OUTSIDE IN FIFTY YEARS

OF FORGING CHANGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE STRAIGHT AND THE STREET

"THE NAME OF THE CLINIC MEANS A NUMBER OF THINGS AND REFLECTS FLEXIBILITY, SUGGESTING THAT THE CLINIC HAS A GOAL TOWARD REHABILITATION FROM THE OUTSIDE IN AND ALSO SUGGESTING A HAVEN FOR PEOPLE ON THE OUTSIDE."

CHARLES SPRAY

The hippies were coming. In the spring of 1968, one year after a Golden Gate Park "Be-In" kicked off the Summer of Love, Portland officials braced uneasily for a drove of young people to migrate north from Haight-Ashbury. "I'm not interested in helping create any hippie heaven here in Portland," Commissioner Francis J. Ivancie declared before City Council.

But the hippies were already here—at Phantasmagoria, the vintage clothing store at SE Sixth and Stevens; in Lair Hill Park; and at Charix, a basement coffee house, rock venue and refuge for "alienated youth" run by First Unitarian Church at SW 12th and Salmon.

Charix—open seven nights a week and staffed by volunteers—charged a 50-cent entrance fee, hosted open-mic events and offered display space for artwork. Between 50 and 120 young people crammed the space each evening. "The idea is to provide a place where young people can gather, listen to music and talk," wrote the church's social responsibility chairman in a fall 1967 letter seeking donations for Charix, "…a place they can more or less call their own… where their ideas are welcomed and put to use."

A local internist, Charles Spray, visited Charix and realized, after talking with church leaders, that the "alienated youth" needed medical care. With a $6,000 grant from the U.S. Public Health Service, Spray set up shop a block from the church, in a corner building that had formerly housed a grocery store and an office.

The Outside In Sociomedical Aid Station opened on the summer solstice: June 21, 1968. "The name of the clinic means a number of things and reflects flexibility," Spray told *The Oregonian*, "suggesting that the clinic has a goal toward rehabilitation from the outside in and also suggesting a haven for people on the outside."

Three months later, an agency newsletter, *Outside-Insights,* described the clinic as a precarious success. It had served 500 patients from "Portland's sub-cultural population of alienated youth," working with an all-volunteer squad of physicians, fourth-year medical students, nurses and receptionists. It lacked key pieces of equipment: an autoclave, a microscope, a typewriter.

"The immediate future of Outside In depends on its acceptance within the community at large," the newsletter concluded.

But the community was skeptical. Chief of Police Donald T. McNamara, in a letter to Portland's mayor, voiced concern that providing services to the city's disenchanted young people would just encourage them to drop out and leave home. "If specialized assistance in every area of living is too readily available, additional young people will find it attractively easy to adopt this pattern of living," McNamara wrote. It was an argument that would chase Outside In for years.

The clinic forged ahead, establishing a board of directors that included clergy, psychologists and Spray himself, drawing a volunteer force of more than 125 (the only paid staff were a full-time secretary and a counseling consultant) and serving 860 patients in its first six months.

The second issue of *Outside-Insights,* in January 1969, reported that the agency was "still alive and well in Portland, despite adversity. Snow falls, roof-leaks, heating problems, licensing delays, ill-starred fundraising efforts and open criticism from city officials all have contributed to our distress."

Even with volunteer staff and borrowed equipment, the initial grant quickly ran out, so Spray sought a permit to solicit donations. City Council turned him down.

That decision sparked impassioned response—and missives to City Council—on both sides. Some were indignant about the drug use of Outside In's clients. Others voiced a deeper disturbance: the idea that the agency, by welcoming and validating "alienated youth," was a threat to the status quo.

"By catering to these young people through so many agencies…we have convinced them that they are right and that society is all wrong," claimed one letter supporting denial of the solicitation permit.

"I am a parent and I would *want* my youngster to seek understanding help such as the Outside In clinic offers," another letter countered. An aide at Dammasch State Hospital also wrote in support of the agency's request. "These young people … have been 'turned-off' by that which is bureaucratized, mass-produced and de-personalized in American culture. A small, experimental, charitable clinic like the Outside-In is ideally suited to reach them."

Even the Archdiocese of Portland, through its social action commission, weighed in, taking the agency's side. It noted in a letter to City Council that conventional programs had been "inadequate, ineffective or even hostile toward young people and their problems."

June 21, 1968

OUTSIDE IN SOCIOMEDICAL AID STATION OPENED

Some early skeptics, including Portland's chief of police, claimed Outside In was enabling street youth—an argument that would chase the agency for years.

Spray defended Outside In, arguing that the free medical services were more than a Band-Aid for young people; they were an entryway to connection, support and change. He had statistics to back that claim: *Outside-Insights* reported that after six months of operation, an estimated 15 percent of patients were no longer using drugs; between five and 10 percent of them had returned to school or a job.

While city officials were wringing their hands over Outside In, Multnomah County quietly conferred its blessing, recognizing Spray's clinic as a contract agency and qualifying it to receive state Mental Health Division funds—albeit with some strings attached: Outside In would need an active board of directors, accurate fiscal records with annual audits, a written program of goals and "strict adherence to health and legal requirements and codes."

In July 1969, City Council reversed itself, granting Outside In the permit to seek public funds. The agency grew—adding a counseling program staffed by medical psychology interns from Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) and serving low-income adults along with teenagers.

Jean DeMaster was one of those counseling volunteers, holding sessions in the basement of First Unitarian Church. "Mostly, it was very young adults, between 16 and 25," she remembers. "Some wanted to stop drug use. Some were just people who had mental health problems. Depression. Bipolar. They couldn't get mental health care any other way."

The medical clinic, still housed in the former grocery store at the corner of SW 13th and Salmon, was a bare-bones suite of three exam rooms and a waiting area, furnished with borrowed desks and second-hand equipment. A Chinese horoscope and a couple of Beatles photographs hung on the walls.

Kay Sohl, who later became Outside In's auditor, migrated from San Francisco to Portland in the early 1970s. She was a day care worker with no health insurance and a chronic earache when someone pointed her to Outside In.

"I was there at night, in a lot of pain," she recalls. "The doctor reached in the drawer where he thought he was going to find the otoscope. It wasn't there. He called down the hall: 'Does anybody have an otoscope?' Finally, he said, 'I'm just going to have to use a flashlight.'" But Sohl left with a diagnosis, even a referral to an ear specialist willing to treat an uninsured patient.

Zarod Rominski, who later came to work at Outside In as the agency's associate executive director, also began as a patient of the clinic, a place becoming known in town both for its affordability and for operating outside conventional norms. There were women doctors. A female patient could insert her own speculum, if she wished.

"Outside In had a reputation as one of the places where very low-income people could be served without prejudice in terms of race or in terms of class," DeMaster says. That openness did not yet extend to sexual orientation, or even to gender politics—DeMaster knew she was a lesbian but was not out professionally, and it was clear to all at Outside In that Spray, a heterosexual white man, was in charge.

In fact, his leadership became a source of internal conflict, and Spray left in 1971 to work at the Barnes VA Hospital in Vancouver. *The Oregonian* reported that some staff resented Spray's "benevolent dictatorship" and said the agency would shift to collective management by a "nine-man board of directors." Spray countered that the collective shunned money and growth, distrusted the "straight" world, was uninterested in research and blasé about the quality of counseling staff.

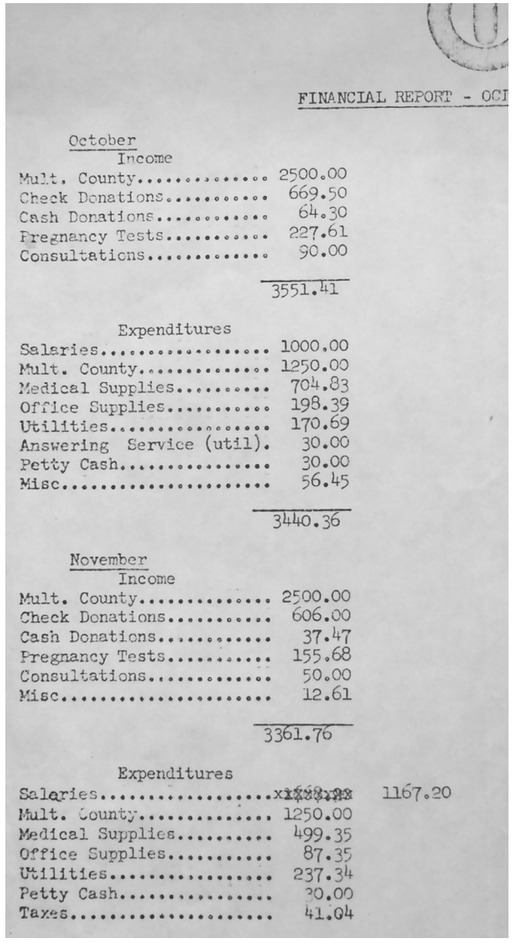
Like the arguments swirling outside the agency—did its services and approach help to transform or merely enable its clients?—Outside In's internal wrangling about leadership structure and legitimacy would continue for years.

But the newly governing collective had more urgent items on its agenda, including how to keep the place solvent. A 1971 financial report showed $3,551 in income—from donations, pregnancy tests and consultations—for October of that year, with $3440 in expenses. Outside In had $335.95 in the bank.

There were other problems: an infestation of crabs in the beds where the "crash crew" allowed clients to sleep off a bad drug reaction, and chafing from city officials about the agency's free drug analysis program, which lab-tested drugs for clients worried that they'd been sold tainted goods.

Outside In's board chair called the program a public service "to protect youth from poisonous drugs"—it had tested a sample of "hashish" that turned out to be brown chalk, and some "LSD" that was actually face powder—but *The Oregonian* described it as "the most offbeat consumer protection program in the city" and reported, in what was surely an understatement, that the official attitude was "extremely cautious."

By 1975, Outside In's newsletter noted the mundane (donated plants for the waiting room; a no-smoking policy in that area) and more significant changes in the agency: it now boasted women's health services (pregnancy testing, abortion counseling, birth control) along with the general medical clinic, counseling center and "crash crew," originally formed to deal with drug reactions and now responding mostly to suicide threats and psychological crises.



FINANCIAL REPORT - OCT

October

Income

Mult. County	2500.00
Check Donations	669.50
Cash Donations	64.30
Pregnancy Tests	227.61
Consultations	90.00
	3551.41

Expenditures

Salaries	1000.00
Mult. County	1250.00
Medical Supplies	704.83
Office Supplies	198.39
Utilities	170.69
Answering Service (util).	30.00
Petty Cash	30.00
Misc	56.45
	3440.36

November

Income

Mult. County	2500.00
Check Donations	606.00
Cash Donations	37.47
Pregnancy Tests	155.68
Consultations	50.00
Misc	12.61
	3361.76

Expenditures

Salaries	1167.20
Mult. County	1250.00
Medical Supplies	499.35
Office Supplies	87.35
Utilities	237.34
Petty Cash	30.00
Taxes	41.04

A financial report for October and November 1971 detailed Outside In's shoestring budget.

The coordinator of each clinic section received $66 per week—barely subsistence pay, even in mid-1970s Portland. And the agency continued to borrow and beg: for a pediatric blood pressure cuff, for copies of the Physicians Desk Reference, for qualified and willing volunteers.

By the end of the decade, as Outside In approached its 10th anniversary, it boasted signs of stability: an annual budget of $100,000, mostly from the Multnomah County Mental Health Department, and a part-time staff of six, aided by 11 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) workers and 50 volunteers. The agency was also struggling to shed its early reputation as a nexus for hippies and drug users.

Citywide, and nationwide, a backlash was rising against the convention-cracking liberalizations of the 1960s and early '70s. In Florida, orange juice queen Anita Bryant waged a successful anti-gay campaign. In New York, former actor and California governor Ronald Reagan announced his run for president. And in Portland, Outside In set its course as an agency "on the edge"—one that would meet marginalized people without judgment, risk public censure in the service of its clients and attempt to bridge two mutually distrustful worlds, the "straight" and the "street." ✹

RUNAWAYS AND THROWAWAYS

In the early 1980s, as Portland became a popular stop on the I-5 corridor shuttling homeless youth between Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver, *The Oregonian* posed a question to readers: "How should Portland deal with street kids?"

Responses ran the spectrum from compassion ("They are our future and they need help instead of hassles") to disdain ("Feed them a little bit each day and don't kick them").

To some, street youth were an irritant, superfluous as pigeons—kids clustering at "the Wall" on the east side of Pioneer Courthouse Square, known as a trafficking spot for drugs; teenagers hanging at "the Camp" near SW Third and Yamhill.

Others saw street kids as a menace, particularly after the August 1984 murder of 16-year-old Cyril Wayne Horton, whose beaten body was found under an overpass. Three street kids were arrested in connection with his death.

Prompted by that incident, *The Oregonian* published a series on street youth, a mostly sympathetic portrayal that talked frankly about sex work and drug use, noted the prevalence of sexual abuse as a reason for kids to leave home and included interviews with staff from Outside In and other youth-serving agencies.

"Although these young people come from all walks of life," the series concluded, "there are common threads in the factors that lead them to the streets. Most are, in the blunt words of one Portland social worker, 'the runaways and throwaways' of society."

"I WOULD SIT WITH A KID FOR AN HOUR, JUST TALKING ABOUT THE MEANING OF LIFE. ONE NIGHT, WHEN I WAS WALKING MY DOG, I THOUGHT: WHAT A WONDERFUL JOB. I CAN'T BELIEVE I GET PAID TO DO THIS."

JOHN DUKE

These teenagers were different from the long-haired,love-beaded, acid-dropping, adventure-craving, anti-establishment youth who flocked to Charix a decade earlier.

"In the early 1980s we started to see homeless youth," says John Duke, who worked at Outside In for 29 years, starting as an emergency services caseworker. "The timber industry was dying. All over Oregon, people who used to have full-wage jobs that could raise a family with just a high school degree couldn't do it anymore. So they drink, start doing meth, beat their kids. We saw kids escaping from that."

BY 1987, THE AGENCY SAW MORE THAN

700 street youth

ANNUALLY

More and more, those escapees sought refuge at Outside In. And the agency, under administrative coordinator Kathy Oliver, began to learn what they needed.

Oliver joined Outside In in 1980 as a grant-writer, charged with rustling up funds for the perpetually cash-starved agency. But she couldn't help looking at the big picture, including the youth who gathered in Portland's downtown blocks, untethered from home or school or any community except the "street families" they hitched together for survival.

The agency began doing on-street outreach and opened a basement drop-in center specifically for homeless youth: a shabby but safe place where kids could stay warm, make phone calls, brush their teeth in the cramped bathroom sink and talk with staff, if they wished, about their lives.

"It seemed to me the two things kids really needed were, of course, housing, but also the means to be able to sustain themselves," Oliver says. Outside In—with a chain-smoking, frank-talking youth program director, Barbara Sussex, on board—began to provide both. With money from the county and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Outside In launched a pilot program in 1985, housing 10 formerly homeless youth in a low-cost downtown hotel; the kids were supposed to come to Outside In for daily case management sessions.

"That was kind of a mess at first," Oliver recalls. "We put all the youth on one floor. They did everything you could think of: sold drugs out of their rooms, did sex work, set fire to a room. We then changed the model to scatter youth, not have ten of them in one place at one time."

Case-managed youth could remain in hotel housing for 90 days, but others needed shorter-term shelter. In 1987, Outside In and Burnside Projects, which served homeless adults, partnered to open Streetlight, a 30-bed youth shelter funded by the county, the city, the Oregon Community Foundation and United Way.

It was a no-frills facility: a cavernous space on SW Washington Street fitted with showers, toilets and rows of green canvas cots. A television. A couple of second-hand couches. And it was immediately clear that providing a place for street youth to sleep (the shelter was not open daytimes), while beneficial, was not nearly enough.

"The kids that came there—they needed to turn their lives in a different direction quickly. There were not enough services for them," says DeMaster, the one-time Outside In counselor who was, by then, executive director of Burnside Projects. The two agencies also learned that a high percentage of the youth were lesbian, gay or bisexual—kids who'd come out, then been kicked out of their families.

