

DIRECTOR'S
DESK

By Israel Bayer



You can feel the sands shifting below our feet, and for many that means more folk are sleeping in a doorway or under a bridge tonight. I assume it's not just a Portland thing, but like many other communities across the rock from Wall Street, the swells that have been building borne out of the recession are now crashing ashore.

In the past two weeks more than 30 people have walked through the Street Roots' door seeking work. That's more than a third of our entire vendor program. Families from rural Oregon who are down and out and scared. Single men and women who are now down to the last paycheck, no family, no safety net and scurrying for funds for medicine, hotel rooms, next month's rent, etc.

Normally, when we see an influx of vendors, it can be any number of things. Maybe individuals were referred to us by a social-service agency in the hood or possibly it's simply the word on the streets. Sometimes it's because the Po-po and private security put the squeeze on corners, parks and doorways by increasing enforcement of any number of laws. People sleeping outside feel safe selling Street Roots and it sometimes becomes a shield against being harassed.

But something's different.

No matter how long you work on the block you never get used to watching people lose everything and become homeless. The faraway look in innocent eyes. The shock. The panic. If you're on the street, you either break on the spot or not, but either way at some point you fade into a post-traumatic state — lost on a series of islands with no clear passage out of the realities you find yourself facing. Staying safe. Staying warm. Navigating systems. Living with rats. Living on the edge. Degraded. Loss of dignity. Respect.

You see miracles. You see tragedies. The deadly seriousness of what it's like for a human being to survive on the streets is something that really can't be retold in writing or photographs. At what point can you capture logic when it has fled?

I was reminded of all this by a 40-year old woman dressed in a business suit selling Street Roots because she has lost everything and simply doesn't know where to turn; by the family from Vernonia now selling the newspaper on the bus mall.

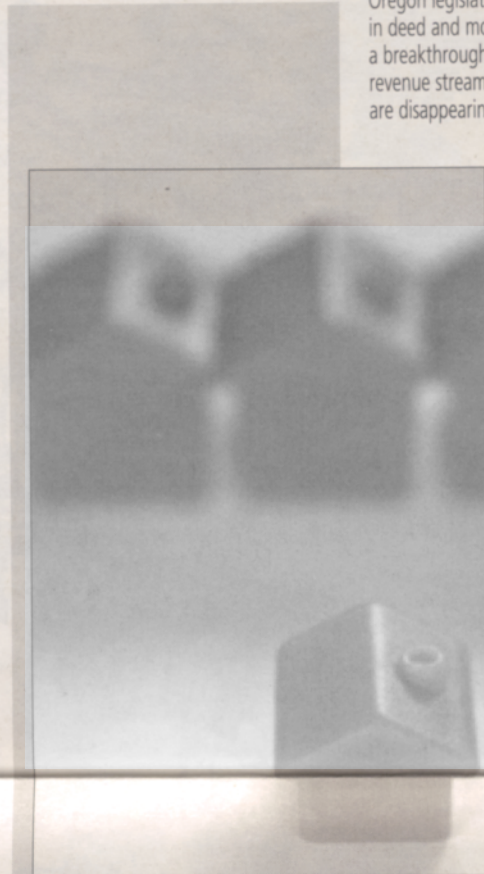
Whatever we knew to be a problem in the context of poverty in Portland and around the country is about to get a whole lot worse. If you're looking for warning signals that the recession is in fact playing itself out on the streets in the Rose City and in other cities, you don't need to look far. On street corners, on neighborhood benches, under bridges, in doorways, the cold, hard realities of a growing homeless population are right before your eyes.

Street Roots
211 NW Davis St.
Portland, OR 97209

Address service requested.

ACT
NOW

Steps you can take to make a difference



AT ISSUE: HOUSING

Put your voice behind sustainable
affordable housing funds

A document recording fee for affordable housing is currently making its way through the Oregon legislative process. The new law would raise the nominal fee for recording documents in deed and mortgage records of county to generate funds affordable housing. This would be a breakthrough for local communities, including Portland, to have a much needed, dedicated revenue stream for housing low-income individuals and families, at a time when other funds are disappearing, and affordable housing is increasingly needed.

Now it's time to pick up the phone and remind your representatives in Salem that we want them to support HB 2436

Here's who you should call or write:

Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee

Sen. Betsy Johnson, Vice-Chair, District 16

Contact: 503-986-1716 sen.betsyjohnson@state.or.us

Rep. David Edwards, Co-Chair, District 30

Contact: 503-986-1430 rep.davedwards@state.or.us

Sen. Rod Monroe, District 24

Contact: 503-986-1724 sen.rodmonroe@state.or.us

Sen. Bruce Starr, District 15

Contact: 503-986-1715 sen.brucestarr@state.or.us

Rep. E. Terry Beyer, District 12

Contact: 503-986-1412 or 541-726-2533 rep.terrybeyer@state.or.us

Rep. George Gilman, District 55

Contact: 503-986-1455 rep.georgegilman@state.or.us

Rep. John E. Huffman, District 59

Contact: 503-986-1459 rep.johnhuffman@state.or.us

Rep. Mike Schaufler, District 58

Contact: 503-986-1448 rep.mikeschaufler@state.or.us

Rep. Brad Witt, District 31

Contact: 503-986-1431 rep.bradwitt@state.or.us

Senate Finance and Revenue Committee

Sen. Ginny Burdick, Chair, District 18

Contact: 503-986-1718 sen.ginnyburdick@state.or.us

Sen. Frank Morse, Vice-Chair, District 8

Contact: 503-986-1708 sen.frankmorse@state.or.us

Sen. Mark Hass, District 14

Contact: 503-986-1714 or 503-641-2742 sen.markhass@state.or.us

Sen. Diane Rosenbaum, District 21

Contact: 503-986-1721 or 503-231-9970 sen.dianerosenbaum@state.or.us

Sen. Chris Telfer, District 27

Contact: 503-986-1727 sen.christelfer@state.or.us

OREGON CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

David Wu

District 1

U.S. House of Representatives

2338 Rayburn H.O.B.

Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-0855

Fax: (202) 225-9497

Greg Walden

District 2

U.S. House of Representatives

2352 Rayburn H.O.B.

Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-6730

Fax: (202) 225-5774

Earl Blumenauer

District 3

U.S. House of Representatives

2446 Rayburn H.O.B.

Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-4811

Fax: (202) 225-8941

Peter DeFazio

District 4

U.S. House of Representatives

2134 Rayburn H.O.B.

Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-6416

Kurt Schrader

District 5

U.S. House of Representatives

1419 Longworth H.O.B.

Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-5711

Fax: (202) 225-5699

YOUR DONATION MATTERS

Street Roots is a 501(c)3, nonprofit organization. All donations are greatly appreciated and may be tax deductible. I would like to contribute:

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____

Send your check to:

Street Roots, 211 NW Davis, Portland, OR, 97209

Donate online at www.streetroots.org