Hot topics, cool people

In more recent years, Street Roots has expanded its coverage to go beyond homelessness and into the issues surrounding poverty, affordable housing and human rights. We've highlighted the works and philosophies of the famous, and not-so-famous. At right is a feature on Eddy Barbosa, a former vendor, who was hired full-time as the Rose City Resource Specialist for Street Roots.

> "I had seen other street papers before but street roots is very professional, and when you read it you get a real feeling that the writers are compasionate about their work. It was something I wanted to be involved in."
>
> **- Echo, contributing writer**

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moved from its 12th & Morrison location to a new office in Old Town/Chinatown where it resides today at 211 NW Davis.

Street Roots gained an ally in Erik Sten. The housing commissioner and other City Hall staff members began to feed Street Roots stories – pitching different angles on specific topics to create a dialogue on issues not being discussed by Portlanders.

Street Roots never compromised its journalism through the relationship. Sten never bent on the criminalization of the homeless, and for that we called him soft and drilled him time and again. Still, the newspaper was evolving, and he and others around Portland took notice for the frank discussion our coverage generated.

The vendor program began to thrive. Papers published every two weeks created a more connected regular readership. It became easier for people to engage with individuals selling the newspaper. For years, Street Roots' readers made up a rainbow of people including social-service workers, activists, and poor people. But as Portland grew and gentrified, so did the Street Roots reader. Not only did Street Roots begin to reach those closest to the streets, but we began to reach those furthest away from them economically. More affluent readers began to purchase the newspaper and to build relationships with folks on the streets.

Street Roots continued to publish its own brand of gritty journalism and offer unique voices from the streets. In 2005, a feature in the Society for News Design journal called Street Roots one of the best, if not the best, street papers in the country.

Throughout 2006 readership grew, and vendor success increased. After six years, Street Roots began to see its third and fourth generation of vendors. Some old faces remained, but mostly new faces continued to walk through the door, accessing Street Roots as a means of gaining an independent income, a social network of support, and an outlet for expression and organizing.

Street Roots struggled to find the support it needed to grow. Regular readers gave $26 dollars a year in support of their neighborhood vendor by purchasing the newspaper every two weeks. How were we to connect with donors in a way that communicated that the organization also needed help to maintain the newspaper and vendor program?

Seven years had passed with interest growing in the community. However, we still hadn't learned how to financially grow the organization in a way that it would be sustainable. While the organization had helped hundreds of individuals find housing, and put nearly $1 million into the hands of vendors, the organization in many ways struggled to find an identity. Many Portlanders still didn't even know what Street Roots was and continued to believe that the paper was a publication for "those people" – the homeless. Could a homeless paper be taken seriously?

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Street Roots entered into a year-long process with TACS, a Portland non-profit consultanting group, and became more aggressive in how it maintained and developed the organization. An advisory board was created and the organization expanded its Board of Directors. It entered into a three-year strategic planning process and developed a timeline for growth. The three key areas of focus would be to support the vendor program, grow the newspaper and create economic stability.

At the same time, the North American and global movement of street papers were growing. More than 30 papers across the continent and 90 papers worldwide were now communicating and growing together. Ways to improve fund raising and how to improve the vendor program were being shared. The Street News Service, a global newswire made up of street papers, began to grow, and content from 17 languages was being shared. Now Street Roots was able to highlight issues affecting people living in poverty from South Africa to Japan, Seattle to Washington D.C.

Street Roots continued to see more and more people walking through the door to sell the newspaper. By 2007, the organization had seen its fifth and sixth generation of folks on the streets. We had learned the hard way the glacial pace with which bureaucracies dealt with poverty, and that many of the issues Street Roots focused on locally, such as criminalization, were seldom going to be prioritized by local and federal governments. If we were to reach people in a way that we weren't preaching to the choir, we had to expand and improve our coverage. So we did.

The organization began producing regular special editions to present indepth coverage on a broader range of topics. We remained an outlet to highlight the voices of the streets but also brought in celebrities and high-profile activists and facilitated campaigns to help folks on the streets sell more papers and to reach a new readership. We added the Act Now page to engage

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10 CELEBRATING A DECADE street roots
Education • Dialogue • Independence

Your on-line recurring donation keeps Street Roots strong and independent!

It's safe and easy and a great way to support the organization.

For 10-years Street Roots has published the voices of the streets while bringing readers some of the best journalism the city has to offer. We've put more than $1 million dollars into the hands of people experiencing homelessness and poverty. And we produce the most comprehensive list of resources in the Rose City Resource Guide. (Read more.)

Your support means that Street Roots can remain sustainable, especially during these hard times when the organization is more relevant than ever.

Go to www.streetroots.org and become a recurring donor today!

Levels of donors:

Rainy Day Supporter - $5 a month will provide the necessary materials (rain jackets, hand warmers, lip balm, etc.) for 10 vendors to stay warm and dry during the winter months.

Coffee Break Supporter - $10 a month will provide fresh water, tea and coffee to more than 200 individuals who sell the newspaper.

Tech Support - $25 a month will provide computers and Internet service for more than 200 vendors experiencing homelessness and poverty.

Front-Page Supporter - $50 a month helps produce one page of the paper a month. This is a great way to support Street Roots.

Cover-to-Cover Supporter - $100 a month covers the cost of one entire edition of the paper each year. A single print-run puts up to $10,000 directly in the hands of people experiencing homelessness and poverty.