At the same time, Outside In developed a dual-track employment program in partnership with Portland State University and backed by the governor's Youth Coordinating Council:

one team of kids worked on trail maintenance in Forest Park, while another group produced a newsletter, "Street Times," and ran a speakers' bureau.

It was a small experiment—just three girls and 13 boys ages 16 to 19, all of them current or past alcohol or drug users. None had graduated from high school; five had earned GED certificates, and the others had dropped out anywhere from sixth to 11th grades. They worked in small teams with a supervisor, putting in 15 hours a week at minimum wage.

"We are really trying to teach them some things like coming to work every day on time, solving problems by talking and not hitting people, and how to work cooperatively and take supervision," Oliver told *The Oregonian* in December 1985.

After five months, seven of the 16 were still clearing trails or producing "Street Times"; four had landed full-time jobs or returned to school. Two quit the program due to lack of housing; three were asked to leave.

Those numbers, and an analysis of the program, appeared in a report co-authored by Oliver and a Portland State University associate professor of urban studies. After describing the program as a small-scale victory—"the youth were able to establish 'alternative' family situations that served the need to support each other on work responsibilities and job performance"—the report noted that meaningful work was just one strand of the complex tangle of street kids' needs.

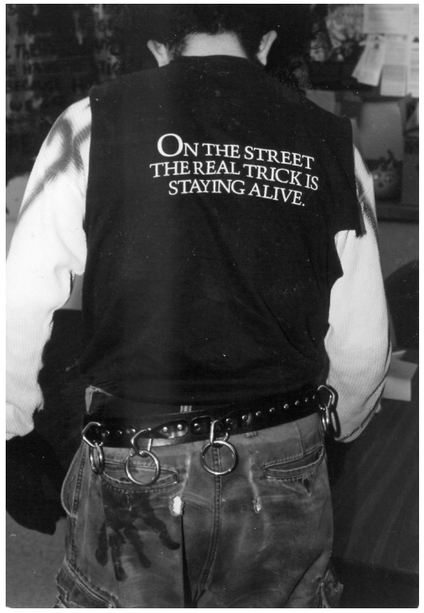
What was missing, the report said, was a handclasp among organizations, a coordinated merge of resources for street youth that included housing, food, health, mental health, education and employment. It would take another decade—and months of contentious meetings—to even approximate that vision.

Meanwhile, Outside In's youth department grew, in numbers—by 1987, the agency saw more than 700 street youth annually—and in reputation. Sussex, an impassioned advocate for street youth, presided over a staff that included VISTA volunteers, Jesuit volunteers and several full-time emergency services workers and case managers—among them, a former Catholic nun, a future Peace Corps volunteer and a one-time *Washington Post* reporter.

Duke began volunteering in the street youth program in the late 1980s, leading jam sessions and drum-making workshops in the battered basement. Soon he became an emergency services case manager.

"When I was first doing the music training, I was afraid," he recalls. "Is this kid going to pull a knife on me? Is this going to be dangerous? That didn't last long. I felt like this was what I was supposed to be doing. I felt like I had come home when I started to work at Outside In.

"My job was to hang out with kids in the drop-in center, check them into the shelter, give them bus tickets and food vouchers. The youth drop-in space was dank and crusty, but we painted it and decorated it. We let people paint graffiti on the walls. It was lively and fun."



Beneath those quotidian duties was a goal of authenticity that guided every Outside In encounter, from the drop-in center to the "board room" (a second-floor space with a few beaten couches) where youth program staff gathered each Friday morning for a meeting that began with a ritual—often intimate—check-in.

"People would talk about anything they were experiencing that would cause them to be less than pure and present in the discussion," Duke says. Then staff would debrief about encounters they'd had with youth during the week or discuss operational issues. They made decisions by consensus.

In some ways, Outside In's youth staff mirrored their clients: while street kids formed families bound by necessity and roiled by emotion, youth department employees forged their own network, a tightly wound group with its own routines, values and tensions.

An occasional exercise, employed when there was conflict between two staff members, involved both employees standing face-to-face, palms pressed together, each saying what scared them most about the other. "It shows you the level of emotional intensity and truth that was part of the daily work we were doing," Duke says.

That raw intensity shaped interactions with youth, as well. "I would sit with a kid for an hour, just talking about the meaning of life," Duke says. "One night, when I was walking my dog, I thought: What a wonderful job. I can't believe I get paid to do this."

An Outside In brochure from that time, featuring the agency logo of a dotted "i" (resembling a person) standing inside the round doorway of an "O," described the employment project and emergency services, an education program with Portland Community College and transitional housing, now up to 17 beds.

"For some kids, life on the street is a last resort," the brochure said. "But it doesn't have to be a last stop."

While building up the youth program, Oliver was also bringing a new level of accountability and structure to the place she came to call, fondly, that "odd little agency." When she arrived at Outside In, the five coordinators were still wedded to a collective model of leadership; some staff members also served on the board.

Kay Sohl, who began to do audits for Outside In shortly after Oliver arrived, remembers an organization that compensated in spirit for what it lacked in order. "People were crammed into that old building; there was no quiet place to work. There were clients in and out of all the spaces. If you needed to go to the bathroom, there was a long line.

"So many of us had come through the women's movement and really were pretty deeply committed to the collective model. So it was hard to let go of that and say, 'We do need to have a structure.'"

Oliver and the other coordinators took stints answering phones and managing the front desk; each was paid $6.50 per hour. "But at some point, we did need to specialize," Oliver says. "We needed the doctor to just focus on being a doctor." Gradually, Oliver took on more administrative functions.

By Outside In's 20th anniversary, marked by a lively street dance, the agency had cause for both celebration and concern. Outside In's operating budget was half a million dollars, drawn from public and private sources. At the same time, local and federal budget cuts threatened the now-thriving youth program.

And with every step toward convention came an equal measure of pushback. When Oliver sought to become a United Way member agency—aware that Outside In needed a funding source besides Multnomah County—other staff feared that cozying up to United Way would co-opt the agency's radical stance.

Ultimately, pragmatism ruled: Outside In needed a stable, perennial stream of funding, and United Way was one avenue to secure it.

"At every point in our history, when there was major change, there were people who struggled with that," Oliver says. "I thrive on change. I really like it."

Good thing. Because in the summer of 1988, Outside In was on the cusp of a new controversy—one that would thrust the "odd little agency" into a national spotlight. ✹

Youth department clients Colby and Miah jumping on beds in Outside In's on-site housing, a program that eventually grew to include 27 units—with some apartments for HIV-affected youth and youth with babies—in the agency's new building.

OPINIONS AND NEEDLES

"WHY DID I FIGHT SO HARD TO OPEN THIS PROGRAM?...GIVING [PEOPLE] STERILE SYRINGES WAS HELPING TO SAVE THEIR LIVES, BUT IT WAS ALSO GIVING THEM A MESSAGE: 'HERE'S STERILE EQUIPMENT THAT WILL ALLOW YOU TO INJECT SAFELY. WE THINK YOUR LIFE IS WORTH SAVING.'"

KATHY OLIVER

On June 10, 1988, a New York Times headline announced, "Drug Addicts in Portland, Ore., to Get Free Hypodermic Needles." Seven years earlier, a wave of disease—cases of pneumonia, clusters of purplish skin lesions—began rippling through gay male communities. "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals," *The New York Times* reported in July 1981. The disease, first called GRID (gay-related immune deficiency) and later dubbed AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) provoked panic, prejudice, activism…and silence on the part of the Reagan administration; the president didn't mention AIDS publicly until 1985, when pressed by a reporter about the lack of medical research funding.

By 1986, health officials estimated that one million Americans had already been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. At the time, the disease was a death sentence. And IV drug users, who could contract or spread the virus through needle sharing, were among the fastest-growing groups of AIDS victims.

For Oliver and Outside In, there was an obvious, rational response—especially after two young, pregnant women, both patients of the clinic, tested positive for HIV. One was an IV drug user; the other had a partner who injected drugs. Both women opted for abortions.

A syringe exchange project, in which IV drug users could swap used needles for clean ones—both reducing the threat of HIV exposure and keeping dirty needles out of the litter stream—made sense from a public health standpoint and an ethical one. Refusing to provide sterile syringes, Oliver told *The New York Times*, was saying that "these people are expendable, that you'd rather have them die of AIDS than give them needles."

Sohl, who did Outside In's audits—initially, with a calculator and handwritten ledgers—had also become a consultant and confidante to Oliver. "I remember when Kathy told me she was going to do the needle exchange. I thought, 'Oh, my God, the shit is going to hit the fan.' And indeed it did."

The backlash was swift and intense. And the announcement of Outside In's needle exchange program, it turned out, was a year premature.

"I started calling around the country to see who else was doing a [needle exchange] program, and nobody was," Oliver recalls. "I decided: Well, that shouldn't be reason not to do it. AIDS is one disease that is preventable, and we know exactly how to prevent it."

Outside In already supplied clients with condoms—free for the taking in a bowl in the waiting area, even taped inside Valentine cards that read, "Share this with the one you LOVE."

But needles were a different story. The 1988 *New York Times* article noted that "President Reagan's AIDS commission has identified contagion among addicts as the epidemic's new battlefront," but elected officials and the general public regarded free syringes as a thumbs-up to self-destructive—not to mention illegal—behavior.

It was, after all, the era of "Just Say No"—Nancy Reagan's contribution to the White House's renewed war on drugs, a program of "zero tolerance" policies and harsh sentences that swelled the number of people imprisoned for non-violent drug offenses. In New York, Mayor Edward Koch advocated using the military for drug control and suggested the use of "prison tents" in the Nevada desert to incarcerate offenders when there was no room in state prisons.

Syringe exchange clients received a kit that included cotton balls, bleach, alcohol swabs and contact information for drug treatment and AIDS services.

Oliver held firm. "[Needle exchange] seems like the sensible thing to do," she told *The New York Times*. She'd even found a funder for the project: the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), which ponied up $67,000 for a pilot syringe exchange project, with a research component aimed to determine whether supplying clean needles helped to stem the spread of AIDS.

Money wasn't the only obstacle. The agency's insurance company, St. Paul Fire and Marine, threatened to cancel Outside In's policy if Oliver started a needle exchange. "We tried to reason with them. They thought what I was doing was immoral," Oliver recalls. "It took me two years to find insurance. I finally found a company out of California. I was fighting everyone on this; people said I was enabling drug users. It was probably the biggest ordeal of my life."

During one meeting, the director of Oregon's alcohol and drug treatment programs leaned across a table and yelled that he would never allow a needle exchange to open in his state.

BY 1995, THE AGENCY WAS exchanging 80,000 syringes ANNUALLY.

Neighbors of Outside In threatened to sue; one outraged caller said that giving needles to drug users was like providing rapists free rooms in which to rape. The owner of a nearby apartment building wanted Oliver to promise, in writing, that she would be on call to pick up any used syringes he found around the premises.

The syringe exchange landed the agency in headlines across the country: the *Los Angeles Times, The Baltimore Sun, The Washington Post.* Producers of the nationally televised "Today" show flew the media-shy Oliver to New York to debate a narcotics prosecutor. Locally, she faced off against members of the right-wing Oregon Citizens Alliance.

The arguments echoed ones that had dogged Outside In since its inception, when opponents claimed that providing services to "alienated youth" would just goad them to leave home. Oliver's response was similar to agency founder Charles Spray's back then: a needle exchange could not only save lives now, but could be an avenue to trust—and ultimately, treatment—that might change lives in the future.

AIDS had also prompted a new candor about sex at Outside In, along with innovative efforts to educate clients, older and younger, about risky behavior and "safe sex" practices—including the use of condoms and dental dams for oral sex—that could protect against HIV transmission.

"AIDS required us to speak frankly about sex, about all kinds of sex," Duke, the youth case manager, remembers. "We did a lot of work around HIV prevention, street outreach and education," including Guerilla Theatre, a troupe of Outside In youth who performed original skits about safe sex and AIDS prevention to school and community groups.

It took Oliver a year and a half to secure new insurance and sufficient funding for the needle exchange—the county finally came around with a $50,000 grant, in addition to the money from amfAR. By then, Outside In's was no longer the country's first such program; others had begun in Tacoma, Wash., and New York.

The Portland program opened quietly in November 1989—board members and staff feared that a splashy opening, with television cameras rolling, would scare users away—and served nine clients in its first three days. They had to be 18 or older, with visible needle tracks. Each received a kit including a clean syringe, cotton balls, bleach, alcohol swabs, condoms and information on AIDS and drug treatment programs.

"We think the ultimate answer is for people to stop taking drugs," Oliver told *The Oregonian*. "We also accept the reality that they're not all going to now. And we don't believe that people should have to die in five or ten years for a mistake that happens today."

The backlash didn't quit. Less than a week after the first clients swapped used needles for clean ones, a letter to the editor, from Union Gospel Ministries, Inc., appeared in *The Oregonian*, claiming Outside In was "abetting in felony drug abuse. Clean needles or not, intravenous drug abuse is dirty, deadly and wrong. The program is sending a misleading message that IV drug abuse can be safe."

Funding struggles continued. The White House banned the use of federal funds for needle exchange services, a prohibition that continued even after President Bill Clinton's election in 1992. Multnomah County became a steady funder, but each year Oliver had to beg City Council—sometimes, with other staff or needle-exchange clients in tow—to allocate money for the program.

Outside In did have national support from prominent AIDS researchers and physicians. Public health officials, including Multnomah County's Gary Oxman, backed the needle exchange. Leaders of First Unitarian Church allowed the program to operate in a building on their property.

Several research studies, including two in the *Journal of the American Medical Association,* found no evidence that needle exchange programs increased drug use or prompted people to start using drugs. Syringe exchanges earned nods of approval from the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the National Academy of Sciences and the National Institutes of Health.

By 1995, the agency was exchanging 80,000 syringes annually.

By 2017, that number topped one million—approximately 150 syringe exchange clients per day, ranging in age from 18 to 83 (the mean age is 27). Haven Wheelock, the agency's injection drug user health services program coordinator, recently ran some statistics: More than half the users of the syringe exchange were not born when the program started. "They've never known a world without it," Wheelock says.

"Why did I fight so hard to open this program?" Oliver wrote in the local *Street Roots News* on the syringe exchange's 25th anniversary. "I had worked on social justice issues my whole life, for people who are marginalized and considered expendable, for animals who have no voice…Giving [people] sterile syringes was helping to save their lives, but it was also giving them a message: 'Here's sterile equipment that will allow you to inject safely. We think your life is worth saving.'"

Portland State University professor Hugo Maynard and Kathy Oliver collaborated on the research component of the needle exchange to determine if the program would help to stem the spread of AIDS among the city's IV drug users.

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THE ART OF ADVOCACY

The billboard was visible for blocks: a 4-by-12-foot rendering of the American flag, with stars in the shape of missiles and red stripes that appeared to be leaking blood. For a month in the spring of 1991, that image—painted by artist Tom Miller in protest of Operation Desert Storm and the Gulf War—stood atop Outside In's building at SW 13th and Salmon.

It wasn't the first time, and it certainly would not be the last, that Outside In stepped into the tendentious realm of politics. From its start, the agency positioned itself as a counterpoint to mainstream thinking; where others saw strung-out hippies in need of a bath, the founders of Outside In saw young people challenging moribund authority and seeking meaningful connection.

Under Oliver's leadership, the agency took bold, often unpopular stances on behalf of its clients. The needle exchange program grabbed the largest headlines, but daily life at Outside In was filled with opportunities to "walk the talk" of an agency committed to human dignity, inclusion and justice.

Before anyone was counting the number of street youth who identified as lesbian or gay (and before B, T or Q became part of the acronym for queer identities), youth program director Barbara Sussex launched a support group for lesbian street youth aged 20 and younger. The agency's pioneering embrace of sexual minority clients and staff continued over subsequent decades with the development of a trans health resource center, an ID project to help people change the gender designation on their driver's licenses and passports, and Queerzone, a program of activities for LGBTQ young people.

