



KATHY KNIEP
CONSULTING

STRATEGIC PLANNING
LEADERSHIP SUPPORT
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
EXECUTIVE SEARCH
MEETING FACILITATION

Kathy Kniep's Bio

She or They

The Big Picture

Growing up in St. Louis as a gymnast, I spent a good portion of my childhood upside down. Turns out, the skills I learned in gymnastics – agility, creativity, and stamina – prepared me well for a career in the nonprofit sector.

Now, I am an independent consultant and co-dependent organizational development geek who benefits from the wise counsel of colleagues in a serious-but-humor-filled learning community. I like to work with people who aren't afraid to tackle big, hairy issues or ask hard questions, and I think strategic planning can be fun. (Seriously!) My varied interests have led to work in all kinds of organizations and government agencies addressing social justice, health and human services, housing, the environment, arts, and philanthropy. I've held just about every job imaginable in an organization – from front-line volunteer to board president, and administrative assistant to executive director.

The Nitty Gritty

Since landing my first full-time mission-focused job at the Ford Foundation in 1990, I've been working to make the world a better place. These days, I help nonprofits and government agencies with strategic planning, leadership support (executive coaching), executive recruitment and transition, organizational culture and equity, and board development. I have served as an interim executive director for nine Portland-based organizations.

From 2005 to 2010, I was privileged to serve as executive director of the YWCA Clark County, a Vancouver, Washington-based social services and social change organization helping over 11,000 people each year, including survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, homelessness, and discrimination. Four years prior to that, I rather accidentally – and happily – started my own consulting business and did the same kind of work I enthusiastically returned to following my time at the YWCA.

In the late 1990s, as a program officer for the Neighborhood Partnership Fund (now Neighborhood Partnerships), I worked on a team providing financial and technical support to affordable housing and workforce development organizations in Oregon. (Having just moved from New York City, I was

horrified to discover that Oregonians wore hiking clothes to meetings. Now...) While living in NYC in the early to mid-1990s, I created and managed programs for Homes for the Homeless, including employment training, family literacy, and after-school programs. I also worked as the Director of the Institute of Children and Poverty, a division of Homes for the Homeless, and as Managing Editor of the Journal of Children and Poverty.

Volunteering is an important part of my life. I've served on a variety of boards and advisory councils, and I now focus my volunteer efforts on advancing racial justice through the PDX Housing Solidarity Project and Equitable Giving Circle. I also have been a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for children who are in the foster care system because of abuse or neglect, one of whom, L, I informally adopted in 2017 when they were 21. They are a wonder and have enriched my life in so many ways. Another volunteer gig that started way back in 1991 with Big Brothers Big Sisters connected me with Christina, when she was six, and who is now my true sister.

While I'm equipped with an undergraduate degree from Miami University of Ohio and a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, all the important stuff I learned came from my family, Christina, L, CASA kiddos, mentors, colleagues, friends, travel, living at the Center of the Universe (NYC), and spending time in nature.

Gratuitous Tidbits

I love, love my job. And when I'm not working or volunteering, I'm out seeking adventure: backpacking in the wilderness, skate skiing in the mountains, biking Portland's quirky neighborhoods in search of new brewpubs, travelling to wondrously foreign places, and trying to muster the courage to skate in Portland's Secret Roller Disco (should I wear a cape?).

I live with a hilarious guy, Ed Johnson, who is a badass public interest lawyer and the Director of Litigation for the Oregon Law Center. In addition, he's a terrific adventure companion, poet, basketball player, formidable Scrabble opponent, and fun haiku collaborator. I also am fortunate to have amazing parents, a fabulous brother, and rad friends and colleagues who provide abundant encouragement, cook up fun capers and rejuvenating diversions, and inspire me to do more mission-driven work.

My partner and I are currently in the process of moving to the Methow Valley, where we've cross-country skied and hiked for over twenty years. We are thrilled to be making this transition to a place that has taken up residence in our souls. I am so enjoying getting to work with nonprofits in North Central Washington, and I continue to work in Portland, making frequent trips to keep in close contact with clients and friends.

One of my favorite quotes is an African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." I want to go far.

More Information

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