



Seeds of Change

Arkansas transplant Ali Williams grows community from ground up

Ali Williams may be new to Portland, but she has wasted no time in establishing herself and, in the spirit of this year's Pride theme, making it happen.

The 24-year-old Arkansas native arrived in Portland fewer than six months ago, with nothing but a bit of savings and the determination to work at Q Center.

"That's just kind of how I operate," Williams says of her leap-of-faith approach.

She had visited during the previous year and was taken by the Pacific Northwest's promise of outdoors adventure and progressive politics and decided to find a nonprofit to land at.

"I came to visit and it was great," says Williams, who grew up in a conservative Southern evangelical Baptist family in the city that is home to Walmart's headquarters. "I wanted to be in a more progressive place."

Once she arrived in Portland, Williams made a coffee date with Q Center's then-executive director Kendall Clawson. She came to the meeting with a list of things she

would do if hired as a Q Center intern, to which Clawson replied, "Looks great. Do it," Williams says.

Starting the day before 2011, Williams jumped into preparations for the annual Winter Gala, and was soon approaching the board of directors with her proposal for a farmers market.

After hearing her market pitch, the board told her to "go for it," Williams recalls. She began laying the groundwork on February 1 and is currently putting in 20-30 hours each week as the Market Q operations manager and special projects and events intern.

"I'm not a farmer, but I really liked the idea, especially the way it brings people together," Williams says of the now established Market Q.

It would be an unpaid gig, but Williams managed to secure a donor to fund her work there. That's in addition to a second internship with Clawson in her new position as director of special appointments for Governor John Kitzhaber.

While Williams aspires to take on bigger projects, perhaps going to graduate school or entering politics, she says she's happy to be standing among the grass roots, one foot planted in community organizing, the other in politics.

"I have no problem starting at the ground floor," she says. "You have to start somewhere."

—ERIN ROOK

The Executive Director

Todd Tubutis returns to Portland after 20 years

Portland seems to have converted Todd Tubutis.

"I have embraced the gay beard," he jokes.

Sitting at a table outside of Barista, he motions toward the plaid shirt he is wearing. Gray speckles his jet black beard. Lying in the seat next to him is his bike helmet.

Portland has indeed infiltrated his life. A year and a half ago, Tubutis moved to Port-

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