"THAT'S WHAT I'M PROUD OF—THAT OUTSIDE IN WAS A POLITICAL AGENCY. WE TOOK STANDS ON THINGS. WE WERE NOT NEUTRAL."

MAUREEN BRENNAN

Outside In wasn't always queer-friendly. In the earliest days, when Spray, a white, cisgender man, was at the helm, lesbian and gay staff at the agency were as closeted as they were anywhere else.

Post-Stonewall—the spontaneous demonstrations in response to a police raid at a Greenwich Village gay bar that kick-started the gay liberation movement— that tone began to change. "In the late 1970s, waves of people began recognizing they were gay, and more and

more gay women came to Portland," remembers DeMaster, the former Outside In counselor who later led Burnside Projects. Her agency was just one of the city's cultural and social service endeavors headed by a lesbian.

Lesbians also ran the "anti-profit" Mountain Moving Café, A Woman's Place bookstore, and the Oregon Feminist Federal Credit Union. Outside In, with Oliver as administrative coordinator, joined that list. "There weren't that many other places where you could be out as a lesbian; that was important to me," Oliver says.

Outside In staff and clients, dressed in rainbow regalia, marching in the 2015 Pride parade.

Being out meant publicly confronting homophobia. When local United Way leaders wanted Outside In to be part of a promotional video, Oliver refused. "They called me down and said, 'Don't you know we fund you?' I said, 'Yes, I do. But as long as you're giving money to the Boy Scouts and they have anti-gay policies, I don't want to be part of helping raise money for that.'"

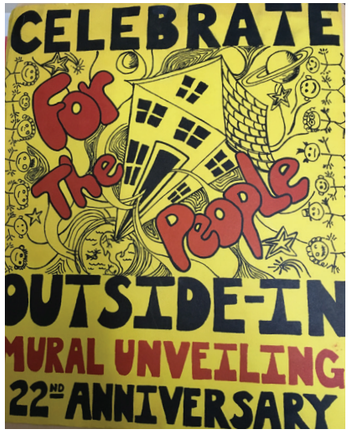
When the far-right Oregon Citizens Alliance boosted anti-gay ballot measures in 1992, 1994 and 2000, Outside In joined the opposition. An agency contingent—dressed in rainbow colors, hoisting the Outside In banner and drumming on plastic buckets—marched in each June's gay pride parade. At one point, Outside In banded with nearby neighbors to wrap the entire block in a yellow ribbon and declare it a "hate-free zone."

"So many of us had been radicalized by the Vietnam War, by the civil rights movement," says Pattie Ladd, who coordinated Outside In's medical clinic from 1981 to 1988. "We had models of activism, of how you make social change with integrity and creativity."

The agency's openness startled even some prospective employees. A VISTA volunteer, newly transplanted from the East Coast, recalls her 1986 interview with members of the youth staff. Sussex, the department's coordinator, said, "Hi, I'm a radical lesbian separatist, and if you come to work here, you can ask me what that means."

Four years later, Maureen Brennan applied for the position of youth program coordinator and wondered whether she should remove her second ear piercing for the interview. She left the earring in. She got the job.

"Maybe my first or second lunch in the downstairs counseling room, people were talking about how many tattoos they had," Brennan recalls. "Everyone [gay and straight] was talking



about who their boyfriend or girlfriend was. I almost choked on whatever I was eating. I was still just getting used to being out and proud."

Brennan had previously worked at the state Department of Human Services. In contrast to that buttoned-up environment, Outside In felt like "a bit of a utopia." Yet Brennan knew that others in the youth-serving world saw the agency the way some business-suited commuters regarded the street youth in Pioneer Square.

"We were seen as defiant adolescents. We did what others wouldn't. We stood for the underdog, trying to do whatever was possible to serve the underserved."

That commitment extended to staff as well as clients. When Claudia Schroeder, a housing case manager and German citizen, came to Oliver after just six months of work to confide that her visa would soon expire, Oliver paused for a moment, then said, "Well, let's take on immigration." Outside In successfully sponsored Schroeder for her H-1 visa; she worked there for a total of eight years, eventually earning her green card.

The agency's politics—emphatically anti-war, pro-choice and queer-friendly—drew employees eager to work in a place where they did not have to leave their convictions, or their identities, at the door. When Bill Bradford moved to Portland from Palo Alto in 1994, he agreed to serve temporarily as Outside In's fiscal manager, even though the pay, about $25,000 a year, was a significant step down from his previous salary as finance manager of a theater company.

"I fell in love with Outside In—just feeling like 'this is really the good work,'" Bradford says. "That this was important: saving people's lives, doing things nobody else would be doing. It was amazing, a dedication that went way beyond a job."

Sohl, the longtime agency consultant, describes Outside In as "an organization that tries really hard to live its values. It doesn't always succeed, but it tries really hard. I think that matters to people."

Agency archives are filled with evidence of Outside In's tireless advocacy. In one letter to the editor, Oliver argued against President Clinton's continuation of the ban on using federal funds for syringe exchange programs; in another, she criticized an MSNBC special for its claim that 100 percent of street youth were using heroin.

And when Oliver commissioned artist Joe Cotter to create a 93-foot mural that would wrap around the clinic building and extend up 13th Avenue, she did not censor the content. The painting depicted sex workers, injection drug users, homeless people and a person holding

Beginning in 1991, Outside In's rooftop became a billboard gallery for local artists whose images and text challenged militarism and promoted inclusivity.

a newspaper with a headline about the county de-funding social services. "I said, 'It can all go up,'" Oliver recalls. "I got a few complaints. I got more complaints about the billboard that was on top of the building."

OUTSIDE IN BANDED WITH NEARBY NEIGHBORS TO WRAP THE ENTIRE BLOCK IN A YELLOW RIBBON AND DECLARE IT A "hate-free zone."

For that project—"completely illegal," Oliver says, though the city never asked her to take the billboards down—Outside In invited local artists to submit designs. Throughout the Gulf War, the agency's rooftop became a forum for political protest art and a visual touchstone for Outside In.

The mural and the billboards were destroyed a decade later, along with the cluster of Victorian houses in which Outside In once made its home. But the agency's feisty, fighting spirit continues. Today, staff members proudly display the blue/pink/white trans flag or wear "Black Lives Matter" buttons. International Women's Day, March 8, remains an agency holiday.

And following the 2016 election, in the face of the Trump administration's anti-immigrant, homophobic and misogynist rhetoric, Outside In took a popular lawn sign created by three Portland women, blew it up to 15-by-15 feet and draped it in front of the building.

The banner resembled an American flag: cobalt blue corner, red and white stripes. "In our America," it read, "All people are equal; love wins; black lives matter; immigrants and refugees are welcome…women are in charge of their bodies…diversity is welcomed."

At Wilson High School in Hillsdale, where Brennan is now a guidance counselor, she keeps a photo of Outside In from the early 1990s: the brown clapboard house, the wrap-around mural and, balanced atop the old building, a bright orange billboard displayed during Fleet Week of the Rose Festival. It depicts a military ship overlaid with the crimson circle-and-slash symbol that means a universal "NO."

When high school students ask about the picture, Brennan smiles. "That's what I'm proud of—that Outside In was a political agency. We took stands on things. We were not neutral." She tells the kids: "That's where I became a social worker." ✹

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH

"WE HAD VOLUNTEER LAB TECHS, VOLUNTEER LPN SCREENERS. WE BUILT RELATIONSHIPS. WE PRIDED OURSELVES ON SETTING THE BAR HIGH. THE MEDICAL CARE WAS EXTRAORDINARY. SOME PEOPLE PAID, BUT WE DIDN'T TURN ANYBODY AWAY."

PATTIE LADD

In January 1995, Outside In's clinic won a $13,000 prize, an award from American Healthcare Systems honoring innovative programs aimed at the medically disadvantaged. Outside In had placed fifth among 68 clinics across the country. Less than two years later, the clinic doors were shut and its coffers were empty. Since the agency's founding as a "sociomedical aid station," the clinic—a hive of sparse exam rooms furnished with donated equipment and staffed by barely-paid or volunteer doctors and nurses—had provided primary care to people who couldn't, or wouldn't, seek medical help anywhere else.

A 1975 agency flier, tapped out on a manual typewriter, noted that clinic services included pregnancy testing, abortion counseling and assistance with birth control, as well as a preventive nutrition project. Two years later, the agency added a pediatric clinic to that list. By the end of Outside In's first decade, the clinic was providing primary medical care to 1,500 patients a year.

"It was really thought of as a place for white hippies," remembers Sandra Ford, a physician assistant. She, along with her colleagues, stethoscopes, exam tables and some patients, migrated to Outside In when the Fred Hampton Memorial People's Health Clinic—a project of Portland's chapter of the Black Panthers—closed in 1979.

While the client base downtown was younger and whiter than the People's Health Clinic site in Northeast Portland, Ford says, Outside In's doctors welcomed their new colleagues and the transition was easy.

The work was not. "I'll never forget the feel of a breast tumor, or a cancerous ovary, or a too-large liver," she says. "We saw everything from a run-of-the-mill rash to sniffles to life-threatening illnesses." She remembers a patient from Korea who brought homemade food to the clinic staff as a thank-you, and a woman with bipolar illness whose moments of grandiosity were delightfully infectious. "I loved her so much. She'd say, 'You don't have to worry about a thing. I've figured out how to get you a million dollars to run this clinic forever!'"

Jose getting his ear checked by Dr. Meghan Brinson in Outside In's Clinic.

Pattie Ladd, who knew Oliver from work both had done to combat domestic and sexual violence, came for an interview in 1981 at Oliver's coaxing. She was hired as clinic coordinator, drawn by the urgency of the work and by Outside In's upstart reputation.

"We were there to make people's desperate lives a little easier, or at least to keep them from dying on the streets," Ladd says. During her tenure, clients' needs nudged the agency in new directions. When Ladd learned that homeless pregnant women were showing up in active labor at emergency rooms, she wrote a grant to start prenatal services at Outside In and hired Zuky Sak, a nurse practitioner from Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) known for her deft clinical skills and her rebel's heart. She would, for instance, violate hospital rules and allow a woman to hold her stillborn infant.

Later, when Ladd realized that Outside In's clients lacked resources for referrals, she joined with nine other nonprofit neighborhood clinics and, with a $50,000 start-up grant from Multnomah County, launched the Coalition of Community Health Clinics. The coalition developed a referral list of specialists available on a rotating basis and a directory of community health services.

"We had volunteer lab techs, volunteer LPN screeners," says Ladd. "We had a pharmacy we put together with a lot of heavily discounted or free meds. We built relationships. We prided ourselves on setting the bar high. The medical care was extraordinary. Some people paid, but we didn't turn anybody away."

Most clients were poor, and it seemed absurd to attempt third-party billing for patients who didn't have an address. By November 1996, Outside In was unable to raise $50,000 to keep medical services operating. The county decided not to fill the funding gap, reasoning that the agency's patients could receive care at OHSU and other locations thanks to the new Oregon Health Plan.

Zarod Rominski, a one-time patient in Outside In's clinic in the late 1960s, had graduated from Antioch University in Seattle with a focus in whole-systems design; she was hired in the fall of 1996 as the agency's first associate executive director. "Within weeks of my arriving, we were faced with this immediate crisis of the clinic being shut down," she recalls.

But not for long.

Duke, moving from his youth case manager post to a half-time administrative role, worked with Rominski to convene meetings with dozens of stakeholders—other Outside In staff, local medical providers, business people, social service administrators and county

officials—in an effort to salvage the agency's medical services, particularly for the 2,000 young people who had nowhere else to go.

"We did a lot of outreach about health care for homeless youth and why this other alternative [the Oregon Health Plan] wasn't going to address their needs. Kids weren't going to go to OHSU and register," Rominski says.

What emerged from those meetings were new partnerships and modest infusions of money—a $4,000 grant from Multnomah County, in-kind services from OHSU's department of adolescent medicine—to bring primary care back to 13th and Salmon. At the same time, a naturopathic clinic, open three days a week and staffed by doctors and students from the National College of Naturopathic Medicine, became another option for Outside In's clients.

"It was a really good learning site for medical students and for residents," says Wayne Sells, a specialist in adolescent medicine at OHSU who worked with Outside In's clinic starting in 1997. He later became its medical director. At Outside In, future doctors were steeped in the realities of public health: If they prescribed medication for a homeless youth, could she get the medicine and store it safely? Were there more pressing concerns, such as securing shelter or sufficient food?

"The relationship with OHSU gave legitimacy to Outside In," Sells says, while physicians and students from the medical school "were able to get off our hill and get down into the community, providing care where those patients were. It was a beneficial relationship for both."

An acupuncturist, David Frierman, volunteered to run a part-time acupuncture clinic with a small pharmacy of herbal and Chinese medicine he subsidized himself. There were chiropractic services, too, and dental care from a Northwest Medical Teams International mobile van that parked in front of Outside In. "Our whole clinic has become a collaborative site," Duke told *The Oregonian* in 1997.

Not everyone shared the vision of a clinic for low-income and homeless patients that offered alternative medicine alongside conventional care. "I knew all those remedies and therapies could be quite expensive. I didn't think our people could afford to go alternative," Ladd remembers. "But I was wrong. I was a little bit behind the times."

"WE WENT FROM SERVING 2,000 HOMELESS YOUTH TO SERVING **7,000 poor people** [ANNUALLY]."

JOHN DUKE

Duke, who was earning his MBA in a part-time program, brought lessons from the business world—the clarity of a bottom line, the value of evidence-based practice, the aspiration and strategies to grow an enterprise—to his expanding role in the clinic. Gradually, his youth case management load shrank to two clients, then just one, until being clinic director was his full-time job.

Under Duke's leadership, the clinic pursued more partnerships and projects: working with the Centers for Disease Control on youth outreach to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, and with the New York-based Center for Health Care Strategies to improve health care access for homeless youth.

The most audacious change was to become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), which brought a huge infusion of funds along with a tangle of strings attached. For years, Outside In had shunned the idea of seeking federal dollars. Its longtime rebel stance combined with a fear that federal regulations would crimp the agency's values and practices, especially around abortion referrals, AIDS prevention and work with queer clients.

But Duke was persuaded by health care providers and administrators he met through the Oregon Primary Care Association that becoming an FQHC would provide Outside In with a large, steady stream of government funding to do more of what the clinic was already doing: providing essential care for people who had no other options.

"The FQHC program is an oasis that exists in the middle of government that is truly remarkable," Duke says. "The requirements are hard, but they are good. They really make you stretch. We became an FQHC in 2002. That was a point of transformation for the agency."

It was also a moment of soul-searching.

"When we applied for [FQHC status], I didn't think we were ready for it by any stretch," remembers Bradford, the finance director who worked for the agency briefly in the mid-90s, then returned in 2000. "We applied for it as a 'health care for the homeless' grant. When we got it, I thought: Oh, my God, now we have 16 major things to do here. I didn't know anything about Medicaid. We didn't know how to bill. It was a long, arduous learning process. But eventually medical billing became one of our strongest sources of income."

The FQHC money, which came from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), demanded new systems of documenting and reporting data. Bradford and

other staff attended trainings to learn to decipher the requirements. And because Outside In was operating outside the conventional clinical box with its acupuncture, naturopathic and chiropractic services, fulfilling the feds' requirements was an endless, brain-bending puzzle.

"The system wasn't designed for a funky homeless services agency that did things like syringe exchange," Bradford says. "We used a lot of naturopaths and alternative medicine, which was mostly unallowable by HRSA. From a simple reporting point of view, it was way more difficult than it would have been for a standard community health center."

By 2002, Outside In's clinic boasted a full-time staff of nine, a menu of conventional and alternative treatment, the FQHC designation and a $716,000 grant to go with it. An article in the *Portland Business Journal* noted that the clinic "has undergone a 180-degree shift since it was forced to close its doors in 1996."

From a cluster of spare exam rooms with borrowed equipment, the clinic grew to provide primary medical care, alternative medicine and acupuncture to 7,000 people a year.

