

## Staff Profile: Introducing Teri McKenzie



Teri McKenzie just started on NEV staff as the Office Manager, replacing Connor Magee (and formerly) Lindsey Oldani. In January she will also start to spend some of her hours coordinating our volunteer and member recruiting activities. She told us about her experiences, values, and vision.

Teri raised her family here in Portland. Her two children are now in their twenties. She then lived in Idaho for a few years and just recently moved back to Portland, temporarily in Southwest and now considering the Northeast. She has had her cat Jenga for all 17 years of his life and much of her children's.

She has worked with volunteers in organizations all her life. We call them “nonprofits” but she prefers the positive orientation of what they are *for* rather than *not*: “social benefit organizations: humans are social beings, interdependent, made for connection.” She is all about community, uplifting and supporting one another. She is like us all, eager to jump into being together, and like us notes our frustrations and remarkable success in maintaining community and social ties through the long pandemic.

First, she is an “RPCV” (Returned Peace Corp Volunteer), worked in Senegal, West Africa, and has already found other RCPVs among us in NEV.

Later in Idaho, Teri founded and ran an organization that connected people, place, food, and farms through education and outreach, to promote the health of people, the environment, and the local economy. She continues to “do food”-- growing, preserving, cooking it --and is interested in the cultural aspects of food that bring us together and root us in time and place.

The Idaho experience taught her to appreciate what it takes to start an organization and keep it funded and share the work. Now she appreciates the opportunity to support NEV and our ongoing success in operations and participation.

All her “social benefit” organizational experience (plus an MA in Whole Systems Design: Nonprofit Leadership) will be of help in structuring our core operations more efficiently. And she is excited about all our “amazing people who have expertise and creative ideas ... so together we can find a way forward that will enable NEV to grow and thrive.” She's heard that many of our long-time volunteers in key leadership roles have been in those positions for years and want to move on to other roles, which is normal at our org's stage of development. She's strategizing for her future Recruiting Coordinator role to encourage new and existing volunteers to move into more leadership roles.

And personally, I found a connection between the personal values Teri described to me and her mentioning her book club books that are candidates or already read by our NEV Book Group 2. We talked about these works:

[Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer (also the author of NEV's Nov.10 event subject: [The Serviceberry](#)): connected to Teri's interest in our indigenous kinship beyond humans with animal life, water, plants, especially *trees* for Teri such as the weeping willow near her.

[My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies](#) by Resmaa Menakem: connected to Teri's study of what it personally means

to be White and how to be a Black ally. Teri's own book club spent many months doing the exercises in this book. They are currently reading [The Good Ally: A Guided Anti-racism Journey from Bystander to Changemaker](#), by Nova Reid.

You can reach Teri by e-mail at [officemanager@nevillagepdx.org](mailto:officemanager@nevillagepdx.org) or through the NEV office phone 503-895-2750.

-- *Jeanne Bear*