

street roots.org



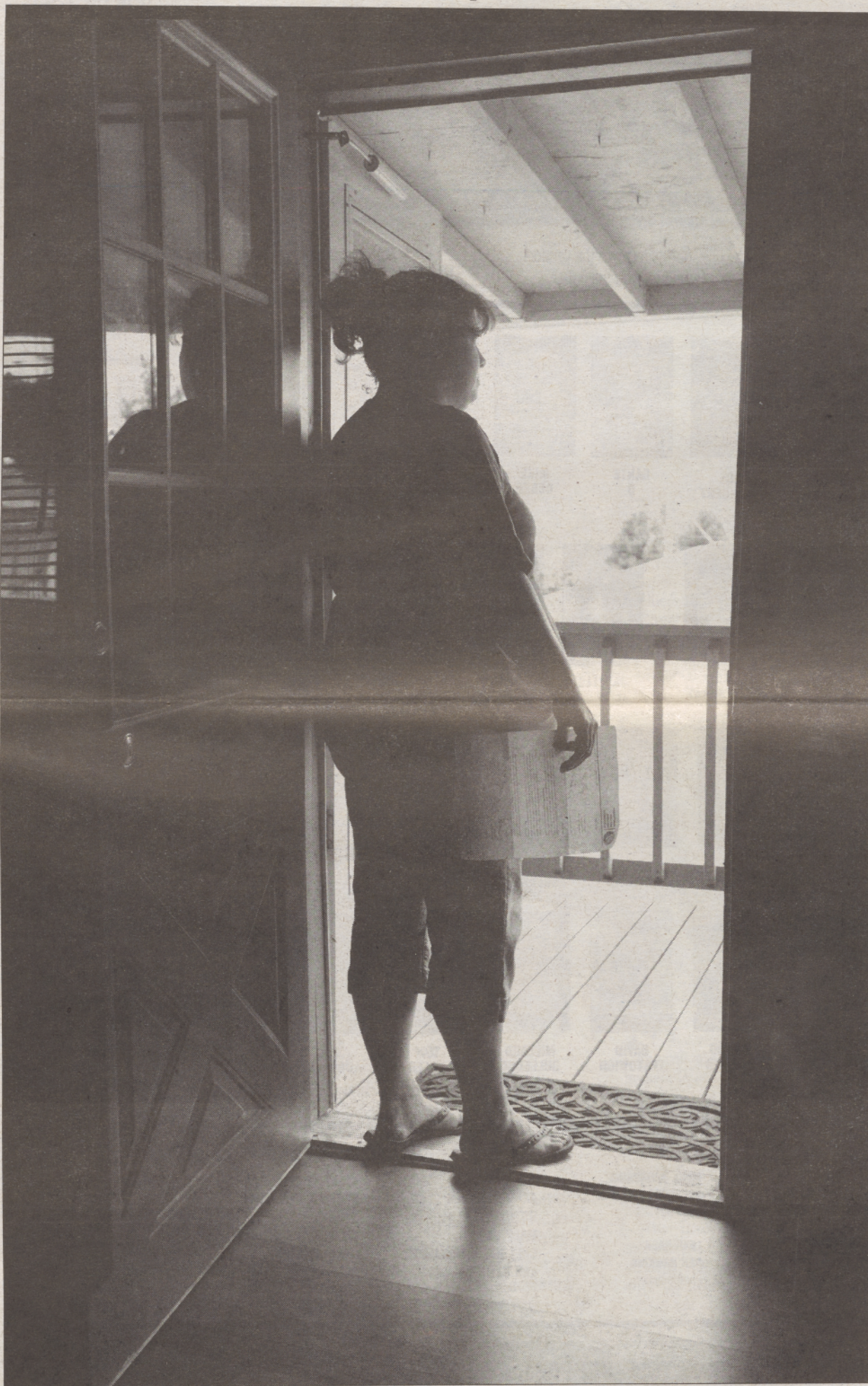
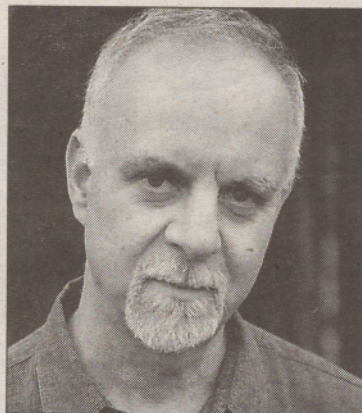
CELEBRATING
A DECADE OF

Education • Dialogue • Independence

A DUET, FOR MUSICIAN AND WRITER

An interview with Steve Lopez, the
author behind 'The Soloist'

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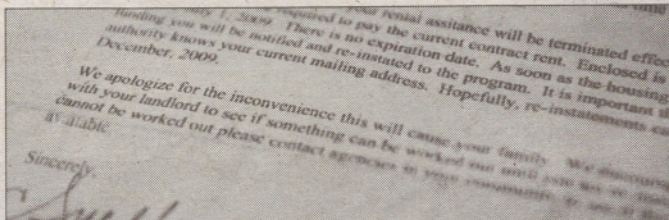
PHOTOS BY KEN HAWKINS WWW.KENHAWKINS.COM

Jennifer Cherry stares out her door with the letter from the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority in hand. She was one of 285 households that received letters (shown below) from NOHA, terminating their Section 8 rental assistance. The assistance paid for 90 percent of her rent. The terminations were the result of reduced funding through the federal Housing and Urban Development because NOHA's capacity fell short of HUD guidelines.

ACT NOW

Demand HUD meet the
full demand of housing
our poor, disabled
and elderly.

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The letter

*It arrived late May to
nearly 300 Section 8
recipients in Northwest
Oregon, giving them
30 days to avoid
becoming homeless*

BY JOANNE ZUHL
STAFF WRITER

This summer, unlike the past, held promise for Jennifer Cherry. After two years on a waiting list, Jennifer and her family finally received their Section 8 voucher and in February found a home. For her and her fiancé, Jeff Crist, and their three children, it meant they could move out of her mother's house, put her children in good schools in Garibaldi, and concentrate on recovering physically and finding jobs. They each suffered disabilities that left them without work — Jennifer has a herniated disc in her neck and Jeff is recovering from a collision with a logging truck two years ago. But he had recently received his certificate as a logger and was looking to get on a crew this summer. Next month, Jennifer will go in for surgery to correct her neck.

Yes, there was a lot of potential in the air, right up to the moment Jennifer opened the letter from the housing authority at the start of June.

"Our funding has been reduced significantly effective June 1, 2009 through Dec. 31, 2009. Our only option at this time is to terminate rental assistance for a minimum of 230 program participants.... We apologize for the inconvenience this will cause your family..."

The "inconvenience" poses an insurmountable financial barrier to her family. Jennifer and her fiancé's combined income is \$700 a month through disability assistance. Their rent is \$984, of which NOHA paid about 90 percent.

"It has taken so long to get where we're at, and then to just be pushed out," Jennifer says, in between silence and tears. "It's taken us two years to get this far, and in one month we're supposed to be homeless again?"

A total of 285 letters were sent out to Section 8 recipients like Jennifer in Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook counties, all managed by the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority, or NOHA. That's equal to the entire population of Manzanita, or other rural towns that pepper that region of the state — roughly 25 percent of NOHA's Section 8 participants. It comes as a devastating blow to renters who are among the disabled, elderly and poor, and it has many people who work with the vulnerable in the region scratching their heads at to how such a catastrophic failure of bureaucracy could occur seemingly without warning.

For a would-be tenant, securing Section 8 housing assistance means navigating an

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