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Senior Advocates
for Generational Equity

SAGE Board of Directors with Biographies

Joe Dabek, Board Member, Governance Committee

Dr. Joe Dabek has been involved in community and organization development for the past 40 years and most recently, until his retirement in 2018, as a nonprofit board governance consultant/coach with NeighborWorks® America, a national, nonprofit providing technical and financial assistance to nonprofit affordable housing organizations. His areas of specialty are board governance, organization and leadership development, and strategic planning. He received his A.B. in economics and philosophy from Fordham University; an MBA in economics and finance from New York University; and a doctorate in Organizational Leadership from the University of Phoenix. He holds a Certificate in Advanced Studies in Organizational Development from Columbia University.

Kristen Grauer, Board Member

Kristen Grauer is a Donor Stewardship Officer at Health in Harmony (HIH), a nonprofit based in Portland that collaborates with rainforest communities in Borneo and Madagascar to improve the health of both people and the planet. She champions the organization's donor stewardship and communications strategies. She holds a B.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and spent a semester studying in Valparaiso, Chile, which deepened her interest in both art and international development. Kristen formerly served as Chair of SAGE's Young Leaders Advisory Board.

Ward Greene, President, Executive Committee

Ward Greene is Senior Counsel at the law firm of Farleigh Wada Witt in Portland, Oregon. He has practiced law for over forty years, served as President of the Multnomah Bar Association and Vice President of the Oregon State Bar. In addition to serving on SAGE's Board, Ward served on the Board of Ascent Funding. Ward has a B.S. in business from Florida State University and a J.D. from Duke University.

William Howe, Board Member

Bill Howe has practiced law for over 40 years, which includes over 25 years devoted exclusively to family law with Gevurtz Menashe, P.C in Portland, Oregon. In addition to many years of active practice, Bill has devoted significant time and energy to family court reform. He has been appointed by several Chief Justices to serve as the Vice-chair of Oregon's Statewide Family Law Advisory Committee from 1998 through 2020; served for many years as President of the Oregon Family Institute; served two terms as president of the Oregon Academy of Family Law Practitioners; served on the Board of Directors of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts; and was appointed by two Governors to Chair the Oregon Task Force on Family Law Reform. Bill was awarded the 2003 Pro Bono Challenge Award for donating the Highest Number of Pro Bono Public Service Hours by the Oregon State Bar and is the recipient of the 2021 Wallace P. Carson, Jr. Outstanding Achievement Award.

Ben Manny, Board Member

Ben Manny retired after 30 years with Intel and last served as their Director of Wireless Technology research lab in Oregon. After retirement, he helped organize the Intel Retiree Organization and served as was one of their charter board members where he established and still chairs the Intel Retiree Volunteer and Donation Committee. His major focus since retirement has been to inspire students to pursue engineering and technology careers. This has involved mentoring senior engineering projects, reviewing STEM grants for the Oregon Department of Education, and serving as State Head Judge for Oregon’s FIRST Lego League middle school robotics program. For the past 3 years, Ben has coached a local neighborhood FIRST Lego League team to help kids hone skills in math and engineering and to learn about problem solving, teamwork and critical thinking. Based on this coaching experience his current interests have expanded to include increasing generation to generation interactions. He graduated from the University of Texas with a B.S. in Physics, a B.A. in Math and a High School teaching certificate.

Neal Naigus, Board Member, Governance Committee

Neal Naigus retired after 42 years at Portland Community College. He served as Assistant to the President for the last 6 PCC Presidents and represented the College throughout the community. In doing so, he was part of the creation of the Leaders Roundtable to lower high school dropout rates and he also helped create many partnerships and initiatives including the Pacific NW Public Policy Institute, the PCC Senior Studies Institute, the PCC Senior Volunteer Program, Life by Design, and Fostering Success to help foster youth attend college. Neal served on the Board of the Canadian American Society of Oregon and currently serves on the Board of the Hollywood Senior Center.

Rick Nitti, Board Member, DEI and Development Committees

Rick Nitti served as Executive Director of Neighborhood House for 18 years. He is a highly regarded leader in the Oregon nonprofit community, having served as President of the Board of the Nonprofit Association of Oregon, and on the Board of the Southwest Community Health Center. At Neighborhood House, Rick dramatically increased the organization’s size and reach of its services and oversaw programs to help low-income, recent-immigrant, and other vulnerable people overcome challenges so they can achieve success, stability, and independence. He holds a B.S. from the University of Illinois and an M.Ed. from Loyola University. Rick received the 2017 Spirit of Portland Award from Mayor Ted Wheeler in recognition of his contributions to the region.

Sheila Panyam, Board member, DEI Committee

Sheila Panyam is a recent graduate of the University of Washington. A life-long resident of Portland, she was an alumna of Lincoln High School’s We the People Team and a coach for the program. She was a former vice president of Mission: Citizen, an organization that provides free citizenship classes for immigrants, and is currently the co-executive director of the Kids First Project, another nonprofit in Portland. She is a published novelist and loves to spend her free time reading, writing, and studying classical history.

Elizabeth Schellberg, Secretary, DEI Committee

Elizabeth (Liz) Schellberg is a retired Certified Public Accountant. She has also worked for nonprofits and religious institutions. She has 20 years of work and volunteer experience with a variety of nonprofits – both in operations and board membership – involved in the environment,

peace and justice, the arts, healthcare, and crisis intervention. She has a B.A. in philosophy from Washington State University and a Master of Divinity from San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Marcus Wood, Board Member, Executive Committee

Marcus Wood is a retired attorney. He spent his legal career at Stoel Rives LLP, where he served on the firm’s Executive Committee and led its 11-office energy and renewable energy practice groups. He has served as Chair of the Board of the former Indochinese Cultural and Service Center and Chair of the Board of the Oregon Ballet Theatre, and also was a long-time member of the Outside In Board. He co-founded the non-profit Oregonians to Save the Boat People, which organization found sponsors to allow immigration for thousands of Indochinese refugees during the “boat people” crisis of the late 1970s. In retirement, he has led math clubs and tutored students in math at a local elementary school. Marcus has a B.A from Vanderbilt University and a J.D. from Yale Law School.

SAGE Board Members on Sabbatical

SAGE’s Sabbatical Leave Program for Board Members provides an opportunity for current board members to take personal time off to rest and rejuvenate without holding the official responsibilities of board membership. The program was developed during the pandemic and is intended to support board members who are not able to serve in their full capacity right now. The following two members are on sabbatical.

Diane Ponti, Board Member

Diane Ponti is a writer, editor, and storyteller, and has worked as a public-school teacher and bond broker. She has 20 years of volunteer experience focusing on nonprofits that promote writing and literature, including as Board Chair for Literary Arts and as Board Member for Portland Story Theater. She has a B.S. from Oregon State University and an M.S. from Portland State University.

Bruce Watts, Board Member

Bruce Watts is retired after having served as Senior Director of TriMet’s Diversity and Transit Equity Department. During his time at TriMet, Watts built community involvement in several rail and transit projects, including the north-south light-rail project. In the late 1980s, Bruce moved to Portland, and became an activist for black and minority causes as a member of the Coalition of Black Men, which he helped found in 1988. In retirement, Watts served as a mentor with the Coalition and served as Board President of the Urban League and Ascent Funding and as a member of the Metropolitan Contractor Improvement Partnership. Watts received a football and academic scholarship to attend Ohio State University and served in the U.S. Air Force.