

NEWSBRIEFS

Bayer, community members honored by city committee

Street Roots Executive Director Israel Bayer was among a group of individuals and organizations recognized with achievement awards by the Portland Coordinating Committee to End Homelessness. The awards were presented Wednesday by City Commissioner Nick Fish and Multnomah County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury.

Bayer was honored for his "leadership and ingenuity in challenging the community to act, respond and live to promote justice for all people and be a voice for marginalized groups."

Also receiving awards were the Multnomah County Mobile Medical Clinic, Cascade AIDS Project, and the Home Builders Foundation. Other individuals honored were Lio Alaaloa with JOIN, Liora Berry with Cascadia BHC, Liv Jenssen with the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice, and Holly Redeau of Central City Concern.

Deadline approaches for seniors to tap farmers' market subsidy

Almost 25,000 low-income Oregon seniors are receiving help to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers markets and farm stands, but some 17,000 additional eligible seniors haven't signed up yet, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services. The deadline to sign up is Sept. 15.

The state has sent more than 42,000 eligible Oregon seniors invitations to participate in the federally funded Oregon Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program, which runs annually from June 1 to Oct. 31. To be eligible, seniors must have turned 60 by April 1, 2009, receive Food Stamps or Medicaid, have a monthly income below \$1038 for an individual, and live in their own home or rental unit.

Those who sign and return the letter to DHS by Sept. 15 will receive farm-direct checks that can be used at any participating farm stand or farmers market in Oregon through the end of October. Participants also receive information on the locations of authorized farm stands and farmers markets in their area and nutritional information, including recipes and tips to healthy eating.

For more information on the Oregon Senior Farm Direct Nutrition Program, contact your local office serving seniors and people with disabilities /www.oregon.gov/DHS/localoffices/index.shtml

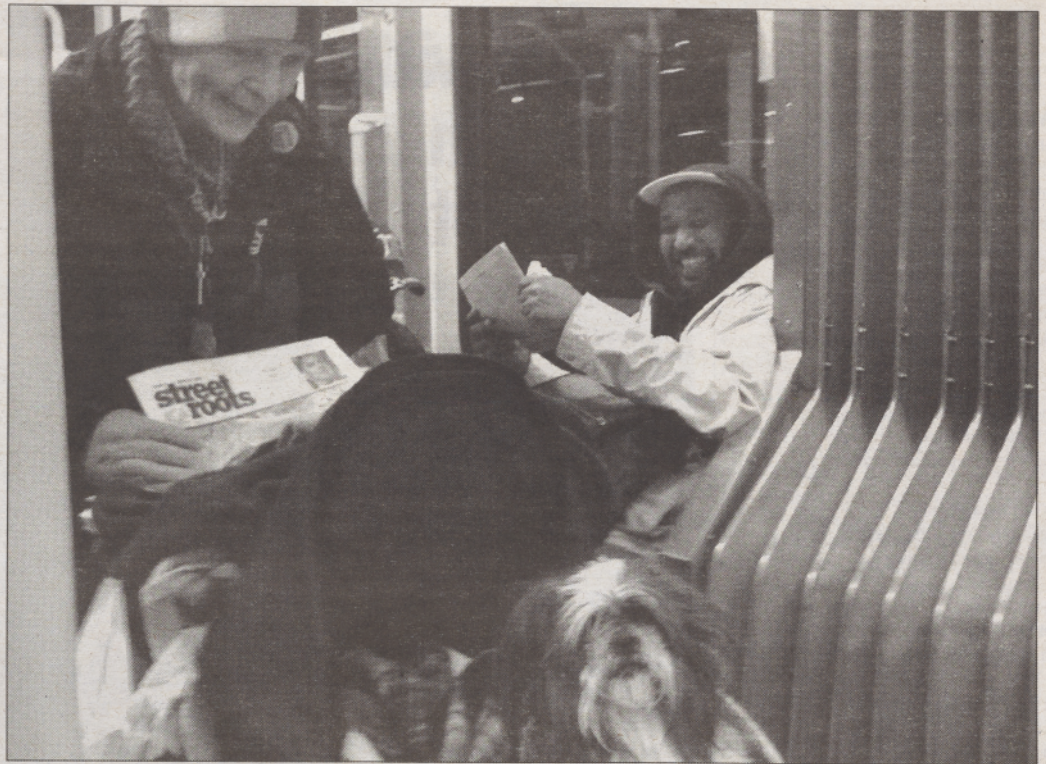


PHOTO BY SCOTT KEELER

Sharing smiles

A reader sent in this photo of vendor Vicky Sittinghawk sharing a laugh with a customer on the Max train – along with her dog, Max.

Group says health care bill contains discriminatory provision

STAFF REPORTS

A group of Oregon advocacy, labor, business and faith representatives say a health reform proposal under development will allow employers to discriminate against low- and moderate-income families.

In a letter to Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, the group says the "free-rider" provision would require these employers to pay a fee for each worker receiving a federal subsidy to help them purchase

insurance. The employer would pay nothing for employees ineligible for subsidies due to their family income, the

group says.

The group, which includes the Oregon Center for Public Policy, AFSCME Local 3214, Health Care for All Oregon; and Oregon Action, Portland Chapter, among others, say the provision would apply only to employers who do not provide affordable health coverage for their low- and moderate-income employees. They want it removed from the health care proposal being developed by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus.

"Employers subject to the provision would find it more expensive to hire employees from lower income households than those from higher income ones," the

group says in its letter. "Consequently, the provision would create an incentive for employers to favor higher income job candidates. Knowledge of a prospective employee's household income information – whether the job seeker has a spouse with a well-paying job or whether he or she is a single parent, for example – could prove decisive, and thus discriminatory, in hiring decisions."

The group says a better approach would be to require employers who fail to offer coverage to pay a fee on their total payroll, rather than a fee tied to a particular employee.



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