

Dreams can come true, and sometimes they bring jobs

Every time the Powerball goes over a hundred million, I think about the cold mornings waiting in line at the Blanchet House. Sometimes some of the

homeless guys would come to the line soaking wet, shivering. I'd look at those guys and think, "What the hell, how the hell did these guys get wet?" I'd feel sorry for them,

watching them shiver. Then one day it happened to one of my friends. I was standing in line with another friend. We started laughing as our friend walked up shivering. We asked him, "What are you, nuts, walking around wet?" He replied, "No, I fell asleep on the landing docks."

Across the street from the Blanchet House is a huge, old, abandoned warehouse. Sometimes they would turn the sprinkler system on the homeless as they were sleeping on the docks. What a rude awakening.

One morning, a friend asked if I'd pitch in

for a Powerball ticket. Then he told me, "If I win, we're going to buy the warehouse across the street for the Blanchet House." Then he went on to say, "And we're going to turn the warehouse into a big homeless shelter. I told him, "Hell yeah! I'm in."

My friend Vince and I were looking at the building. We figured the first floor would be offices, intake, counseling, conference rooms, showers, bathrooms, and laundry facilities. The second floor would be for families, the third for single mothers, the fourth for single fathers, the fifth for youth, and the sixth only for women. The top floor would be open to any homeless person. All the times we tried the Powerball, we didn't win more than \$12.

I left Portland in 2000, and didn't return until March of this year. I checked out my old stomping grounds. I went by the Blanchet House. It was still there, and still the same. Across the street was the warehouse, and they were renovating it. My heart started beating quickly. I thought to myself, Wow, did somebody hear about our plans to make the warehouse into a shelter? I knew it wasn't any of my friends, because

they're all dead. Happy and excited, I looked at the warehouse building and smiled.

Some time later, I found out it was going to be an office building. My heart sank. Then I told myself it was just one of those days.

Now I hear Commissioner Fish is going to start construction on the Resource Access Center. The RAC building is going to have affordable housing, a homeless shelter, support services, and a day shelter for homeless people. This is a great start, but we need more, like across the river in Northeast, and in Southwest. Homeless people aren't just downtown.

I'm excited about the RAC building, and I know it will help a lot of homeless people. Yet one thought keeps going through my mind. Are there going to be any homeless or low-income people working on the job site?

We should e-mail Commissioner Fish to applaud his creativity and courage on the RAC building, and also encourage him to put homeless and low-income people on the job site.



THE WANDERER

Leo Rhodes

Leo Rhodes is a street activist and homeless advocate. He is also a vendor with Street Roots and a regular contributor to the newspaper. His street name is The Wanderer.

Emptiness

By Wesley Hesketh

The emptiness of the street
Pounding at my soul
Making me only one half
Where once I was a whole

The hunger and the loneliness
Fill this life of mine
Looking for a handout
People never being kind

The pain that is in life
Never makes its point
Drug-induced this dreaminess
I'll smoke just one more joint

Now I'm at the bottom
Falling in a pit
Now I find that drugs and smoke
Is not really it

But in the streets I'm living
No one being kind
Can't they understand?
What is on my mind?

As I lie here sleeping
People walking by
No one to help me up
No one gives a try

But someday I'll stand up straight
I will show them all
That my life is not a mess
My happiness does call

Though I have no money
Not even a room they'll give
Nobody really can be with me
In this life I live



By Bernard Patrick



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