That turnaround also meant an uneasy jostling from within. For years, the clinic had limped along financially, supported by the in-kind help of volunteer practitioners, a trickle of patient payments and administrative support drawn from the agency's other grants.

But the FQHC funds, along with the new revenue of third-party billing, flipped that equation. The clinic began to make money, enough to hire more staff and branch out with new, more visible services: mobile medical vans and a school-based health center at Milwaukie High School.

Patient demographics were changing, too: more people with severe mental health needs, more undocumented people, more patients who spoke Spanish. Suddenly the agency needed bilingual staff, along with pamphlets and signs in both languages.

"We went from serving 2,000 homeless youth to serving 7,000 poor people [annually]," Duke says. "From doing only acute care to comprehensive primary care, employing eleven doctors and a number of alternative providers, generating $6.5 million a year."

Even as the 2008 recession slammed Oregonians—workers lost health coverage along with their jobs, while corporate donations and grant budgets withered—Outside In's clinic grew to fill the need, using federal stimulus dollars to build new exam rooms and space for counseling. And with the advent of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, most patients were now covered by insurance.

That shift caused friction in the fast-growing agency: Which programs deserved accolades and attention? Which ones were reliant on the others? Who commanded higher salaries? Who got more space?

"There were differences in culture," says Duke, reflecting on nearly three decades of work in both the youth program and the medical side. "The youth department is like paddling a canoe through a swamp. There's danger. You have to be alert. But there's time to think, stop, look around, breathe.

"The clinic is like working in a full-on waterfall. The energy is fast. You're seeing hundreds of people a day. It requires a different kind of organization."

There's another way Duke likes to describe Outside In, a metaphor that captures both programs even as their populations and their needs diverged. "Outside In was a little factory of health that set itself up on a river of suffering. It didn't try to change the river or stop it or move it. It just dealt with the people who came in." ✹

CULTURE CLASH AND COLLABORATION

In May 2000, Oliver added a few penciled notes to a memo—sent by a media consultant to her and the directors of three other youth-serving agencies—about an upcoming meeting with editors of *The Oregonian.*

"Database," she scribbled in the margin. "X in case mgt, hsng, day prog."

The reason for meeting with the newspaper's editors? To tout the one-year anniversary of a collaboration among Outside In, Janus Youth Programs, New Avenues for Youth and The Salvation Army Greenhouse.

A jointly written press release trumpeted the collaboration as "…a success story. It's also remarkable proof that working together is an effective approach to serving the community." Behind the scenes, though, agency directors refer to the "remarkable collaboration" as something more like a shotgun wedding.

"OUTSIDE IN WAS A PIONEER IN THE CONCEPT OF HARM REDUCTION AND LOW-BARRIER SERVICE. THEY HAD MUCH TO TEACH US. I LEARNED [FROM OUTSIDE IN] THAT YOU NEED TO LISTEN TO THE YOUTH YOU'RE PROVIDING SERVICES FOR AND INVOLVE THEM IN HELPING YOU FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY NEED."

DENNIS MORROW

The first blast came in 1998, when a 40-page study produced by two business-connected groups, the Citizens Crime Commission and the Association for Portland Progress, slammed the city's youth-serving agencies by claiming they lacked accountability and coordination.

The report also faulted the county for underfunding homeless youth services.

Leaders of those longstanding agencies, including Outside In, were outraged by the castigation and its source. Who were these business groups, dictating how social services for youth should be delivered? The controversy felt epic: a battle over turf, dollars, expertise and ideology.

From the start of Outside In's drop-in, housing and case management program in the early 1980s, the agency had held to a non-judgmental, "no barriers" approach, a belief that youth needed a safe place and nurturing relationships in order to make choices about their lives.

Nina Narelle was 19 and homeless when another kid on the street told her about Outside In, a place where she could get a free peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a small collapsible can opener.

Narelle, who'd left a dysfunctional home and crashed with relatives in Virginia before making her way to Portland, had previously sought help from faith-based organizations. "I had to exchange my willingness to listen to their religion for my food. That was mildly offensive," she says.

John Duke (center), an emergency services caseworker, held Friday afternoon jam sessions in front of the building, open to any street youth who wanted to jump in on percussion or guitar.

Outside In was different. "I didn't feel shamed. I didn't feel condescended to or treated like I didn't know what I was doing." When a caseworker convinced Narelle to open a checking account, then offered to accompany her to U.S. Bank, she wondered at first about his motives. "I thought: That's weird. What's the scam? It struck me when we were in the bank: He's actually just here to be supportive. He's just showing up for me.

"That's part of what makes Outside In so special: the idea that you're not someone who needs to be fixed…that we believe in your agency and our job is to support you in that journey and make sure you have the resources you need. That's deeply radical."

Around the time Narelle was wandering the streets of Portland, Sean Suib was also knocking on the doors of Outside In, hoping for a job at an agency he deeply admired. Suib had done a brief stint in the construction trades before taking an on-call post at the Streetlight youth shelter. But Outside In had a magnetic appeal. "It had this sort of edge," he says. "It wasn't an organization that was too caught up in the rules of how you do the helping. It honored the relationship. It met people where they were." Once Suib persisted his way to a job as an emergency services case manager, he eagerly joined the agency's ethos.

"I worked with a young woman who was very at-risk, 16, engaged in prostitution and heroin addiction. I remember showing up at Outside In at six in the morning, scraping her out of some doorway, throwing her into my pick-up truck and taking her to drug treatment." Thoughts of liability—that he was an adult man, driving a drug-affected teenaged girl in an unofficial vehicle—never crossed his mind. "We were real people helping real people, without barriers," he says.

Schroeder, the German-born case manager who garnered her H-1 visa with Outside In's help, also recalls those days, when youth program workers operated more from instinct than from guidelines. "A client would knock on the door and you'd shout upstairs: 'John, are you there?' We took youth hiking, drove them to Cape Lookout in borrowed cars. We did home visits, a lot of things that were out of the ordinary. We were very, very client-centered."

Schroeder recalls one "incredibly angry young woman" who, during case management sessions, would dig her fingers into the arm of a couch. Over time, she shredded the upholstery. Schroeder never tried to stop her. "Now, I would understand that [behavior] was due to past trauma; I would work on self-soothing and personal containment techniques.

"What was challenging was the intensity of the trauma that youth had gone through…and not knowing if what we were doing was effective."

Even Duke—who in his early days at Outside In felt astonished that someone would pay him to have probing conversations with 17-year-olds about the meaning of life—acknowledges that the agency's system, limited by available funding and county rules, wasn't set up for youth to truly gain independence.

"We had an abysmal success rate," he says. "The transitional housing program lasted 90 days. Put someone into an apartment for 90 days, and they had to be self-sufficient?"

Brennan, youth program director from 1990-97, recalls an era of haphazard record-keeping—case notes that might include a scribbled "met with client," or emergency shelter reservations with carbon-paper copies that a youth was supposed to carry across town.

As county contracts began to demand more accountability, youth case managers, under Brennan's supervision, had to step up. "The bottom line was: If you can't document this, we're not going to get funded and you may not have a job," Brennan says.

Dennis Morrow became executive director of Janus Youth Programs the same year Oliver joined Outside In. He says both agencies, in the 1990s, were still guided by their counter-culture origins and a profound commitment to people who were marginalized. "These

organizations weren't designed around a strategic plan. We were making it up as we went along."

Enter New Avenues for Youth, an agency founded in 1997, funded by prominent members of Portland's business community and tied to the groups that produced the blistering report on youth services.

"The origin of New Avenues was a very right-wing business coalition that hated having homeless youth on the street and also hated Outside In's attitude of acceptance for the kids," says Sohl, the longtime agency consultant. "They wanted an agency that would 'knock some sense into those kids' and get them cleaned up. It was a culture clash."

"The board that founded New Avenues had a lot of arrogance," agrees Suib. "They were very paternalistic—the idea that if a kid wanted a sandwich, he'd have to sit through counseling." Suib eventually left Outside In to work for New Avenues—"I felt like I was crossing a picket line," he says—and has been its executive director since 2012.

The report, blandly titled "Services to Homeless Youth in Portland," was seen "as a kind of hit job," Suib says. "But the report was mostly right. The services at Outside In were amazing. But even those of us who were on the front line at the time worried about duplication of services. There was no coordinated effort. To me, that report was more scathing to the county than to any organization."

The county, stung, responded. Commissioners agreed to boost funding for homeless youth by more than 50 percent—the total pot of $2.5 million came from the county, the city and the federal government—and invite the four agencies (Outside In, Janus, New Avenues and Salvation Army Greenhouse) to apply for particular services and portions of that funding. A committee of business leaders, community advocates and government officials would evaluate and score the proposals.

But when two members of that committee changed their initial scores—so that Outside In lost a significant part of the contract while New Avenues gained—Oliver blew the whistle. *The Oregonian* detailed the debacle. The county decided to scrap the proposals and begin again.

"The county had the money. They said, 'If you want to play in the sandbox, you will play nice,'" Morrow says. The county charged the four agencies with devising a system of coordinated services: emergency help, intake, education, employment, crisis shelter and longer-term housing, with some agencies focusing on younger adolescents and others on the needs of older ones.

THE COUNTY CHARGED THE FOUR AGENCIES WITH DEVISING

a system of coordinated services

The new system, commissioners said, should offer 24-hour-a-day services, improved screening, mental health and drug/alcohol treatment, smaller caseloads and more robust case management.

"[The county] hired a facilitator for us, and two representatives of each of the four agencies got together and hashed out a working agreement," recalls Heather Brown, who became Outside In's youth program director in the midst of the tumult.

"We found a way that we could all be at the table and worked out the components that are part of the homeless youth system today."

What emerged was the Homeless Youth Continuum, a multi-agency effort that would ensure a youth could enter anywhere in the system, with computerized tracking to let every agency view that youth's history of prior services and communicate about treatment and outcomes. Janus Youth Programs would operate two overnight shelters; New Avenues for Youth would offer day programs, case management and transitional housing for younger youth; and Outside In would provide similar services for older ones. Salvation Army Greenhouse would run a 24-hour assessment and access center.

"It wasn't a love-fest at the beginning," Morrow says wryly. "I remember the first three years of going to Continuum meetings: We'd all look at each other and go, 'Oh, crap, when's this thing going to be over?' But they kept making us come back. Then it clicked: This would be the best way to serve the youth we're serving. Everybody settled into their role in the system."

"It took a lot of trust-building and re-trust-building" among the four agencies, says Brown. "But we are so much stronger, and we leverage so many more resources, when we function as a system."

Within Outside In's youth department, the Continuum meant volcanic change. "We laid everybody off and had people re-apply for the position they wanted," Brown says. "We didn't want people to just switch over [to the new four-agency system] without consent. That was a hard time: working through the redesign, having to set up systems, helping bring people through that."

Eventually the Salvation Army left the partnership, replaced by the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA). Today, the four Continuum agencies acknowledge that their collaboration calls for ongoing adjustment. "There are definitely points of strain and change, and it's hard to navigate," says Brown. Occasionally, the old wounds resurface. At the same time, it's clear that the agencies have influenced each other.

Dallas at Outside In's 2015 GED graduation. In the agency's education resource center, youth can study Japanese and life science, hone skills in the writing lab, prep for GED tests or work to recover high school credits.

"WE WERE REAL PEOPLE **helping real people,** WITHOUT BARRIERS."

SEAN SUIB

Caseworkers at NAYA refer youth with medical needs to Outside In's clinic, and the two agencies collaborate to send community health workers to visit youth in some of the outlying neighborhoods where the only affordable housing can be found. Kanoe Egleston, program manager at NAYA, says Outside In's philosophy has rubbed off. "I appreciated their ability to meet youth where they're at. That's the approach we strive for in dealing with young people."

"Outside in was a pioneer in the concept of harm reduction and low-barrier service," says Morrow, of Janus. "They had much to teach us. I learned [from Outside In] that you need to listen to the youth you're providing services for and involve them in helping you figure out what they need."

Even Suib at New Avenues, once Outside In's nemesis, credits his former employer for his approach to helping street youth. "Everything I know about how to do this work came from my experience at Outside In," he says. And despite the "tough love" rhetoric of New Avenues in its early days, "the practice that happened when they opened the doors looked very similar to what was happening at Outside In."

At the time of that May 2000 meeting with *Oregonian* editors, the Continuum partners were still new and wary collaborators. A few days later, the four agencies' directors published an op-ed piece in the paper, as much aspiration as explanation, outlining the logistics and the heart of their mission.

"What has this partnership meant for the young people these agencies serve?" they wrote. "A homeless youth can enter through any of our doors, at any time, and get appropriate help. That youth will not be lost." ✹

MOVING IN, MOVING UP

Oliver kept counting the zeros. The check had come in the morning's mail, in a plain, windowed envelope with the address of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the corner. It was only a few weeks since Outside In had sent a letter of inquiry to the fledgling foundation; surely, Oliver thought, any response would arrive in a larger envelope, with a cover letter and a packet of paperwork.

Inside the envelope was a seven-figure check. Oliver stared. Still shaking, she phoned Outside In's accountant. "We just got a million-dollar check from the Gates Foundation, and it's made out to me," she told him. His response: "Will you marry me?"

It wasn't the first large donation toward Outside In's ambitious, first-ever capital campaign, which aimed to raise $5 million for a desperately needed new building—that one had come from the Meyer Memorial Trust, for $750,000—but the 1999 Gates Foundation money was a generous validation of the project, one that would coax future grantors to pony up.

Outside In had long since outgrown the cluster of dilapidated houses, leased from First Unitarian Church, that housed the clinic, youth program and administrative departments. The "board room"—a shabby second-floor space with several couches—wasn't large enough to accommodate the entire board. The needle exchange was housed separately, and staff members often had to walk around the corner to consult with one another.

"People were working in offices where they had umbrellas over their computers because the ceiling was raining down; they'd see rats run across the floor. The day program was stuck in a basement. The clinic was always crammed for space," recalls Rominski, the agency's associate executive director.

As Outside In was spilling from its cramped quarters, First Unitarian Church was looking to expand. "The church let us know that at some point, they wanted to tear down those houses and build," Oliver recalls. With some pro bono assistance from Tom Clark, principal of Clark/Kjos Architects, the agency calculated how much space would be ideal and considered relocating to an existing building, but couldn't find anything suitable in the neighborhood.

"THE MOVE DID CHANGE US—I THINK, IN A GOOD WAY. WE ATTRACTED A DIFFERENT KIND OF BOARD MEMBER. WE HAD ROOM FOR PROGRAMS. GROWTH COMES WITH ITS OWN SET OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS. BUT THE TRADE-OFF IS HUGE. YOU CAN DO SO MUCH MORE FOR CLIENTS."

KATHY OLIVER

The new building, seen from SW 13th Avenue, combined industrial materials, odd angles and a four-story mural in a structure the architects intended to look "unfinished"—a metaphor for the works-in-progress lives of Outside In's clients.

"One day I got a call from [Oliver] and she said, 'We want you to start working full-time on the building design, and we're going to pay you,'" Clark recalls. Then she told him about the Gates Foundation check.

First Unitarian Church had agreed to lease the agency a parcel of land on the same block—a 60-year lease with a possible 30-year extension. For the first time, Outside In would own its home. For the first time, the agency could design a space that would accommodate its burgeoning programs, instead of trying to shoehorn staff and clients into a warren of overcrowded rooms.

"I knew what kind of building I wanted," Oliver says. "Something that was not institutional: cheerful, welcoming, innovative, with lots of public art."

Not everyone shared that vision. Some staff worried that a large, brand-new, custom-designed building would compromise the agency's grass-roots vibe. "People said, 'We're losing our spirit; we're giving into corporate standards; it'll never be the same,'" Rominski says. "I heard that and tried to be sensitive to those concerns, but I believed the agency could grow and keep its spirit."

Others wondered whether a sleek new building would alienate the agency's clients. "We thought it would be too institutional, that it would make them feel like they didn't belong," Duke says. "But what we discovered—and this was my prejudice, too—was that poor people don't like ratty places. They like nice stuff, too. To be respectful to the people you serve, you should make your place as nice as you can make it."

