

which runs voter identification and get-out-the-vote programs. Later he was hired by the Senate Democratic Caucus to be its chief of staff. He managed the support staff and was the top adviser for the Senate Democrats for the past five years.

"I wanted to work on a much broader array of policies, and that was one of the great things about working for the Senate," Pack says. "I can tell you more about energy deregulation, telecommunications, land use and our education system and all that," he adds with a laugh.

Looking back at the changes in the political scene, Pack notes that the Legislature has become more partisan and divisive through the years. He also sees that it is much harder to recruit candidates than during his time at RTP. "It's nearly impossible because nobody wants to be [in Salem], and I think that is a shame," Pack says.

He left the Senate at the end of last year and recently started a consulting company for strategic development with Cheryl Perrin, who was executive vice president for public affairs at Fred Meyer. "Our niche is sort of a broad spectrum across public policy, whether it is lobbying government or helping an organization advance an agenda or issue," Pack says.

Turns out majoring in theater served him well.

Chuck Carpenter

"I have just always loved politics and public policy and have had a desire to make a difference,"

says Chuck Carpenter, who was elected to the Legislature in 1994 and served in the 1995 and 1997 sessions.

As the Legislature's only openly gay Republican, Carpenter had many opportunities to make a difference. Just being there was a difference in itself. "I'm proud of my whole



Chuck Carpenter is executive director of Manufactured Housing Communities of Oregon

two terms," Carpenter says. "I was well-respected within the Republican Caucus, and I think we broke down a lot of barriers."

He is most proud of his work and debates on light rail legislation in 1995 and the Employment Nondiscrimination Act in 1997. He was one of the few Republicans who was able to work on the other side of the aisle with Democratic colleagues. He attributes some of his success to being a moderate voice on public

policy and being at the right place at the right time to make something happen.

Today he's executive director for Manufactured Housing Communities of Oregon, where he works on landlord/tenant laws and property rights issues.

"I enjoy being on the other side of the political process," Carpenter says. "It certainly is more lucrative, and I don't have to run for re-election—that's the best part of it all!"

He is an optimistic person and feels fortunate about the things he has been able to do so far. He thinks the queer community has made a good deal of progress, despite continuing battles and controversies. "We have made enormous strides and have friends...in the Democratic Party. But I think that many times we do have friends in the Republican Party as well," he says.

Up until very recently, Carpenter still considered himself a Republican. But after President Bush announced Feb. 24 his support for the Federal Marriage Amendment, he changed parties.

"In good conscience I don't know how any body who's concerned about civil rights could be a Republican," says Carpenter, who now calls himself a conservative Democrat. "I think at this point it's clear that to be a Republican is insane."

Scot Nakagawa

When Mulugeta Seraw, a young man from Ethiopia, was brutally murdered in Portland in 1988,

Scot Nakagawa was motivated to action. He became involved with the Coalition for Human Dignity, which led grassroots efforts to fight white supremacy and hate crimes.

"One of the key projects of the coalition involved reaching out to and organizing young people in the alternative music scene to oppose neo-Nazi skinheads who were intimidating and recruiting people in music venues around town," Nakagawa says.

The youth he worked with were poor or homeless and too often harassed by police and shunned by mainstream society. "But [the kids] played a major role—perhaps the most important role—in breaking the back of the neo-Nazi youth movement of the late '80s in Portland," he says. "They were incredibly courageous and put themselves at great risk to live up to their commitment to standing down bigotry and changing the social climate among their peers."

He adds, "That was the most interesting and rewarding work I've done in Portland."

Through his work with the coalition, Nakagawa became involved with researching and



Scot Nakagawa is associate director of the Western Prison Project

exposing right-wing groups such as the Christian Coalition and the Oregon Citizens Alliance. Soon he was serving on the No on 9 steering committee and later on the campaign staff.

After the defeat of Measure 9 in 1992, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force recruited Nakagawa. He worked for the organization for 3 1/2 years out of an office in Portland as well as an office in Washington, D.C. Since then, he has worked primarily at the grassroots level in different organizations here and across the country.

Now he is associate director of the Western Prison Project. With a main office in Portland, the project serves prisoners and their families in seven Western states by advancing the cause of criminal justice reform.

"We're organizing and supporting constituent-led efforts to win progressive sentencing and prison reform and to reduce the overreliance on incarceration in our region," Nakagawa explains.

He sees this work as an extension of the anti-right wing work he did in the past. He loves his job and believes penal reform is one of the most important racial and economic justice issues confronting the country. According to Nakagawa, the majority of prisoners are marginally employed or underemployed at the time of their arrest. Many have drug and alcohol abuse issues that won't be treated and resolved while they are in prison.

"Fear of crime and 'tough on crime' policy reform has become one of the most effective wedge issues of the right wing, splitting liberal

and progressive coalitions and constituencies and undermining the political power of the right's natural opposition," he says. "For example, in Washington state, ex-felon voting restrictions have permanently denied voting rights to almost 25 percent of black men."

Looking at how things have changed in Portland and the queer community, Nakagawa says the city feels like a bigger and more complex place to him than it did 17 years ago—some changes better than others.

"In the queer community, I see the embrace of a broader array of people and issues, such as Basic Rights Oregon's embrace of the transgender and bisexual community, as a wonderful advance for us," he says. "But some things haven't changed at all."

"In all of my travels over the years, I have come to know Portland as one of the best and worst of places. It is definitely one of the most racist cities I've ever lived in, and I've lived in a few, including the South," Nakagawa says. "But it is also full of great people and holds tremendous promise."

Cindy Cumfer

"I've worked for several decades in the hope that no young person has to be a gay teenager with

nowhere to turn and no positive gay images in their lives," says Cindy Cumfer, a lesbian activist and lawyer.

When she graduated from college in Florida, she knew she wanted to move to Portland, which she saw attracting alternative culture people, including

"lots of lesbians!" It wasn't long before she was living in a collective house with other women, going to the bars and playing basketball. She was involved with starting a women's resource center, a women's bookstore and the Lesbian Community Project.

She went to law school, then worked for the Community Law Project, which was a women-run public interest law firm. There, she and lesbian Katharine English forged new territory in Oregon law and the courts.



Cindy Cumfer is a visiting assistant professor of history and humanities at Reed College

Continued on Page 29

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