

# *Encore! Encore!*

## An Intel Retiree Has a Second Act

Submitted by Bill Mackenzie



*After 12 years of working at Intel on long-term strategic planning, Rod MacDow was preparing for retirement in January 2012. The spark for his next challenge came at an on-site luncheon featuring a presentation by the Encore Fellows program's then executive director, Stephen Ristau.*

Encore Fellows are seasoned, private-sector professionals entering retirement who offer professional expertise and passion to visionary non-profits, typically for about 12 months.

In Oregon, the Encore Fellow program operates under the auspices of Social Venture Partners Portland, a non-profit that aims to build powerful relationships to tackle social challenges. Intel is a long-time supporter of the program for its retirees.



Rod MacDow

“I had a general desire to get involved with volunteer work, but had no particular plan in mind,” Rod said. “Right away the Encore Fellows program became my primary focus, and by November 2012, I was working to join the program, open to any opportunity to make a difference.”



Mike Mercer, executive director of the Portland-based [Northwest Earth Institute](#) (NWEI), quickly saw that Rod would be a great addition to his team.

NWEI believes the solution to many of earth's biggest challenges lies in the power of collective change. By taking action in their own lives and inspiring the people around them, each person can contribute to a world of impact.

To advance that philosophy, NWEI offers discussion courses on pressing environmental issues that help people create their own community of change. Thousands of people worldwide have participated in the courses and discovered new ways to live, work, create and consume.



*Rod MacDow at the community garden, one of the opportunities to foster community participation, feed the hungry and encourage good nutrition and health.*

“Rod was truly passionate about our work, had broad international experience, understood and would fit into our culture and had credibility,” Mercer said. “He also possessed a variety of valuable skill sets, such as an ability to connect with senior level leadership in other organizations in a position to spur employee engagement in sustainability thought and practice.”

Rod joined NWEI in March 2013 and jumped right in. For the first several months, he focused on figuring out how everything worked and how he could add value without bowling over the staff with Intel-speak and Intel-style impatience.

He also reviewed the organization’s current strategic plan and looked for areas of improvement. He started by looking at the broad audience NWEI serves with its courses, including the higher education, faith and business communities. Then, he considered how NWEI could get into 10, 20, 30 and even thousands of organizations. He suggested the organization do a pilot at a couple of companies, analyze it, make needed changes and then roll it out.

In addition to the program itself, one of Rod’s main goals was to bring the staff along so they would better understand how to do more programs after Rod’s tenure. In the end, the staff was energized by being able to think about their future in new ways.

Rod ended his Encore Fellowship at NWEI after a year, but stayed on for another year as a volunteer. “I still work with them as needed, and I count them all as friends,” Rod said.

“We expect Rod’s work will lead to a larger, stronger, more influential NWEI,” Mercer said. “Resources at most non-profits are scarce, so having a mature Fellow who’s devoted to a particular issue with clear objectives over a specific period of time can be a godsend.”

*“I have never been especially impressed by the heroics of people convinced they are about to change the world,” said American writer, Ellen Goodman. “I am more awed by those who struggle to make one small difference.”*

*Intel retiree Rod MacDow is somebody Goodman would admire.*

Rod now talks enthusiastically about the entire experience. “The Encore program, put simply, was the bridge between the high-tension world of Intel and whatever happens next,” he said. “I loved it at Intel - the constant pressure, the challenges, the changing world of opportunity and competition - it was the best time of my 42-year career in high-tech. But by the time I turned 65, I knew I couldn't and shouldn't try to keep up that pace. The Encore program allowed me to work productively, but not on the same kind of clock.”

Rod's Encore assignment also gave him a chance to see how non-profits strive to make the world a better place with passion, commitment, hard work and a lot less money than they need.

Now, two and a half years after retiring from Intel, Rod is getting the hang of being retired. He's helping a number of different non-profits in business development and strategic initiatives, as well as Social Venture Partners and the Encore program. He spends the rest of his time with his family, camping, hiking, reading, writing, cooking and, sometimes, just sitting around petting the dog and having a beer.

“I'm grateful to Intel for piloting the Encore program and would encourage them to keep supporting it for the long run,” Rod said. “ Like any program, it's not for everybody, but it's a choice that can do good for you as a retiree, for Intel, for a deserving non-profit organization, and for the people they serve.”

Learn more about the [Encore Fellows program](#).

Want to connect with Rod MacDow? He can be reached at [portland.r@gmail.com](mailto:portland.r@gmail.com)



*Rod MacDow hiking in the Wallawas*