Oliver, other staff and board members began to work in earnest with Clark: holding brainstorming sessions with youth and adult clients, contacting local artists, hustling for in-kind donations of materials and time.

Clark notes that his firm's design tried to preserve the essence of Outside In's former space. "Those old buildings had a leftover quality, a thrown-away quality, an away-from-the-mainstream quality," he says, while typical government or educational buildings "don't have that grit and street cred. We created the building so it seemed unfinished. That seemed to match the kids, who are also unfinished. It seemed like a good metaphor."

That metaphor, made manifest, resulted in a 32,000-square-foot, L-shaped building with a courtyard facing 13th Avenue. It skewed internal geometry (not all rooms are rectangular) and sported industrial materials like corrugated metal, exposed beams, brick finish and mismatched tile. To shield the west-facing building from summer heat, the architects designed

a four-story perforated-metal sunscreen and commissioned a young artist, Michael Hensley, to enliven it with a giant mural.

That mural—an abstract, bright, Chagall-like design depicting ladders, birds and buildings—became a source of contention between Outside In and the city, which claimed it was a "sign" and therefore violated zoning rules. The agency insisted it was art.

"None of us wanted to fight about this," Oliver recalls. "I wasn't going to give it up, and [the city] wasn't going to approve it. In the end, I just put up [the mural]. I moved homeless youth into housing on the top two floors, and then I'd won. Then the city sent someone with an application for a waiver for a very large sign, and told me they were also waiving the fees, and to just sign here, and I did."

In the end, Clark's firm donated $80,000 of design time; real estate developer Vern Rifer volunteered as project manager. Checks arrived from the Kresge Foundation ($250,000) and the Paul G. Allen Foundation ($100,000). An elevator company provided and installed equipment for half-price. The Portland Development Commission helped, as did Housing for People with AIDS. Some individuals added donations to the total.

"I THINK OF THIS NOT AS THE BUILDING OUTSIDE IN BUILT, BUT AS **the building the community built."**

KATHY OLIVER

"I think of this not as the building Outside In built, but as the building the community built," Oliver wrote in a press release inviting members of the media to a "sneak preview" of the new digs. "We did not take out a loan; rather, 100 percent of funds needed were given."

"[Oliver] was pretty ambitious," Clark recalls. "She kept saying, 'We'll find the money.' We got a lot of in-kind donations, and we kept finding ways to value-engineer interesting and durable solutions."

The fundraising effort itself changed the agency, even before the building was complete. "Now, instead of dealing with a $2 million budget, we had this $5 million project, quite a complex undertaking by itself," recalls Bradford, the former finance director. "The capital drive did give Outside In a lot more visibility. [Before], Outside In was thought of as this funky little place with the billboard on top at 13th and Salmon. This appeared to give us credibility in town.

"And there was a lot of pride that came with the new building. We were showing it off, doing tours with friends, colleagues, neighbors, strangers."

A bedroom in Outside In's on-site housing for youth, updated in 2017 with a $10,000 donation from IKEA

Haven Wheelock, currently the injection drug user (IDU) health services program coordinator, recalls her first glimpse of Outside In, from the freeway side of the street, during a visit to Portland. "I was blown away by the beauty of it. [I thought], 'How is this possible, that they've created this?' I remember walking into the clinic and how welcoming the space was."

For the first time, most agency programs were gathered under one roof. A light-filled two-story atrium welcomed clinic patients and youth clients. A commercial-grade kitchen served three meals a day to homeless youth; a basement conference room was roomy enough for board meetings and staff trainings.

The third and fourth floors held 27 units of youth housing: clusters of individual bedrooms with shared common rooms, kitchens and 24-hour, on-site staff, along with private apartments for youth in transition to independent living. Several of those apartments were designed for youth who had babies or children; others were reserved for youth with HIV/AIDS.

After a weekend of hauling office furniture around the corner, Outside In staff held a "Home at Last" grand opening celebration on February 21, 2002. A senior program officer from the Gates Foundation, as well as the chair of Multnomah's Board of County Commissioners, were among the throng touring and applauding the new space.

Architecture and design critics called the building a winner. "The utilitarian structure creates a raw, urban dynamic that is reflected indoors as well," declared a writer for *Just Out*, Portland's LGBTQ newspaper. "The colorful, offbeat tile floors convey a message that this is not a conventional clinic or social service agency."

The building won design awards from *Modern Healthcare, Healthcare Design Magazine, Northwest Construction Magazine* and the state of Oregon. It received a 2002 award from the American Institute of Architects/Housing and Urban Development for "community building by design." The judges called it a "vibrant urban collage" with "fantastic integration of art and architecture."

The building was even featured in a museum. From September 2016 to February 2017, the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York held an exhibit of socially responsible design projects that exemplified the theme, "By the People: Designing a Better America." Curators included photographs and text about Outside In's building and the community-centered process that helped create it.

But for those on the inside, the new building was less than perfect. For one thing, a design envisioned with growth in mind had become, almost overnight, too small. "It felt great, at first, pulling people into one building. But within six months, we'd pretty much run out of space," recalls Bradford.

There were other challenges: the building's unconventional interior design meant that sound—including one-on-one conversations with clients or confidential discussions among staff—leaked from one room to another. Noise from the second-floor youth day program spilled down to the clinic's waiting area.

"We found ourselves trying to deal with security issues: How can we lock this area off, but also make it accessible?" Bradford says. "How can we have billing conversations, or medical conversations, if people can hear us?" At first, the needle exchange was in the midst of the clinic; an IV drug-using client might come and dump a bag's worth of used syringes on the floor to count them, in front of patients waiting for well-baby checks or flu shots. Clients congregated in the courtyard. "People were hanging out there, sleeping there, stealing bicycles and bringing them there. It started to be a hard thing to manage," says Duke. "The proximity of the youth department and the clinic became more fractious: mothers with little kids near a drugged-out, dangerous-looking 6-foot-2 homeless youth."

The building's L-shaped footprint included a courtyard with benches, planters, dog kennels and rotating panels of public art.

Within six years, the staff had more than doubled, reaching the 100-person mark in 2006 and continuing to grow as Outside In added new services and expanded existing departments: a human resources staff, a development office, a director of facilities.

In a *Portland Business Journal* article, board member Tony Johnson voiced the quandaries that came with such rapid change. "The board now wrestles with such questions as the size and scope of its services…whether the agency is too big to be as nimble as it needs to be."

"The move did change us—I think, in a good way," says Oliver. "We attracted a different kind of board member. We had room for programs. We had, for the first time, a permanent home in Portland. We were able to attract funding sources we weren't able to have in a small, funky, rented building.

"Growth comes with its own set of issues and problems," she says. "You're more bureaucratic. I don't like that. I don't think anyone really likes that. You have to have more policies. It's not as free-flowing as it is when you're a five-person agency.

"But the trade-off is huge. You can do so much more for clients." ✹

GIFTS AND GROWING PAINS

"I ALWAYS TRIED TO EMPHASIZE THAT ACCESS TO INCREASED RESOURCES MEANT INCREASED PROGRAMMING, INCREASED STAFF, INCREASED NUMBERS OF YOUTH THAT COULD BE SERVED. PEOPLE SOMETIMES HAD A NOTION THAT YOU COULDN'T DO THAT BUREAUCRACY WITHOUT LOSING YOUR SPIRIT. I BELIEVED THAT WE COULD. I BELIEVE WE DID."

ZAROD ROMINSKI

The 200 people who strolled up Broadway had dressed for the occasion: men in suits and ties, women in evening wear, shawls draped around their shoulders in the cool October night.

Flushed from a fundraising dinner at the Hilton Hotel, the crowd—which included filmmaker Gus Van Sant, a 125-member high school marching band and a phalanx of local movers and shakers—beamed as the marquee outside the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall came into view.

"*Elephant,*" it announced. "A benefit for Outside In."

Van Sant, the local filmmaker known for his legendary shyness as well as his moody cinematic dives into various subcultures, received a standing ovation as he entered the theater. Then the audience hushed for the national premiere of *Elephant,* a film based loosely on the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School.

The movie had already earned two honors—best director and the Palme d'Or, the highest prize—at the Cannes Film Festival. And when the night's receipts were counted, Outside In reaped $250,000 from the event.

Outside In had long had a mutual love-fest with Portland's independent artists, filmmakers and musicians. In the early years, a music benefit for the agency's clinic, with string quartets playing Bach and Mozart, carried a ticket price of $3 ($1.50 for low-income patrons). Local artists painted the 93-foot mural that wrapped around the original clinic building and extended down 13th Avenue.

Van Sant, an alumnus of Portland's Catlin Gabel school, was certainly Outside In's highest-profile friend in the arts world. Beginning with *My Own Private Idaho,* he dedicated several film premieres to benefit the agency. Later, his friendship with director Todd Haynes inspired Haynes to do the same with premieres of *I'm Not There* and *Carol.*

"[Outside In] is small and it's local," Van Sant explains. "The subjects of my films often have characters who might have been part of Outside In."

That October 2003 strut up Broadway also signaled a new chapter in the agency's development: no longer a scrappy "adolescent" organization with a counterculture vibe, Outside In was now a legitimate player in the big leagues of social services, with federal funding, major philanthropy and an increasingly professionalized staff and board.

Rominski recalls the first ripples of that change. "When I came on board, it was like the agency was really ready to begin taking itself more seriously on another level. It always took itself seriously in providing services to clients. But now it was ready to take itself seriously as an organization."

Oliver with actor James Franco (left) and director Gus Van Sant (right) at the 2008 Portland premiere of "Milk," a film about the pioneering gay activist Harvey Milk. The movie screened at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall as a benefit and 40th anniversary celebration for Outside In.

Outside In's early fundraising efforts were small, improvisational events that gleaned several thousand dollars at best. Sometimes they happened with no agency input at all: in 2002, a network of bicycle messenger firms held a rally and brought the agency an envelope stuffed with $1,500 in cash; some years later, a group of lesbian/gay scuba divers donated $1,000 from their "Diving for Life" benefit.

Kelly Anderson became Outside In's director of development in 2002, the same year the agency moved into the new building. The capital campaign had already raised Outside In's profile; Anderson's job was to build on that momentum, seeking philanthropic gifts, diversifying the agency's funding base and refining how Outside In explained itself to the world.

"We had a large group of grass-roots supporters," she recalls. "I had people who gave ten dollars a month and were committed to the work we were doing. I built a board fundraising committee and sought matching gifts from a foundation. What people need in order to give to an organization is to understand the impact of their gift. I often felt like I was the translator to the community," rendering social work jargon into language that could seize the hearts—and wallets—of potential givers.

The *Elephant* premiere was the splashiest event Outside In had ever planned: corporate and individual sponsors, a pre-show dinner at the Hilton, rented searchlights, a red carpet and a violinist who played as people exited the theater. Anderson kept track of attendees and followed up with direct-mail pitches, one of them written by an actor who appeared in *Elephant*. The idea was not only to raise funds, she says, but also to "connect the community more to Outside In."

"THE SUBJECTS OF MY FILMS OFTEN HAVE CHARACTERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN PART OF OUTSIDE IN."

GUS VAN SANT

At the same time, at the turn of the millennium, the board was changing, too.

David Gregg, an accountant, knew about Outside In's hippie origins from friends in Northwest Portland. He did some of the agency's first audits. When he joined the board in the early 1990s, he recalls a group of well-intentioned people who tried—but didn't always manage—to attend monthly meetings. "The existing board members were not the movers and shakers in the community," he says.

Tony Johnson, a commercial loan officer and manager for U.S. Bank, recalls walking into his first Outside In board meeting in 1990 and being met with a blanket of stares. "Everyone at the table turns around and looks at the suit: Why is he here?" At the time, board members came primarily from the social service arena: directors of nonprofits or staff of state and county agencies. A few attorneys. Some activists.

The campaign to fund the new building, and the growth it spurred, both demanded and attracted higher-profile, well-networked board members: women and men who worked for property management companies and health care systems, public utilities and community colleges. "It was a different set of eyes and ears on the problems," Johnson says.

Those connections helped feed a "virtuous circle," says Anderson. "Outside In began to fit more into the social structures of nonprofits and, through that, had increased access to resources and dollars, which translated into more staff."

More money and stepped-up professional standards meant more complexity at every level: the documentation required in the youth department and the clinic; the spreadsheets involved in managing the agency's budget. Shifting trends and priorities in human services called for new ways of structuring and explaining the agency's work. One year, funders might want evidence that Outside In caseworkers were addressing sexual health with their clients; the next year, addiction, education or employment might be the emphasis. Budgeting was a perennial rollercoaster of dread and reprieve.

"Every year, we'd go into our early budget retreat and say, 'Well, we have this huge deficit and don't know how we're going to fill the hole,'" recalls Bradford. "And invariably, we'd end up with a surplus at the end of the year. It was incredibly complicated. I would normally

keep track of a spreadsheet with 50-60 funding sources. But we made it work. Our audits were invariably clean."

Some staff pushed back against professionalization and the burdens that came with it: faster-paced work, a higher level of scrutiny, more meticulous accounting of services and time. They missed the freewheeling intimacy of the old days at Outside In.

"I always tried to emphasize that access to increased resources meant increased programming, increased staff, increased numbers of youth that could be served," Rominski says. "People sometimes had a notion that you couldn't do that bureaucracy without losing your spirit. I believed that we could. I believe we did."

It was the old, uneasy straddle between "straight" and "street." And it surfaced again, writ large, when Anderson initiated a "rebranding" initiative in early 2009. The agency's website, she thought, was geared more toward clients and other social service providers than to the foundations and individuals whose gifts might support Outside In. The jagged, jumpy typeface that spelled "Outside In" on letterhead and brochures looked dated.

What's more, Anderson thought, the agency's tagline, "together on the edge," might even turn off potential givers.

With Oliver's nod, Anderson formed a committee that included staff, board members and a community member to fashion a makeover. Anderson had already changed the "Outside In" logo color from a sharp "reflex blue" to red, to match the building's palette of warm colors. But this project would result in a more profound redesign.

"I wanted something that represented not just the youth services piece but also the clinic, something that didn't look like barbed wire," Anderson says, "a logo that reflected who we had grown to be—this place of healing and movement and transformation."

When board member Gail Snow, who owned a design firm and had a background in public relations, e-mailed Anderson a few options for a new tagline, it was "the point of return" that struck a chord. The agency found a designer to create a new logo: a quartet of spring leaves, in increasing sizes and gradations of green, with "Outside In" and the new tagline in a tranquil, neutral font.

Snow's firm also redesigned the agency's website, tailoring the message more toward donors, past and potential, than to clients or other social service providers. It was Anderson's idea to include stories of adults and youth who had changed and thrived with the help of Outside In.

Some staff and board members liked the new look. The "point of return" tagline "implies that you're in a place that will lead to better times for you," Johnson says. "You're returning from being down or being ill or being addicted or being homeless."

But for others, the rebranding was one more indication of the agency's slide toward the mainstream, an abandonment of its rebel origins. "I was never a fan of the new logo and the change from 'together on the edge,'" says Gregg. "That was the perfect definition of Outside In and its culture: we were over here on the edge, fighting together, in a context of strength."

AS THE AGENCY ENTERED ITS fifth decade, THERE WAS NO GOING BACK

Privately, some staff snickered about the leaf logo, saying it reminded them of an ad for hand lotion: "Outside In: now with soothing aloe." Anderson remembers the period as a contentious time. "The rebranding project was a difficult project," she says, careful with her words even a decade later. "There were a lot of people who had different feelings about the images. For me, it had to do with: What is our strategy and goal? How do we make the fantastic work people are doing here authentic to the community?"

The new tagline called Outside In a "point of return." But as the agency entered its fifth decade, there was no going back: the once-upon-a-time collective with the $100,000 budget was now a multimillion-dollar enterprise with the access, opportunities, tensions and costs that come with rapid change.

