PHOTO COLLECTION BY ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ

Celebrating 10 years of changing attitudes and lives

BY ISRAEL BAYER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's 8:30 on a Thursday morning, and the monthly vendor meeting is about to begin. People have been mulling about for more than a half an hour – drinking coffee, eating pastries and talking sales techniques and sports.

Nearly 40 people gather around. They are eager to talk about the increase in vendors and how it's effecting vendor locations throughout the city. In the past month, the number of individuals walking through the Street Roots door and selling the newspaper has increased dramatically. New faces and old assemble around the Street Roots table like a campfire on a chilly night. It's the same table where, more than a decade ago, five vendors and a few volunteers gathered around to plan the first edition of Street Roots.

> "I ask people if they know Street Roots. I want them to understand what Street Roots does and motivate them to buy it. Some people just pass by us, but others stop to listen to us. I enjoy selling the newspaper ... Street Roots is awesome. It lets the homeless make their own living."
>
> **- Jerry Leach, former vendor**

In the summer of 1998, the publisher of the Burnside Cadillac, a small homeless publication with about five vendors, handed the paper over to a volunteer photographer and shelter worker, Bryan Pollard.

Pollard recruited Michael Parker, a writer and book buyer from Powell's books, to help launch a new street newspaper.

With a handful of vendors and a small hodge-podge of friends and volunteers, the group decided to change the image of the newspaper. They would publish art and writings of the streets, while covering issues important to the broader community. They would work to incorporate journalism and art, poetry and activism into a product people experiencing homelessness would be proud to sell. It would be called Street Roots.

In December 1998 the first issue hit the streets. At the time, there were only a few vendor locations in the city. Seven vendors shared the territories, and the going was slow. Still, the volunteer-operated newspaper continued to scrape up enough money every month to publish. Volunteers worked around the clock to keep the newspaper afloat – running meetings, developing a working board, setting guidelines and deadlines for submissions, recruiting volunteers, and making themselves available at all hours of the day and night to sell the newspaper. In the first year, the press run

See CELEBRATION, page 8

The early years

Above, Street Roots celebrates its innaugural year. At right, the edition that put us on the map. Members of Street Roots documented the violence at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, 1999.