

# Teresa Vaughn



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You might reasonably wonder, “Why would anyone want to serve on the Board?” That’s a fair question. Have you been to a Board meeting?

For me, the answer is easy. Every Thursday night before the Fair opens, I walk the grounds and marvel at what we’ve created together. Thousands of people are there—not because they’re being paid, but because they care. They bring their time, talent, sweat, creativity, and love to build something that exists for just a few extraordinary days. Everywhere I look, people are putting the finishing touches on their booth, their stage, their art installation, their camp. The excitement is palpable in the details: a final brushstroke of paint, a carefully hung banner, a shared laugh between neighbors who haven’t seen each other since last year. People beam with pride as they show off what they’ve built, greet old friends, and help neighboring crews finish the last few details. That extraordinary sense of pride, ownership, and shared purpose is something I’ve never experienced anywhere else. We are a truly unique organization.

One of the clearest reminders of why the Fair matters comes from watching my nephew, Isaac. Every year he leaves the Fair inspired to create more joy, more whimsy, and more spaces where people are celebrated for all their gifts—especially the wonderfully weird ones. When he told me he wanted to spend the rest of the year paying forward what he receives at the Fair, I realized that’s the real magic of this place. For generations, people have come to the Fair to

renew themselves, then carried that inspiration home to their families, communities, and the world beyond the gates.

I’ve been fortunate to contribute to the Fair in many different ways over the years. I spent more than twenty years as Spoken Word Stage Manager, coordinating sound and emcees at the Front Porch, Rabbit Hole, Spirit Tower, and Chez Ray’s. In my early years I served on Security Path Rove, and today I coordinate decorations for the Still Living Room. This year, one of my favorite projects was creating the peach luminaries—tributes to those founders, loved ones, and others who helped “light the way” and whose contributions continue to shape the Fair.

For the past three years, I’ve also had the privilege of serving on the Board and on the Fixed Assets, Bylaws, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, and Philanthropy committees. That work has given me a much deeper understanding of both the opportunities and the challenges of stewarding an organization as unique and complex as ours.

Community isn’t something I experience only at the Fair. I live on a commune in Northwest Washington and served for many years as president of the Evergreen Land Trust. Between that experience, 44 years of teaching fifth grade and middle school math, and three years on the Fair Board, I’ve had plenty of practice with collaboration, problem-solving, budgets, governance, and the sometimes complicated work of finding common ground. I retired from teaching this year, which means I now have more time and energy to devote to the work of the Fair.

I want to help protect this tradition, which is why I’m asking for your vote. I’m excited to help carry forward the important work we’re doing around equity and belonging, while also helping the Fair prepare for long-term challenges like climate change and the impact of the Emerald Ash Borer, expanding philanthropy and educational opportunities, and ensuring the Fair remains financially strong through thoughtful governance and budget oversight. Bylaws, budgets, and governance may never be as visible as a giant puppet or a stilt walker, but they are what make the magic possible year after year.

Every Thursday before the gates open, I’m reminded of what this community can accomplish together. I would be honored to help protect it for generations to come.