Outside In's mission—to meet the marginalized, without judgment, and be a partner in their growth—was a through-line from the early days. But the way Outside In functioned as an organization, how the agency told its story and where it sought financial support: those elements were as startlingly different as the tidy leaf logo was from the restless typeface that spelled "Outside In" on the front of the building.

"There's a constant tension" in the agency's ethos, says Duke, the former clinic director who once carved drums with homeless youth in the basement drop-in center. "Are we selling out, or are we advancing the cause? Are we effecting change or are we compromising our values? I think that's a healthy tension."

In 2013, Outside In picked up a $5,000 donation from Lady Gaga's Rose Garden concert; it was the agency's support of LGBTQ youth and adults that drew the megastar's attention. "Gaga played her hits, she wore her clothes," reported *The Oregonian.* "But time and again, she came back to her core message: It's great to be you, whoever you are." ✹

HEROIN AND HARM REDUCTION

"WE STARTED THIS PUSH AGAIN TO GET LEGISLATION PASSED SO WE COULD PROVIDE NALOXONE. THE DRUG-USING COMMUNITY REALLY SAW OUTSIDE IN FIGHTING FOR THEIR HEALTH."

HAVEN WHEELOCK

The ink was barely dry on a new state law allowing broader access to naloxone when Haven Wheelock began teaching Outside In clients how to use the lifesaving drug. Wheelock, the agency's injection drug user health services program coordinator, had been hoping and advocating for the law change since her arrival at the agency in 2006. At least three times a week, clients asked her about naloxone (also called Narcan), which can quickly reverse an opioid overdose and allow a victim to breathe normally.

But only medical professionals were permitted to access and administer the drug. The best Wheelock could do was to teach rescue breathing and "overdose response"—that is, stay with the person who has overdosed and call 911 immediately.

"It was a nightmare…I talked about it in meetings at the county from the time I started here: People are overdosing; we should give them medicine so they don't die," Wheelock recalls.

After intense lobbying from the agency, in conjunction with the Multnomah County Health Department, Governor John Kitzhaber signed the new law—which allowed addicts, family members or friends to administer the drug without civil liability—on July 9, 2013. Wheelock began training clients and distributing naloxone kits that afternoon.

After seven months, she had taught more than 629 staff and community members to use the medication; after 15 months, that number was up to 902. More significant, the number of opioid overdose deaths in Multnomah County was down—from 86 in the year before Outside In began naloxone training to 61 in the year after. It's rare that a drug use statistic can be traced back to a single place or person—but since Wheelock was the only person in the state conducting naloxone trainings for the first ten months after the law passed, it's safe to say that the drop in opioid deaths was largely due to Outside In.

Drug use, and the appropriate response to it, had been a constant—and contentious—aspect of agency life since the beginning. For Outside In's founders, clients' use of marijuana, LSD or pills was not "the problem," nor was abstinence the obvious solution. Rather, drugs were part of a complex picture—part counterculture rebellion, part youthful experimentation, part escape—that demanded equally nuanced responses.

Physician Charles Spray, who founded Outside In as a "sociomedical aid station," explained to *The Oregonian* in 1969, nine months after the agency's opening, that medical services were an entry point to engage youth in changing their lives—including their drug use, if they wished.

"We are available to help them get into a school program, or back into a more conventional living pattern if that's the direction they feel they want to go, and they know we're not in it just to solve a drug problem, but we're in it primarily to help them," he said.

For police and city officials, including a skeptical mayor and city council, that sounded like a thumbs-up to—or at least, a failure to condemn—illegal and self-destructive behavior. Twenty years later, when Outside In opened the syringe exchange program, the backlash sounded familiar. Wasn't the agency just enabling people with addictions to continue using?

By then, the stakes had soared. AIDS was on the rise, the virus was spread through blood and other body fluids, and a dirty needle could be a death sentence. Oliver and Outside In were resolute: drug users were human beings who did not deserve to die for their mistakes. The agency recognized that AIDS was a community health problem, a risk not only for clients but for those clients' needle-sharing companions, sexual partners and unborn children, who could contract HIV in utero.

Outside In won that battle; though Oliver struggled for years to secure stable funding for the syringe exchange, the program was heavily used, ballooning from 80,000 needles swapped in 1995 to a million in 2017.

But the controversy over clients' substance use continued, as the nationwide war on drugs accelerated during the Reagan and Bush administrations and the ban on federal funding for syringe exchange programs continued even under Clinton.

The mainstream response to drug use was punishment, condemnation and incarceration. Outside In rejected those harsh measures; drug use by homeless youth and adults, the agency believed, was a behavior often rooted in poverty, inequity, and abuse. Drugs were clients' attempt to self-medicate their way out of those problems. Addiction was a disease, not a choice or a character flaw.

At the same time, caseworkers recognized that drug use was killing their clients, both quickly—if they contracted hepatitis or AIDS—and slowly, through the physical and psychic ravages of a long-term substance addiction.

"The agency really went through a transition in its attitude toward drug use," recalls Rominski. At the time, case managers accepted street youth use of alcohol and drugs—from marijuana to methamphetamines—as inevitable. A nonjudgmental approach, they argued, was key to building trust with clients and helping them move gradually toward healthier choices.

For Haven Wheelock, coordinator of Outside In's health services for IV drug users, harm reduction means "being kind and providing tools."

902 people trained

TO USE NALOXONE IN 15 MONTHS

"Then we had a couple of incidents happen—there might have been a death of a youth that was drug-related—and I thought we needed to address this," Rominski says. Outside In and other youth-serving agencies began to partner with DePaul Treatment Centers, a long-time substance use treatment program that had been open to youth since 1985.

Initially, staff members were wary. DePaul stressed sobriety, and Outside In's caseworkers feared an inflexible "just say no" approach would chase away their young clients. "But both agencies began to find ways to work together, to modify approaches without alienating youth," Rominski says.

"We were educating DePaul staff about who these kids were; they were educating our staff about how to deal with drug use and abuse. It was a really important piece of work."

Outside In's contribution to the conversation was its belief in "harm reduction." It advanced the idea that while stopping drug use was a worthy long-term goal, it was equally important to address a client's current circumstances and try to minimize harm by offering clean syringes, stable housing, employment or education, medical attention and—through counseling—a gradual exploration of the reasons behind that person's substance use and its impact on their life and future.

When a 2001 MSNBC special on homeless youth suggested that 100 percent of youth on Portland's streets used heroin and that that was a primary reason for their homelessness, Oliver wrote an emphatic retort that appeared in *The Oregonian.*

"The primary reason youth are homeless is because of abuse in the family," she wrote, acknowledging that "drug use by homeless youth must be better addressed…there are gaps in services, particularly in the areas of treatment and mental health treatment."

Over time, a subtle but significant shift happened in Outside In's view of drug use—"from 'Oh, yeah, that's just part of street culture' to 'That's a really difficult and harmful part of street culture, and maybe we can help with that,'" Rominski says.

Today, Outside In operates Street RISE (Reaching Independence through Self Empowerment), a program of substance abuse services for youth ages 17 to 25 who live in permanent

supportive housing. RISE, funded largely by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), includes mental health treatment, life skills and job training, along with support groups, Saturday recreation activities, movie nights, drop-in acupuncture and coffee/discussion sessions.

The program, hip to the 21st century and its GenZ clients, uses text messaging and social media to connect, send appointment reminders and post announcements. It also uses a trauma-informed approach: the recognition that substance use is often a survival mechanism for youth who have grown up in chaos, violence and poverty, and that any treatment must address that trauma along with the youth's resilience.

"It's understanding that the folks we work with have experienced a lot of shit," Heather Baucum, RISE case manager, explains bluntly when she tells new employees about the RISE program. "Many folks who've gone through trauma have gone through big institutions—foster care, juvenile justice—that have continued to re-traumatize them. We don't want to do that…They're survivors. It's important to focus on the things they are doing well—with respect, compassion and mutuality."

And then there's heroin. In 2000, a *Washington Post* article reported that no region of the country was having a deadlier struggle with the drug than the Pacific Northwest. By 2011, it was the leading cause of drug-related deaths in Oregon, with 85 deaths in Multnomah County alone that year, a 63 percent increase over the year before. "It's like a tidal wave," State Medical Examiner Karen Gunson told *The Oregonian.*

The scourge hit home: in the summer of 2012, Outside In lost seven clients of the syringe exchange program to opioid overdoses. "We started this push again to get legislation passed so we could provide naloxone," Wheelock recalls. She says that action not only yielded results—the new 2013 law—but also strengthened clients' trust in the agency. "The drug-using community really saw Outside In fighting for their health."

The syringe exchange program, formerly a one-woman operation with Wheelock at the helm, now has three full-time staff. In addition to providing clean syringes and naloxone training, the program offers free testing for HIV and hepatitis C. In 2014, Multnomah County gave Outside In the Public Health Partner Award in recognition of that work.

New research on brain development and epigenetics—how experience becomes coded into our biology and passed on through generations—underscores what Outside In has believed for half a century: People who use drugs are people first, with complex histories that led to their current behaviors.

The needle exchange program, launched amid controversy in 1989, now provides more than a million clean syringes to clients each year.

Today, most people understand addiction as a disease, not a moral failing. The SAMHSA website includes a guide to trauma-informed care. And practices that once put Outside In on the controversial margins are now the norm, at least in urban centers; there are more than 300 syringe exchange programs throughout the United States, and several cities, including Philadelphia, are considering establishing safe injection sites for IV drug users.

To Wheelock, harm reduction has a simple definition: "being kind and providing tools." She is reluctant to talk about her job's most painful moments, when kindness and tools aren't enough, "the days of sitting with staff who are grieving the loss of a client." But she's eager to share stories of success—such as strolling through downtown Portland and having a former client call out, "Hey, Haven, I got a year clean!" Or when a woman visits with her baby and says, "Without this agency's help, we wouldn't be here."

"I had a client come in recently," Wheelock says. "He'd been harassed by the cops for jaywalking. He said, 'Haven, do you care if I just sit here, because this is the only place I get treated with kindness.' That's a huge win." ✹

LOST AND FOUND

"IF YOU DO THIS WORK FOR ANY AMOUNT OF TIME, IT'S GOING TO CHANGE YOU. IT IS POWERFUL WORK, AND IT IS GOING TO MAKE YOU A BETTER VERSION OF YOURSELF THAN YOU THOUGHT POSSIBLE."

JASMINE PETTET

Each year, around International Overdose Awareness Day at the end of August, staff and clients of Outside In gather in the agency's courtyard. Against the hum of freeway traffic, they light candles, play music and talk about the ones they've lost. The leaves of a bronze tree sculpture bear the names, their birth and death dates: Zeken Barker, 2/10/84–1/13/10; Alec J. Bates, 11/2/88-10/7/12; Jesse Preedit, 4/23/92-11/11/14.

In 50 years, the agency has mourned dozens, perhaps hundreds, of clients. They died from overdoses, from suicide. Some were murdered. The agency has lost beloved staff and board members, as well: to AIDS, to cancer, to accidents.

In a diary Oliver kept from 2001 to 2015, she chronicled some of those losses:

> ***2/10/03:*** *A young woman (age 19) in our housing program was murdered. She was strangled by her partner. They had a 4-month-old baby. Very traumatic for staff and clients.*
>
> ***1/27/06:*** *Lara Clinton died last weekend. She was a case manager here for about 6 years. She was 38 years old. Such a loss.*
>
> ***7/29/12:*** *Michael Evans was shot by the police last night. He's dead. Age 23. A client of the clinic. On Methadone, turning things around for himself, and now he's dead.*
>
> ***3/10/14:*** *Client committed suicide Sat night. Hung himself in a shower at the Janus Youth Shelter. We lose several clients per year, but we never get used to it.*

It was equally anguishing when street youth were the perpetrators of violence. In 2002, *The Oregonian* reported on a practice called "taxing," a brutal form of street justice that included beatings, kidnappings and robberies. The following year, a 22-year-old woman was beaten, stabbed, set on fire and left to die by the east edge of the Steel Bridge as punishment by her street "family" for making a false allegation against one of them.

Every day at Outside In gave staff harsh glimpses of the damage the world can wreak on a person. Clients of the youth program and the clinic had experienced physical and sexual violence, abandonment and neglect, poverty and racism. Between 30-40 percent of homeless youth were LGBTQ; some had been kicked out by their families, then victimized on the street. Some clients had mental illness. Or nightmares. They injured themselves, or lashed out at others, with rage they couldn't explain.

Chuck Currie, now an ordained minister and director of the Center for Peace and Spirituality at Pacific University, recalls the emotional toll of working in Outside In's drop-in center in the early 1990s. "We were still seeing a lot of kids die from HIV/AIDS," he remembers. "We knew way too many kids who were murdered, who were prostituting themselves, who were very addicted to alcohol and drugs. The turmoil they went through hurt my soul."

Long before social service professionals used the phrase "secondary trauma" to describe the effect of working with troubled clients in crisis situations, Outside In staff and board members felt the unspoken ripples of that suffering.

It was apparent to board member Gregg the first time he visited, in the early 1990s. "You'd go into the room where the kids are hanging out—and in that case they were in the basement of one of the old buildings—and you could feel the sadness," he remembers.

That sorrow—and the urge to somehow intervene or fix or mediate it—was also what drew Gregg and others to be part of Outside In. "When you'd hear of somebody nearly dying, or having some tragedy, or a youth who came there salvaged from a terrible, abusive situation, it would ring another chime: I've got to keep doing this."

In Outside In's early years, financial struggles—at both the agency and personal level—were another source of anxiety for staff. "Funding was always in question: Would we stay alive?" remembers former youth program coordinator Brennan. "At times, it was a set-up for resentment: People would say, 'Okay, I'm making a choice, I'm taking less in pay and I'm doing this job,' and sometimes it created pressure for folks. I always knew I couldn't count on lengthy stays [of employees]."

Outside In staff developed an ad hoc response to the routine stresses and periodic tragedies of their work: they'd troop to a nearby pub on Friday afternoons to toss back a few beers and defuse the tension with unfiltered venting, dark-humored jokes and occasional flirtations.

Daily, youth department employees—working in close quarters, with relatively low caseloads and a shared lunch break—found ways to let off steam. They crumpled paper balls and lobbed them at the ceiling fan. They bounced a basketball in the cramped concrete "yard" behind the building. They went on semi-annual retreats, to the coast or the mountains, and staged goofy talent shows.

Staff appreciations were a ritual of the group's Friday meetings, a pay-it-forward practice in which one worker would name someone they appreciated and give that person a gourmet cookie or a small gift. Then everyone would chime in with something positive to say: "I appreciate that Maggie made me laugh on Tuesday…I appreciate that she helped me figure out why that kid was mad." The following week, it would be Maggie's turn to give the appreciation.

"We tried to put in some self-care," Brennan says. "And we always knew we'd have a group to talk together."

"WHEN YOU'D HEAR OF SOMEBODY NEARLY DYING, OR HAVING SOME TRAGEDY, IT WOULD RING ANOTHER CHIME: I'VE GOT TO KEEP DOING THIS."

DAVID GREGG

Brennan left the agency for a few years to work as a child and family therapist. "I was burned out, I was done, I was tired of taking care of people," she recalls. But Outside In—the work, the people—tugged her. "I still spoke of 'we' at Outside In when I wasn't even there. It was still part of me. It was family."

In 2000, she returned to be the clinical supervisor of youth case managers, only to find that the "family" had changed. Because the drop-in center was open for more hours each day, and schedules were staggered to keep it staffed, youth department workers no longer shared a lunch hour. The tempo was faster. The demands for coordination and accountability—especially since the development of the Homeless Youth Continuum—were higher.

She describes an "upstairs/downstairs" dynamic, with the youth program and clinic pursuing disparate projects and goals. "In some ways, it felt like we were growing apart as programs," Brennan says. "And I didn't know everyone who worked there. People would mention someone's name and I'd say, 'Who's that?'"

Client needs were changing, too. "We were getting more developmentally delayed kids, more kids with mental health issues. We needed a psychiatrist. Outside in wasn't just a day program, with drop-in and a safe place off the street. It was becoming a full-fledged mental health agency."

