

RON CARLEY / JILL FUGLISTER

Two Heads Are Better Than One

Ron Carley walks into the room, only three or four minutes late but apologizing for his tardiness nonetheless. Despite the fact that he's running on little sleep these days — his daughter was born just a few weeks ago and he's getting over a cold — he has a smile on his face as he reaches out for a handshake. His co-worker, Jill Fuglister, assures him there's no need to apologize.

Carley and Fuglister are professional colleagues by title, co-directors of the Coalition for a Livable Future, a consortium of more than 85 organizations working to promote healthy and sustainable communities. But as Carley settles himself in a chair opposite Fuglister, they appear to be more like two friends preparing to have lunch together at a café. They joke around and often finish each other's thoughts.

Case in point: Fuglister explains she's been in Portland since

1992, then pauses.

"That's 14 years you've lived here," Carley supplies.

Fuglister laughs and calls him "Mr. Math Guy."

THE PLANNER AND THE PHILOSOPHER Fuglister and Carley come from different backgrounds. Carley is one of the diminishing few who can boast the Native Oregonian label.

"My initial background is in psychology, and I started working for Portland Audubon as something I could do while finishing grad school," he says. "But I fell in love with policy work and have always been drawn to it."

Fuglister, on the other hand, is from Minnesota. The migration that landed her in Portland began with a move to Tacoma as a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps working with at-risk youth. After earning a degree from the University of Oregon in environmental studies and a few jobs here and there, Fuglister began full-time at the coalition.

The differences between Fuglister and Carley go beyond geographic origins, however.

She's a planner who tends to use verbs: work, lead, coordinate.

Carley is more of a philosopher who peppers his sentences with adjectives: helpful, healthy, equitable, fair.



"We're not just staying on the outside and saying, 'This is bad and you need to stop.' We're coming to the table to try and come up with solutions." — Jill Fuglister

The juxtaposition works well, however, they both say. Although their working styles differ, the factor that binds them is a shared passion for civic involvement.

LIVING LA VIDA CIVIC Leading a civic life often comes with its share of stigma. Some folks, for example, see the coalition as "just another hippie organization" and consider its members to be "lefties."

Fuglister thinks that opinion is too narrow when it comes to her group.

"We're not just staying on the outside and saying, 'This is bad and you need to stop,'" she says. "We're coming to the table to try and come up with solutions."

We can all agree that people want a nice place to live, says Carley. "Nobody's going to say, 'I want dirty air, dirty water and unaffordable housing.'"

And one of the coalition's strengths, he says, is that the group has had successes in proving to many decision-makers that sustainable living is also good for business and the economy.

"We may disagree on some of the details," he says, "but we share a common vision, no matter what group you're in."

That give and take, Carley admits, sometimes requires some time — and maturity — to develop.

"When I was younger and perhaps a bit more fiery in my activism," he says, "it was really easy to demonize people that disagree with you, to put them in a box and label them as the enemy and just fight, fight, fight."

The thing is — and here's where Jill nods her head in agreement — that doing the work for so many years has helped them see that "people are people, and we all sort of want the same thing," Carley says.

CHALLENGES TO COME That's not to say that there aren't groups out there who will never be willing to sit down at the table, Carley says. But recognizing that most Portlanders want what's best for everyone is a good sign.

If everything was hunky-dory, though, Carley and Fuglister would

be out of work. There are always challenges ahead, they say.

One of the coalition's newest initiatives is called Shift the Balance, a plan that entails getting people to think about transportation in different ways. The coalition wants the region's residents to start thinking beyond their cars: to buses, bikes, the streetcar and light rail. The group plans to work closely with Metro Council's Regional Transportation Plan to help determine how to spend \$4.2 billion on transportation funding in the next 20 years.

The second big push this year is focused on what the coalition calls the Regional Equity Atlas, a system of using maps to answer questions like: Can workers in every community afford to live near their jobs? Which communities have ample access to parks and natural areas and which ones don't? What neighborhoods in the region lack access to grocery stores? Which cities have sufficient resources to provide public services to residents, and which ones don't?

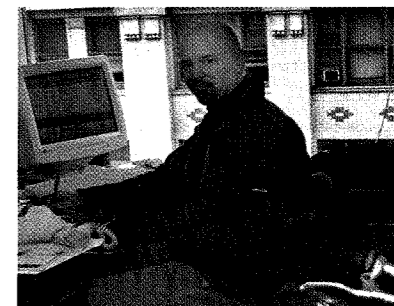
The coalition is in the information-sharing phase of this initiative, showing its findings to policy makers, planners, businesses and the general public.

"Equity is least understood, and it's the first to fall off the table in decision-making discussions," says Fuglister.

Carley expands on Fuglister's statement: "If you operate from a premise and a belief that a fair and healthy and equitable community and region provides people certain access and opportunities fairly across the geographic scope, that's what drove the work we did on the atlas. If you assume that basically people should have access to affordable housing; living wage jobs; good public transportation; good, healthy air to breathe; clean water to drink; it's fundamental stuff that most people would agree they want. Operating from that premise, you look across the region and ask: Where are the gaps? Where are the areas that those kinds of opportunities are not being provided? Are there correlations in the gaps and the income levels and ethnicity?"

It's a monumental task — getting people to even think about these questions — but it's what keeps Carley, Fuglister and the coalition thriving. — Kennedy Smith

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PHOTOS BY DAN CARTER/COMMERCE