

Media Roundup

A look at homelessness in Portland's news

■ A Willamette Week intern asked Street Roots this week if money provided by the city of Portland for the Rose City Resource Guide is in fact being channeled to the mostly volunteer editorial board as a payoff. Questions arose after Street Roots claimed it could help facilitate communication among more than 350 social-service agencies and people experiencing poverty. The paper reported that Street Roots had in fact, "Sit. Lied. Rolled over. And fetched" for the payoff from City Hall.

■ The Portland Mercury has decided to cover issues of poverty and homelessness without doing research on the subject for one-year. Mercury reporters told inquiring minds on their company that they are working circles around the Street Roots staff. One reporter blames Street Roots for not "manning up" and covering the issues he thinks the paper should be covering. "Why aren't they just printing our stories on the front page?" he asked reporters.

■ The Oregonian called to verify that homeless people are still, in fact, homeless.

■ The Portland Monthly has decided to profile the Top Ten Reasons Why no one really gives a crap what the Portland Monthly says about the economy. Coming in at No. 1 was, "No one really does give a crap about what we say about the economy."

■ Several neighborhood newspapers have reported a homeless invasion of neighborhoods. One neighborhood leader told the Portland Sentinel that if any public housing was built in the area, they would post videos on YouTube of neighborhood activists ripping the hearts out of poor people at a public event. Editorials from various neighborhood newspapers agreed, after brokering a deal for sponsoring the event in exchange for three months of advertising. Various musicians around Portland agreed to play the YouTube event, saying, "We owe this to ourselves; we're poor too." Microbrews from local breweries and restaurants will be available at the event. Children and pets are welcome.

■ KGW decided to air a special about how homeless people living out on the streets actually get wet during the rainy season. In an early morning investigative report, KGW found that 14 out of the 14 individuals they interviewed who had slept outside during Rainstorm 2009 actually woke up wet and miserable.

Feds question Street Roots' coverage

BY M.T. PROMISES
 UNEMPLOYED WRITER

The journalistic integrity of Street Roots is being questioned by government agencies after it did not publish several press releases on homelessness as news stories during the past year.

One insider said the newspaper had lost its way and could no longer be trusted on the issue. "Our research shows that reports mandated and developed by the federal government for funding are accurate. Why question the facts?"

Spokespeople for local city governments, the Interagency Council on Homelessness and the National Alliance to End Homelessness have questioned Street Roots for not getting in line and reporting on the real issues of chronic homelessness.

"Look, we know that people who have lived on the streets for more than one year are chronically at fault for their circumstances," says a burned-out administrator from the National Alliance to End Homelessness. "Our goal is to get these people off the streets as soon as

possible. We're not necessarily concerned with their civil rights, but we do think their presence on street corners is bad for business. Our research shows that we can without a doubt clear these folks off the streets in 10 years."

"Will people we house have jobs or be contributing to society in a year? That's not the issue," says the National Alliance spokesperson. "Our goal is to have as many people in housing as possible before another million people hit the streets."

Interagency Council on Homelessness representatives agree, saying the root causes of homelessness are really not the issue. "The issue is people who are homeless, and, frankly, we're tired of Street Roots and other street papers around the country questioning this. We wish they would stop their whining."