Heather Brown, who succeeded Brennan as youth program director, tried to nurture staff with home-baked treats; she'd push a rolling cart from the drop-in center through the offices, proffering cookies or muffins in honor of "Be Nice Tuesday." What drew her to the agency in 1998—"this edge of advocacy, this bubble of really cool stuff going on"—continued to inspire her, even as the workload grew in pace and complexity.

For staff and youth, the anguish was twinned with resilience—moments of unexpected strength, resourcefulness or hope. For Brown, optimism was woven into the ever-shifting nature of adolescent development. "I guarantee these young people will be different in five years," she says. "We have potential to help them see what their options are in life, to see them as they're changing."

Brown recalls one late night, waiting for a youth who was taking an inordinately long shower. She and other staff just wanted to go home to their own showers, their families, their beds. But when the youth finally emerged, he said, 'Thanks for making my life just a little bit less shitty.'

"That's the statement of the work, at times. It's hard. And what we do matters. It matters for that person, in that moment."

Rominski, too, remembers times when she knew Outside In's work had impact: 'When a youth from the employment program went on to write plays that were produced off-Broadway, or when another came by with his pick-up truck, his baby son and an armload of blankets to donate.

"It was a combination of really tragic need—homeless youth, street people—combined with a resolute commitment to helping these folks out, no matter what," Rominski says. "There was comedy, there was camaraderie, a little bit like M.A.S.H., that TV show. Some dark humor, resolute-ness, and caring. A lot of caring."

Duke remained at the agency for 29 years, as a youth case manager and then clinic director, long enough to see two generations of clients and multiple waves of staff members. He noticed that people who came to work at Outside In were often in vulnerable passages of their own lives, seeking meaning, connection or a sense of home.

"They brought whatever they had to that job," he says. "The interaction of that person with the clients was this little magic thing. It was a gift in both directions. I saw clients have the opportunity to become beautiful, and I saw staff have the opportunity to be their best selves. Many, many, many times."

Today, it's easy to Google a trove of resources on secondary trauma and self-care. The Friday afternoon staff sojourns to drown stress in a pint of microbrew have fallen out of vogue; some employees are in recovery, and others just want to get home to their kids.

The agency has a more cohesive, coordinated response to loss. There is the annual memorial service by the courtyard sculpture—"I don't want a pretty tree; I want a powerful tree," Oliver told the artist—along with trainings aimed to minimize and defuse tragedy: coaching for staff and volunteers in CPR and first aid, fire extinguisher use, de-escalation strategies and, for extreme circumstances, the code that rings every land line in the building, an acronym of urgency. *EDNA. Emergency Developing Need Assistance.*

Each year around International Overdose Awareness Day, agency staff members light candles at the base of the memorial tree and remember the clients they've lost.

Still, clients' suffering sometimes erupts in speech or action. Agitated voices spill down from the lunchroom to the reception area. In the youth day program, the television is sealed to a counter so it can't be thrown. Clients—angry or exasperated or high or hearing voices—have kicked in the agency's door and yanked metal leaves from the memorial tree.

Only rarely does someone strike out at staff. But when that happens—as it did at the end of 2017, when a 22-year-old client in the RISE program brandished a knife and stabbed two clinic staff members, injuring but not killing them—the entire agency is traumatized.

"It was the worst incident in our 50-year history," Oliver says, her voice quieter than usual. "I don't think you recover from that quickly or easily." Oliver brought in a trauma consultant to meet with members of the management team, the board and staff; she worked to make sure the agency's Kaiser Permanente medical plan would cover employees who wanted more counseling.

But the incident left its painful mark, furthering the divide between the youth department and the clinic, straining relations between managers and line staff and prompting an effort to unionize the agency.

Today, talking about trauma—and the healthiest ways to respond—is a routine part of Outside In's orientation for new employees. Jasmine Pettet, an alcohol and drug specialist and member of the agency's grief and tragedy response team, tells the group frankly what awaits them: "It's our responsibility to acknowledge that sad things happen here," she says. "So much of what we do here is focused on holding hope for clients. We want to see people's lives change. It's a heartbreaker when people are just gone instead."

She pauses to let the new workers take that in. Then she continues. "If you do this work for any amount of time, it's going to change you. It is powerful work, and it is going to make you a better version of yourself than you thought possible." ✹

THE CHANGE-MAKER

"AS A WOMAN, AS A LESBIAN, I COULD SEE THE UNFAIRNESS IN THE WORLD. I THOUGHT: I CAN'T CHANGE THE WORLD, BUT I COULD PROBABLY MAKE A LITTLE DIFFERENCE AROUND ME, LOCALLY. THAT'S WHAT I SET OUT TO DO. NOT JUST FOR ME, BUT FOR PEOPLE FOR WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT A JUST PLACE."

KATHY OLIVER

Yes, that's her former border collie, Zaida, whose image graces the logo of the Virginia Woof Dog Daycare. But the only part of Outside In that actually bears the name of its longtime executive director is a barely discernible brass plate in the agency's courtyard, atop the kennels that hold clients' pets: "Kathy Oliver Dog Waiting Area."

That seems apt for Oliver, who has guided Outside In for 38 years not with strategic plans, sweeping visions or attention-grabbing charisma, but with a quiet, unwavering commitment to the agency's core belief: People matter. Listen to them. Help them get what they need to thrive.

Oliver came to Outside In as a grant-writer in 1980. She'd previously directed the city's rape relief hotline, while moonlighting in the radical feminist outrage that flared at the time. Pattie Ladd, who befriended Oliver in the late 1970s through their work to combat sexual violence, recalls drafting a list of demands for city officials that included this stipulation: "Men can't go out at night without permission from free women."

When Oliver joined Outside In, the agency was still loosely organized as a collective and funded primarily by Multnomah County. "My job was to try to get money for the agency," Oliver recalls. "I think I'm pretty good at finding money, and I enjoy it; that's exactly what they were looking for.

"I'd done a lot of direct work at the rape relief hotline—going out on calls, taking women to the hospital—and that was really draining. I wanted to stay working in social justice, but I did not want to do direct service anymore.

"I planned to stay [at Outside In] two years. I wanted to stabilize and diversify the funding base and then move on. But there was something about this agency that held me. I think in part it really is meaningful work. I could see that we make a difference in the lives of people."

From the start, Oliver had her eye on both the agency's mission and its structural integrity. Though she'd majored in philosophy

("Nobody would pay me to sit around and think," she deadpans), she knew enough about organizational dynamics to realize that having Outside In staff members also serve on the board of directors was a problem. So was the agency's reliance on money from a single county source.

Oliver sought to become a United Way member agency, a move opposed by some staff who feared it meant "selling out" to mainstream sensibilities. "The only way to get United Way funding was to have a bona fide board of directors who were responsible for the organization," Ladd recalls. "So we started recruiting people and kicking staff members off the board. It was hard going."

United Way refused to fund a collective; that became a spur to restructure job responsibilities and designations. With some reluctance, Oliver took on the title of executive director. "I had some qualms about that. I didn't want there to be a gulf between me and the rest of the group. I could also see that it would free up other people to do what they were good at."

In the 1980s, Oliver grew Outside In's youth program: hiring a coordinator, adding education and employment components as well as the basement drop-in center. She also established herself, inside and outside the agency, as a soft but insistent voice for justice.

She challenged United Way officers on their support of the Boy Scouts, which explicitly prohibited gay leaders. She battled elected officials, funders and a skeptical public to establish the needle exchange. She learned to talk to the press. "At first, I would memorize what I was going to say" at press conferences and other public engagements, Oliver says. "Talking to the media was something I didn't especially enjoy, but I knew how important visibility was for the agency." That was especially true when, in the midst of the AIDS epidemic and controversy over the needle exchange, producers of the "Today" show flew Oliver to New York to debate a narcotics prosecutor on live TV. "People were dying, and I thought I could do something about that," she says.

With Oliver's lead, Outside In continued to take bold stances: when it joined in the opposition to statewide anti-gay ballot measures, when it allied with neighbors to wrap the block in yellow ribbon and declare it a "hate-free zone," when it turned the agency's rooftop into a political billboard gallery during the Gulf War.

At times, Oliver's job demanded sheer stubbornness. She remembers walking into the office of former mayor Vera Katz to request city funding for the needle exchange program. Before Oliver could open her mouth, Katz stood up and began yelling, "No, no, no, no, no!"

"I thought, I can just walk out. But I didn't. I sat down and made my case, and she gave us some funding," Oliver recalls. "Every year, the city would eliminate the funding. Every year, I'd have to organize staff and clients to go down and testify to get it back."

Other times, negotiations with the city, the county or other agencies called for a kind of honey-coated grit. "[Oliver's] got this quiet demeanor," says Bradford, who retired in 2016 after 15 years as finance director. "People respect her a great deal. And yet, she can be tough. When she thinks something doesn't work, she'll say so."

"Kathy was a sort of conscience," says Jean DeMaster, who worked parallel with Oliver as executive director of Burnside Projects and a partner in the Streetlight youth shelter. "If you thought: Oh, it has to be done this way because of expediency, she'd say, 'No, it doesn't have to be done this way.' She was a guiding light. Fairness, honesty, cooperation, collaboration: those are things Kathy always stood for."

Nothing tested those values like the formation of the Homeless Youth Continuum. The hard-wrought partnership among four agencies began with a scathing report on homeless youth services and devolved into a whistle-blowing moment when Oliver successfully challenged the county's process for dividing services and funding among the organizations.

"That's when I first saw Kathy's incredible brilliance as a leader," says Kay Sohl, confidante and consultant to Oliver and Outside In for the past 40 years. "It was a culture clash. Kathy figured out how to finesse the situation. So many times, when adversity would come, it seemed like Outside In would outfox it."

Even the leader of her one-time nemesis, the business-backed New Avenues for Youth, has emphatic praise for Oliver. "Kathy is unyielding," says Sean Suib, who worked at Outside In before joining New Avenues, where he is now executive director. "Unyielding in her core beliefs and core values: it doesn't matter if it's not popular, or if they're not going to fund it, it's the right thing to do, and we're going to do it."

Wheelock had heard the origin story of the syringe exchange before she came to direct the program in 2006. She was drawn to the agency, in part, by Oliver's reputation for being a "fierce, strong woman." She views her boss as a mentor and an ethical compass. "I have so much respect for Kathy's tenacity," Wheelock says. "I have projects I'm working on now, hopes and dreams for this program, that are going to require me to have that strength. Yes, they're going to yell at me and say it's wrong, but I know it's right. I learned that from Kathy."

"I always took my cues from Kathy, from her tone," says Ladd. "She wasn't dramatic, she wasn't condescending, but she was committed. She's selfless, smart, strategic, eccentric. She just plugs away."

While working full-time at Outside In, Oliver earned her master's degree and then a doctorate in urban and public affairs at Portland State University. She also gained a reputation for quirkiness—her sparkly shoes and dry humor, her hobby of making cement sculptures, a habit of bringing her dogs to work. In the 1980s, there was Zoomer. Then she had Zaida. Now, there's Zed, who accompanies her to meetings, naps near her desk and even appears on the agency's website as "Z, the Executive Dog."

It was Oliver's passion for dogs, and her eagerness to think outside the box, that led to the development of Virginia Woof in 2005, the nation's only dog daycare center that is also a youth employment training program.

Oliver had wanted to start a small business for years, but the usual enterprises of nonprofit agencies—cafes and thrift stores—didn't interest her. "One day it just hit me," she recalls. "Dog daycare. The board was skeptical. They didn't think people would really pay for daycare for a dog. I knew they would."

With funding from the Meyer Memorial Trust and private donations, Outside In created a state-of-the-art center on West Burnside Street that can house up to 50 dogs, with filtered water, recycled rubber floors that are kind to animals' joints, even daily "report cards" on the dogs' behavior and activity. She hired David Stone, an Iraq war veteran who'd run away from home at age 15, to create a program that would furnish youth with dog training skills as well as the "soft skills" of customer service, conflict resolution and professional demeanor.

"Initially, they'd pick up the phone and say, 'Yeah?'" Oliver says. The youth learn to work as a team and accept constructive feedback while completing the six-week training program. In 2006, Virginia Woof was recognized as a "best practices" program by the U.S. Department of Labor. The center generates nearly $300,000 a year.

$300,000

A YEAR GENERATED BY VIRGINIA WOOF, DOG DAYCARE AND

youth employment training program

Oliver in front of the 1990 mural, painted on Outside In's original building, which included an image of herself and her beloved border collie, Zoomer.

A second business venture, Bespoke—a giant cargo bike that powers a smoothie-making blender—launched in 2014. "Most homeless youth have never had a legal way of making money and they have a fairly pessimistic attitude about ever being able to," Oliver told *The Oregonian* in an article about what staff wryly called the "social juice-stice" project.

Oliver, who recognized years ago that education was an essential stepping stone for street youth, also talks proudly of a program that includes GED classes, help with financial aid applications, and support—both monetary and emotional—for clients who enroll in college. She cherishes notes like the one she received in 2006 from a young woman who had left home at age 14, found help at Outside In and was about to graduate with honors from the University of Oregon.

"I want to give back and help street youth in the same way that you and your organization made a difference in my life. You made me realize that there are people out there who care," the student wrote. She invited Oliver to her graduation.

"What I remember are the successes," Oliver says. "Clients who send me a note saying, 'I know it's 10 years later, but I never said thank you, and I want to do that.' Or a client—we help them through housing, through college, we help them get a job, and they come back to Outside In as a member of the board of directors. That's happened a number of times.

"One reason I think Outside In has survived and done so well is that we have changed continually. I thrive on change. I really like it. I think it's important. The clients and their needs are continually changing; I want the agency to keep on changing, too."

What hasn't altered is Oliver's commitment to working with the most marginalized and the most misunderstood.

"I grew up in a fundamentalist church, where women were not treated well," she says. "I knew at an early age that that wasn't right. As a woman, as a lesbian, I could see the unfairness in the world. I thought: I can't change the world, but I could probably make a little difference around me, locally. That's what I set out to do. Not just for me, but for people for whom the world was not a just place." ✹

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

"THE PART THAT RESONATED AND WAS EXCITING 20 YEARS AGO WAS THE QUIRKY PART. I STILL WANT IT TO BE THAT WAY, AND I WANT OUTSIDE IN TO BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AND PROFESSIONAL… WHEN THERE ARE PROBLEMS, WE LOOK AT WHAT MAKES SENSE. THERE ISN'T ONE ANSWER TO ANYTHING; IT'S: 'WHAT'S THE BEST ANSWER FOR US, TODAY?'"

HEATHER BROWN

On a gray late-winter Tuesday, fifteen new employees gather in Outside In's basement conference room, paper plates of bagels and fresh clementines balanced on their laps. They include the agency's new development director (it's her second day of work), a family nurse practitioner in the clinic, a kitchen manager, a housing case manager, someone who works in Virginia Woof Dog Daycare and someone who serves as health and wellness coordinator in the Milwaukie High School health center.

They are middle aged and 20-something, straight and queer. A few speak Spanish. Three are people of color. For the next seven hours, they will get a cram course in Outside In history, values and programs.

"I've been here forever," says Oliver—a bit of hyperbole that draws chuckles from the group—before launching into a brisk version of the agency's origin story: the coffee house, the hippie clinic, the youth program, fast-forwarding through the needle exchange, the new building, the certification as a Federally Qualified Health Center and the plan to expand the agency's services eastward with a small clinic and youth services center at 162nd and Burnside.

"We help homeless youth and other marginalized people move towards improved health and self-sufficiency," Oliver tells the new employees. Some take notes.

Later, the workers will hear about the agency's ID Project, which helps trans individuals through the process of changing their names and gender designations on legal documents. They'll get a crash course on Outside In's clinic—team-based, integrated care that now includes two mobile medical vans and the high school health center, one of few such centers to offer contraception.

They will learn the rudiments of trauma-informed care and harm reduction from Heather Baucum, a case manager with the agency's RISE treatment program for youth with addictions and mental health diagnoses. Heather Brown will outline the youth program; Kaitlin Reay will talk about Project Erase, the tattoo removal service staffed by volunteer doctors.

