

**DIRECTOR'S  
DESK**

By Israel Bayer



Street newspapers are getting recognized more and more by the mainstream media around the globe. The street newspaper movement is being highlighted for its unique model of working with folks on the streets, but it's also getting noticed for its reporting on the issues of homelessness and poverty.

In the past month, Street Roots has been highlighted in the New York Times, The Oregonian and a national religious publication, Relevant Magazine. Other newspapers have been highlighted in papers, including the Seattle Times and the Washington Post.

And in one of the bigger honors of the year, reporter Rosette Royal, with our sister paper Real Change in Seattle, recently received a national award from the Society of Professional Journalists for feature writing for newspapers with a circulation under 100,000. The award-winning story about a sex offender who ended his life by jumping off a bridge in Seattle ran in a three-part series called "The man who stood on the bridge." What makes the 15,000-word story unique is that it came from a newsroom with only three staff members supported by volunteers and folks living on the streets.

While journalism and newspapers are being debated under the dark cloud of the recession and declining readership — street papers and quality journalism are finding a place on a street corner near you. It's not something we celebrate without recognizing that a growing homeless population and broken system is at play in communities throughout the U.S. and around the globe.

The street newspaper movement continues to grow stronger with the use of technology and networking. Through shared experiences and content, we continue to learn and improve services for individuals on the streets and the newspapers themselves. But most importantly, we are working hard to highlight and report on the shared experiences of people experiencing poverty and oppression — as highlighted in this issue.

Our relationship with readers and the broader community is important to us. We realize that the vast majority of experiences with vendors are positive ones. We also realize that not every experience may be positive. Working with individuals on the streets in a public arena is something that is a community effort. We rely on the broader public to communicate with us what's happening on the streets. Everyone has a different perspective, and we do our best to create an atmosphere where vendors are respectful to everyone. Together we are acting locally and thinking globally.

**What's driving the Spring Fund Drive?**

The irony isn't lost on us. As Street Roots celebrates 10 years of education, dialogue, and independence, the economy is creating a whole new wave of homelessness and poverty. Street Roots is seeing a ground swell of individuals walking through our door, looking for resources, answers, and a way to earn an immediate income to meet a pressing need.

In a recent issue of Street Roots, Julie McCurdy describes her experience of suddenly becoming homeless for the first time:

"I am new. Portland may be my hometown, but suddenly it feels as foreign as some far-flung city in the Near East. Why? Because I am new to the streets. So many names for it — I prefer to say I am becoming an urban gypsy, not that I am exploring my inner bum. But these are just semantics. The fact is, I have become homeless ... At 45 years old, being gloriously round, semi-crippled, with grey beginning to dance in the strands of my hairline, it didn't occur to me that I would have to choose between protection and core values. Yet here I am — trying to still the icy tentacles of fear racing along over-exposed nerve endings."

While new faces are appearing, the economy is also hitting the organizations trying to meet those needs. We are all trying to do more with less, including Street Roots. Yet the organization is more relevant than ever. From in-depth coverage in the pages of the newspaper to the relationships built between vendors and customers, Street Roots reminds us that we're all in this thing together.

Your support this spring means that more than 250 individuals will secure basic human needs while reclaiming self-worth and human connections. It also means that Street Roots will stay in front of issues like affordable housing and mental health services, reporting the facts on issues that affect us all. Supporting Street Roots keeps the dialogue happening, and puts stories of people like Julie McCurdy in the public eye.

"I try desperately to sleep on this one street corner. I have turned down the dubious offer of 'protection' from the bleary-eyed, slack-jawed man next to me. I spent the last two hours before dawn shivering under blankets with wide-open eyes and a thudding heart. Quite frankly, I would prefer to click my heels and just go home. Oh yeah — right now, this is home."

Times are hard and everyone is stretched thin. But we're all in this together. Please think about giving today.



Falling temperatures raise the trauma of depression

**ACT  
NOW**

Steps you can take to make a difference

**What you can do:**

Go to **www.streetroots.org** and see the Act Now on the front page and sign a petition and send a letter to the Mayor and City Commissioners today and tell them to save critical housing and homeless funding. You can also call their offices and ask to save critical services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. More than 600 people have taken action. You can be the next!

**AT ISSUE: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS****Restore critical funding for local services**

The Bureau of Housing and Community Development's proposed budget, including the \$6.7 million in one-time General Fund dollars is at risk of being cut. To preserve vital services and housing for people in crisis we believe that in this current economic climate it's critical that the City of Portland show leadership in funding and maintaining crucial services that impact low-income Portlanders.

Many social-service agencies are seeing an increase in individuals and families seeking services due to the economic climate. We trust that the City of Portland will find the resources to maintain these essential programs.

**CONTACT YOUR CITY COUNCIL**

Sam Adams  
Mayor  
1221 SW 4th Ave,  
Room 340, 97204  
(503) 823-4120

Amanda Fritz  
1221 SW 4th Ave,  
Room 220, 97204  
(503)823-3008  
amanda@  
ci.portland.or.us

Dan Saltzman  
1221 SW 4th Ave,  
Room 230, 97204  
(503)823-4151  
dsaltzman@  
ci.portland.or.us

Nick Fish  
1221 SW 4th Ave,  
Room 240, 97204  
(503)823-3589  
nick@  
ci.portland.or.us

Randy Leonard  
1221 SW 4th Ave,  
Room 210, 97204  
(503)823-4682  
randy@  
ci.portland.or.us

Street Roots  
211 NW Davis St.  
Portland, OR 97209

Return service requested.

**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](http://www.streetroots.org)