the straight community who struggle in dealings with the queer crowd is the same she gives her own children.

"Judge not lest you be judged," she says. "It is not for you to judge, but it is for you to respect and appreciate the difference that each individual brings to the table of life." □

"When we stand together, it is then, and only then, that we win justice for all"

—Geri Washington