Someone will remind them about timesheets, mandatory reporting requirements and what to say if someone wants to donate their old clothes to Outside In (decline graciously and refer them to the wish list on the website).

At one point, the group splits into pairs to discuss a few questions: What contributes to homelessness? What have you learned from your experience with marginalized populations?

"[This work] causes you to question your own biases about people and belief systems, how people come to be homeless," offers the new nurse practitioner. "At the end of the day, they're human. They're people. They need services. Empathy is what you come to understand and appreciate more—not just about homeless people, but people of color, trans people."

"I grew up in towns where the homeless population was invisible," says an employee with a turquoise Mohawk. "When I moved to a bigger city, they were much more present. I got to meet a lot of these people; I realized they were just like everyone else."

Upstairs, a bilingual volunteer at the front desk is helping a middle-aged, Spanish-speaking woman make an appointment in the clinic. The smell of quesadillas floats down from the youth day center, along with the timpani of teenaged boots and voices. The waiting room is crowded, but calm. In the courtyard, a man and woman argue, their voices growing louder and more strident, until she storms off in exasperation. A thin spring sun glints off the leaves of the memorial tree.

Samuel, a formerly homeless youth, became a certified dog trainer and assistant manager at Virginia Woof. The dog's name is Mars.

2016-17 DATA REPORT

982 HOMELESS YOUTH SERVED

82 EMPLOYED

40 ATTENDING COLLEGE

23,000+ CLINIC VISITS.

1,000,000+ CLEAN SYRINGES EXCHANGED

299 PEOPLE TRAINED TO GIVE NALOXONE

394 OVERDOSE REVERSALS REPORTED

177 EMPLOYEES

23% OF EMPLOYEES ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR

Outside In's 2016-17 data report captures the agency in numbers: 982 homeless youth served, with 82 employed and 40 attending college. More than 23,000 clinic visits. Over a million clean syringes exchanged, 299 people trained to give naloxone and 394 overdose reversals reported. A budget of $12.5 million, including just over $4 million from the federal government.

But those numbers don't tell the story of Aisling Rose O'Grady, who was homeless and hungry at 21, found help at Outside In, became a star of the agency's Street Soccer team and competed in the 2010 Homeless World Cup finals in Rio.

The statistics don't name 29-year-old Aleka Spurgeon-Heinrici, who graduated from OHSU in 2011: future doctor, former heroin addict and client of Outside In. They don't mention the 14 youth who took part in the 2012 project, "Outside the Frame," a three-week program to produce, direct and act in original films based on their experiences with violence, abuse and homelessness.

Nor do the numbers highlight the accolades Outside In has raked in recent years: a 2014 "Light a Fire Lifetime Achievement Award" for Oliver from *Portland Monthly* magazine; a KATU "Everyday Heroes" citation for Project Erase physician Barbara Ferre; a 2015 "Champions of Change" honor from the Obama White House for Portland Police Lt. Ric DeLand and Outside In worker Celia Luce, who worked to build connections between homeless youth and law enforcement.

The numbers do not brag about Outside In's mention in a *Rolling Stone* article about LGBTQ homeless youth and in a *Guardian* piece explaining why tattoo removal is a social service. The data reports don't tell how, in the blistering summer of 2017, the agency expanded its hours, offering air-conditioned space and hydration stations to homeless people wilting from the heat.

At current count, the agency has 177 employees, 23 percent of them people of color, a boost over past decades. Increased diversity has been a perennial aspiration at Outside In, both in hiring and in board recruitment; there are now seven people of color on the 18-member board.

Stone, the agency's facilities director and director of Virginia Woof Dog Daycare, is Korean-American, one of the few management-level staff who is a racial minority. "Young white women with master's degrees are beneficial to the program," he says, "but they're not necessarily seen by the youth as being peers."

In every measurable way—budget, footprint, reputation, number of volunteers, staff credentials—Outside In has ballooned over the last half-century, and especially in the last two decades. "When you get to be as big as we are, there's a shift in culture," says Wheelock, who has run the syringe exchange program for 11 years. "We can't all fit in the same room anymore. We've had to hire professionals to do some of the things that, historically, we would train people to do."

That professionalization has happened not only at Outside In but also throughout the human services arena. An advantage is "scaled impact," says Suib of New Avenues for Youth. "But an invisible wall can be created between us and the people we're trying to serve. Outside all the bells and whistles, the only thing that really makes a difference is the connection that young person has with the person in front of them.

"Yes, Outside In is professionalized. What it never has done is sold out its core values. It's never been fuzzy on what's important. It's always shown huge courage to stand up for what's right."

So many of Outside In's risk-taking stances—on needle exchange, on harm reduction, on outreach to trans youth and adults—are now embraced as "best practice" in the human services arena. The agency has left its mark.

Currie, the minister who formerly worked in Outside In's drop-in center, remained an advocate for homeless issues after he left the agency to work at other nonprofits and with the county. "Outside In, more than any other agency, has shaped how the county and city react to the issue of homeless youth in Portland," he says. "Outside In has driven an enormous amount of the policy that is in place today."

Morrow, who has led Janus Youth Programs for as long as Oliver has been at Outside In, describes the agency as "a combination of Bob Dylan and Mozart. If you put a Dylan CD on, you don't know what's going to pop up or how it's going to sound. Outside In will take the Dylan risks, but I've never doubted their integrity or their leadership. If you look at their internal mission, that has been very consistent. That's the Mozart piece; you can always count on it."

Now, the agency that made "change" its mantra is poised for more: Oliver is retiring, and the board is seeking a successor. Since the 2016 election of Donald Trump, federal policy has become toxic to nearly everything Outside In believes; new applications for transitional housing money for youth do not mention LGBTQ populations and call for agencies to measure, as a gauge of success, how many youth clients enter the middle class.

Valentines from grateful clients of Outside In's youth program

Meanwhile, Portland's laid-back, hippie-village vibe has ceded to a stunning level of gentrification—whole swaths of the city given over to emporiums of vegan tacos, pro-biotic juices and eco-friendly shoes. Housing prices are prohibitive; Outside In youth, and even some staff, can no longer afford to rent apartments in Portland limits. Poverty, once most visible in the downtown core and in North Portland, is shifting east.

Across the country, homelessness is on the rise; HUD data showed a one percent increase from 2016 to 2017—more than half a million homeless people counted in January tallies—driven partly by the surge in people living on the streets of Los Angeles and other West Coast cities.

In health care delivery, even as the president attempts to roll back the ACA, there's a new focus on racial justice, equity and the social determinants of health—poverty, illiteracy, family instability. At the same time, the Trump administration's racist, anti-immigrant rhetoric and stepped-up deportations have wrenched families apart and raised anxiety among people of color, the poor and the undocumented.

Recent research on adolescent brain development indicates that the brain—particularly in areas governing executive function and decision-making—does not fully mature until one's mid-20s. In response, Outside In's youth program now serves people up to age 25. The agency is seeing more youth families, more people with profound mental health issues.

Each year, the agency holds a cap-and-gown graduation for youth who have completed their high school equivalency. Among the 2014 graduates (from left): Alexuis, Leslie, Chelsea, and Micah.

"We work with a population that is really struggling with hope," says Brown, the agency's longest-term employee after Oliver. "The government's not functioning very well at the federal level. There are gaps in funding, uncertainty about the Affordable Care Act and its resources."

And yet, there is something timeless about clients' needs. "We're serving a broader age range, and we have deeper services. But the work is the work, and the youth are the youth—young people who don't have what they need to be in the world on their own."

Brown thinks about the agency that drew her two decades ago—the funky, colorful houses crowded with young, innovative staff. Words like "adaptable" and "flexible" come to mind. "The part that resonated and was exciting 20 years ago was the quirky part," she says. "I still want it to be that way, and I want Outside In to be highly effective and professional. When

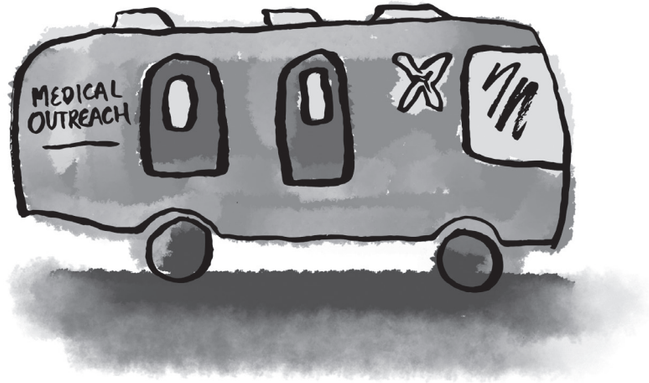
there are problems, we look at what makes sense. There isn't one answer to anything; it's 'What's the best answer for us, today?'"

Amidst the swirl of change are questions that have chased and animated Outside In for 50 years: How to find the balance between growth and stability? How to maintain the professional standards needed to play in the upper echelons of human service delivery and major philanthropy while holding tight to the agency's values of justice, dignity and inclusion? How to straddle the gap—chasm-wide in some eras, barely a hairline at others—between the "straight" and the "street"?

In the office of the soon-to-depart executive director stands a battered wooden newel post from the old building and a bed for Z, the Executive Dog. There is a poster for Van Sant's film, *Milk,* a 2015 Visionary Award from the Portland Women's Crisis Line and a cartoon of a porcupine approaching a storefront whose sign reads, "Needle Exchange Program."

Near Oliver's desk hangs a framed copy of the million-dollar check from the Gates Foundation. And on her door, which stands half-open, a postcard with this calligraphic message, the words of educator and author Patti Digh:

"CHANGE OCCURS AT THE EDGES, WITHOUT PERMISSION."



Outside In's health services now include medical vans and a school-based health center.

OUTSIDE IN A YEAR IN THE LIFE

The memorial tree in Outside In's courtyard, created by artist J.D. Perkins, bears leaves engraved with the names and dates of clients who have died.

At Outside In, there is no such thing as a typical day, or even a typical year. From 2001 to 2015—a period that included the move to a new building, the opening of Virginia Woof Dog Daycare and the start of naloxone distribution—executive director Kathy Oliver kept an intermittent journal, chronicling the mundane and monumental, the poignant and the absurd, the indelible instants that make up life at Outside In.

HERE IS A SNAPSHOT OF 2006:

JANUARY 25

Monday we set an agency record for "Employee Working Shortest Length of Time." We hired a woman to work in the clinic. She worked Monday morning, went to lunch and never came back.

JANUARY 27

Lara Clinton died last weekend. She was a case manager here for about six years. Had lupus and something wrong with her digestive system—unable to work for the past two years. She was 38 years old. Such a loss.

FEBRUARY 1

A youth showed me a poem he wrote. My favorite line: "Caught between loneliness and promiscuity."

FEBRUARY 7

Our payroll service screwed up. They paid everyone twice this pay period. Christmas in February…

MARCH 13

A young woman delivered twins two months ago, and mom and babies are housed upstairs in our housing program. When she woke up today one of the babies was dead…An ambulance is here, police, DHS, medical examiner, family members. It was ruled SIDS.

MARCH 18

An odd little fundraiser: we received $250 from Zaytoon Bar on NE Alberta. Last Christmas they created a tree made up of mini bottles of liquor, named it the "Tipsy Tannenbaum," sold the bottles for $5 each and gave the proceeds to Outside In.

APRIL 18

[note from a youth department client]:
"I am in the Outside In Housing Program. I have a dwarf hamster named Ker-plunk. As of right now he is living with my ex. However, on the 6th of April he was found badly injured behind the dresser his cage is on…I am writing you this letter to ask if I can bring him here, where I know he will be safe."

MAY 12

Received a note from a client: "Hello, I am a former client of your organization and I was just thinking about how grateful I am that you guys helped me get meds when I was couch surfing and eating out of soup kitchens. I've been employed for over six months and even have decent health insurance but I wouldn't be as happy and secure as I am now without your assistance. Thank you for being there for me."

JULY 5

A woman came for a tour, really appreciated the fact that we're a dog-friendly agency, met my border collie, Zaida, and returned the following week with a check for $40,000 from her family foundation.

AUGUST 11

The medical outreach van was broken into. They were clearly just looking for drugs, as nothing was taken—not even the laptops.

AUGUST 30

A homeless youth client was found dead in the park blocks. Likely an overdose, but they have assigned the case to a detective. It was not mentioned in the news media. These youth are so expendable to most of society.

SEPTEMBER 7

A former client graduated from Reed College, obtained a job at the metropolitan public defender's office and returned to Outside In—as a member of our board of directors!

DECEMBER 11

A client upstairs in housing overdosed and collapsed. Staff could not find a pulse, and she was not breathing. They called 911 and administered CPR until they arrived. Thankfully, she is going to be fine. What a wonderful staff.

WHAT A WONDERFUL STAFF.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I'm grateful, too, for the youth program staff of 1986—especially Dolores Kueffler, Robin Resnick and the late Barb Sussex—who welcomed me with disarming frankness when I showed up as a 23-year-old VISTA volunteer and who modeled authenticity, respect and radical inclusion every day at Outside In.

Bill Aronson, Brad Bolchunos and Lori Slaughter reviewed the manuscript; they, along with Kathy Oliver, offered queries, suggestions (and AP style-code tweaks) that made the history a more crisp, accurate and meaningful read. Tess Anawalt cheerfully sleuthed out numerous photos and their caption information.

For airport pick-ups, comfy beds, tempeh Reubens, morning power-walks and late-night reminiscence, my thanks to Rachael and John Duke, Pattie Ladd and Amy Schutzer.

Hugs to my near and dear ones: to my parents, Gloria and (may his memory be for a blessing) Stan, journalists both, who lullabied me with their typewriters and gifted me with boundless love. To L Feldman and Megan Gendell, Jodie Green, Hannah Ashley and all the soup groupies for cogent questions and jubilant cheering as I bore this project to the finish.

My adoration and awe to Sasha, who already holds the torch of justice and compassion; can't wait to see where you aim your light. And my love past words for Elissa—astute editor, best friend, partner-ever-after.

ANNDEE HOCHMAN

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CONTRIBUTORS

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In 1986, Anndee Hochman ran away to the west coast and landed as a VISTA volunteer at Outside In. She stayed for seven years. While in Portland, she also fell in love, learned to backpack and became a freelance theater critic and feature writer for *The Oregonian.* Her personal and political essays, profiles, features and reviews have appeared in *O,* the *Oprah Magazine, Redbook, Cooking Light, Purple Clover, Broad Street Review* and on the website for WHYY, Philadelphia's public radio station; she also writes the weekly "Parent Trip" column for *The Philadelphia Inquirer.* Anndee is the author of *Everyday Acts & Small Subversions: Women Reinventing Family, Community and Home* (The Eighth Mountain Press) and *Anatomies: A Novella and Stories* (Picador USA). For more than 25 years, she has been a teaching artist, guiding children, teens and adults to raise their voices in poetry and memoir. Anndee lives with her partner and daughter in Philadelphia.

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Melissa Delzio has 14 years of experience creating print and interactive work for international brands, local businesses, nonprofits and educational institutions. Her work reflects her passion for issues of social and environmental justice, feminism, sports, local businesses and history. Past personal projects include publishing *Our Portland Story,* two volumes of books about Portland by Portlanders and producing a 50 page creative activity deck for kids with a local nonprofit. Currently, she is working on the long and arduous process of curating and writing about Portland's graphic design history through research and interviews.

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THE END

OUTSIDE IN
FIFTY
YEARS
OF FORGING CHANGE

OUTSIDE IN FIFTY YEARS

OF FORGING CHANGE

Hippies and heroin. Street youth and a syringe exchange. Funding crises and a million-dollar check. Anti-war billboards. A hate-free zone marked by a block-long ribbon. A dog daycare center that is also a job training program. A tattoo removal project. A clinic housed in a high school.

Since 1968, Outside In has welcomed the marginalized, believed in each person's potential, and changed—from a ragtag corner clinic to a sprawling multi-service agency—to meet their needs.

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