

EDITORIAL

Behind every success story is you

How do we measure success in these times? It's a hard notion to embrace as we trudge through the most abysmal economic slog of our lives. With Oregon's unemployment languishing around 12 percent, and approximately 1 out of every 200 Oregonians experiencing homelessness today – according to the federal Department Housing and Urban Development – the crisis is hitting chest level, and for too many, breaching sustainability.

To be sure, numbers are in the abstract, statistics are cold, and speak more of bureaucratic measurements than real-time life. But in real terms, on the ground, the

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times are as hard as we've ever seen them. The tragic stories carried through our door ring closer to middle-class "America" than they ever have before. And the numbers of people looking for help, for answers, for hope, are backing up on every agency and organization's doorstep.

But today, despite those dark clouds, we want to talk about success. It can't always be expressed on a chart, or in mathematical extrapolations. At its core, every success, like every tragedy, is personal.

Success comes in the form of the young couple in homelessness that came to Street Roots last year to establish their own stability to prepare for the baby on the way. Today, they are a happy family who have gotten into housing and are paying rent, caring for their adorable son and working together to stay above the waters. They stop by the Street Roots office now and again, selling papers as money falls short, and looking far healthier and happier than when they first arrived looking for that hope.

Success is in the many people who have worked their way off the streets, first by making their own income through paper sales, connecting with the community that wants to help, and working diligently toward their own security. Our office is their office, to plan and prepare. Many of them continue to sell the newspaper even after the most extreme crisis has passed. It is their profession.

It's in the vendor who began with us working through a powerful addiction to alcohol, who struggled to find a balance in his life. Through us, his own commitment, and the larger network of support we work with, he now has two years of sobriety – and a new life. In housing now, and still a vendor, he photocopies his annual sobriety coins to turn into cards for his family.

There are countless others who find a family each morning around our table in our shotgun office, among fellow vendors, the staff and volunteers, where they have someone to talk to whom they know will understand – without neither the free pass of pity nor the gavel of judgment. It's easy to think that there is no price to be put on trust, dignity and equality, but there is definitely a cost in denying those fundamental human needs in our community.

Last, but not least, is that you are reading this because a scant handful of staff, coupled by a legion of dedicated volunteers and vendors, make this success story happen every day. We do not have a voice without them, and we cannot deliver that voice without you. Thank you.

STREET ROOTS' EDITORIAL BOARD

The views expressed in the editorials in Street Roots are the consensus of members of the editorial board and contributing volunteers.

Summertime, when the living is hard

It's time for some truth telling. Street Roots is in a period of hard challenges in the months to come. Three years ago, the organization set out on an aggressive

growth strategy that would boost the vendor program, improve and broaden the content of the newspaper and grow the organization in a way that would create systemic change in the community. Since

comes to institutional support for our programs.

We need your help now! Street Roots relies on individual donors and supporters in the community to survive. In theory, regular Street Roots readers give at least \$26 dollars per year to their local neighborhood vendor. This act goes to support individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty with their day-to-day survival and increasing people's quality of life. It also creates an atmosphere of relationship-building across class lines that you simply aren't going to find anywhere else in the city. We believe in believing in people, and your support and readership makes that a reality.

Saying that, Street Roots can't support vendors and the relationships built with the community without having organizational support. It takes money to print and maintain a newspaper. And without a newspaper, there's no vendor program. Both programs are joined at the hip. It also takes money to maintain a day-to-day space for vendors and people on the streets to gather in a safe environment and to have the supplies needed to support these efforts.

Street Roots needs to raise a humbling \$15,000 in July and August to keep the train on the tracks. We're not sounding alarm bells, but we are saying out loud that without your support we won't be able to maintain at the level we are today in the coming months.

Your donation this summer will help Street Roots to:

- Get the news out to 10,000 readers every other week – covering the issues that affect real people every day
- Provide an income for 80 men and women experiencing homelessness and poverty in Portland
- Lead strategic campaigns that improve the quality of life for residents with the fewest resources
- Connect thousands of low-income residents with vital services through the Rose City Resource

Street Roots always relies on community support. This summer it's more important than ever. Thanks for giving what you can.

You can make a check or money order out to Street Roots, 211 NW Davis, Portland, Oregon 97209 or donate online at www.streetroots.org.

DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Street Roots encourages readers to submit letters and columns for publication. Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mailed to streetroots@email.com.

2006, the organization has done exactly that.

The vendor program for people experiencing homelessness and poverty has grown. The quality of the newspaper, specifically the journalism and a diverse range of community voices, including those on the streets, is at an all-time high. The Rose City Resource Guide transformed from a 4-page insert in the newspaper to a 104-page, 4-by-4 pocket guide and a state-of-the-art Web site connecting services to people most in need. The organization has led successful campaigns to secure homeless services in Portland and throughout the region, helped families maintain Section 8 housing and changed the conversation around homelessness and poverty.

Now we find ourselves at a crossroads. The organization is set to add a new location in November in outer East Portland to expand the benefits of the vendor program to a growing homeless and low-income population on the east side. We are working on developing the technology to bring the streets to the World Wide Web and are working to create a more timely and effective publication for readers and vendors alike.

All of this comes at a time when the economy has plummeted and the newspaper industry as a whole struggles to develop sustainable funding streams. It also comes at a time when homelessness is rapidly increasing and funding is drastically decreasing from foundations.

Street Roots is not a conventional social-service agency, so we don't receive big government contracts or grants. Most foundations don't fund media projects. While we pride ourselves on being outside the box, it's true that oftentimes we find ourselves on the outside looking in when it



Vendors gather around the front desk at Street Roots to buy papers on a busy Friday morning. Friday mornings when the new papers hit the streets, are busiest days of the week.