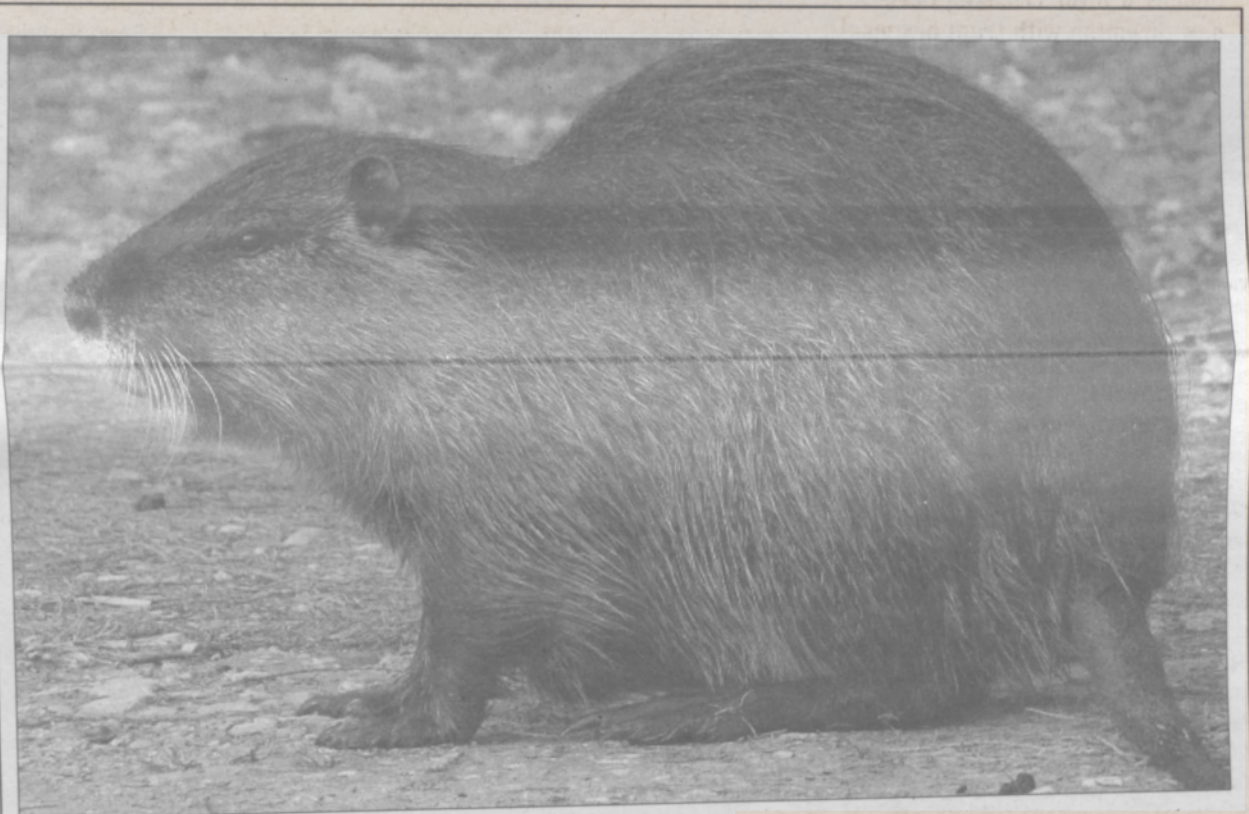
One local official working with the Housing Bureau says, "Our strategy at this point is to just ignore Street Roots."

"If they (Street Roots) think that writing about the systematic causes of homelessness and poverty are something that's going to help the city's political will to

end the crisis of homelessness, then they are sadly mistaken," says one insider.

"Just because there's an economic crisis developing and we live in a society without health care or affordable housing doesn't mean that homelessness can't be solved," says one nonprofit head and 10-year plan advocate. "The bigger corporations and private developers already know that there's no profit in building housing for poor people. Our strategy with private developers and landlords is to be nice to them and not require any kind of regulations - like taking Section 8 vouchers or forcing companies to develop affordable housing. We think after all the money is made - they'll be receptive to our ideas. We will get affordable housing built in this city. Mark my words."

Asked if Street Roots coverage on the subject even mattered, the 10-year proponent said, "The newspaper is cute. I read the poems and I love my local neighborhood vendor, but concerning news - there's really no reason to believe anything they report. It's foolishness. I think our numbers show this."



Nutria-itious? Not to everyone's taste

BY STAFF REPORTS

The Northeast Nutria Processors, which distributes hundreds of nutria meals to Portland restaurants each week, has been shut down amid animal-rights protests.

The meals served about 300 people a week and also helped keep in check the nutria population that never seemed significantly affected by hunting efforts.

Still, animal-rights activists, third-shift workers and strolling lovers have launched a campaign against the nutria distributors, saying the invasive, semi-aquatic rodents, which some have likened to giant rats, are

a cultural icon in the Willamette Valley, and are a welcome sight in the late night and early morning hours. Nutria are known to live along the Eastbank Esplanade and sleep in the dark recesses under the overpass.

Weighing in at about 12 pounds each, a single fricasseed nutria easily can feed seven people. The nutria meal service, launched four years ago, was seen as the perfect solution to address the growing numbers of the animal, and supplying an affordable, meat-packed meals to Portlanders. Activists have organized against the nutria harvest in the past, but

this week successfully persuaded City Hall to pull the plug on the operation.

Pierce Wellington, who owns Northwest Nutria Processors, said he has 400 nutria in the company freezers that they will have to dispose of. One consideration is a marketing strategy to reach higher-end diners in a kabob format, using nutria's more exotic European name, coypu.

"I'm looking into our options right now," Wellington said. "We're appealing to get a permit for the Rose Festival, but that's a long way off."

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 With Alejandro Queral, Joanne Zuhl
 Linda Olson-Osterlund and Patrik Angstrom

Tune in to We The People on KBOO, 90.7 fm 6-7 p.m. the fourth Thursday of every month