

NORTHWEST news

ferent than it did 30 years ago, I think people are still hungry for a space like this."

At the end of last month, In Other Words underwent a shift in management: Sameh passed the torch to Sue Burns effective May 31. The founder plans to pursue a graduate degree in Middle Eastern women's studies and is excited to have found a strong replacement.

"It was a hard decision to make," Sameh reflects. "I helped start the store...it was something I helped give birth to and raise."

Most recently hailing from San Juan Island, Wash., Burns happened to be in town at a time when Sameh was looking for a replacement manager. "One of my favorite things to do when I visit a city I don't know," she says, "is to come to the women's bookstores, because they are resource centers, and that's how you get to learn everything you need to know."

Sameh soon decided she had found the perfect person for the job. Although she no longer will be working on site, she will remain on the board of directors.

Burns brings an impressive level of experience, commitment and enthusiasm to her new role as leader of In Other Words. She also has a background in activism, ranging from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to the Lesbian Avengers to volunteer work with abortion clinics in Colorado and Texas. While in the Lone Star State, she worked at another women's bookstore in Austin, where the bulk of her experience was gained.

"Texas has an incredibly strong yet small women's community that feels in a lot of ways just like here, except more humid," Burns explains. "So in a way, I feel like I'm back home."

An aspect of her new role that Burns is most excited about is learning a whole new set of politics and issues in Portland. She would like to inspire people—not just women—to make a conscious decision to shop at In Other Words.

"My plans are to learn exactly what the community wants and needs and then to meet those needs," she says. "It's really exciting—it keeps me on my toes."


Burns is no stranger to community-based outreach work, either. As a teacher on San Juan Island, she instituted a general education school, which eventually turned into a non-profit. The school reorganized outdated curriculum for young students and worked closely with the home schooling community.

Sameh is excited about this time of change and expects to remain an active participant in the future of In Other Words. She thinks Burns undoubtedly will be a welcome addition to the bookstore, with its mission of reaching out to educate the women's community.

"I feel confident handing over the leadership to Sue," Sameh says, "because she brings a lot of experience and leadership qualities. She has a really strong customer service background and an activism background."

Sameh is always happy to train new volunteers who are looking for ways to connect with the women's community in Portland. They are essential to In Other Words' success, making it possible for the store to remain open during nights and weekends.

People can participate in various ways: working regular shifts, helping with off-site sales, running discussion groups or writing for the newsletter. Many of the community events are suggested or arranged by the volunteer staff.

The store also has an Internet site, www.inotherwords.org, which was created by Booksense, a national program helping small, independent businesses get online. Although economic recession provides a formidable challenge, In Other Words remains an irreplaceable part of Portland's progressive women's community. 

For more information about volunteer opportunities contact IN OTHER WORDS WOMEN'S BOOKS AND RESOURCES at 503-232-6003 or othrwrds@teleport.com.



The women's community in Portland reminds Sue Burns of Austin, Texas

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