

'Thank you, everyone!'

BY CHARLES YOST

I just like to thank all my Street Roots customers and thank Street Roots for getting me into this beautiful home that I'm living in. ("Arriving home after a long journey homeless," Street Roots, Dec. 23) I remember back in August when Israel Bayer steered me to Northwest Pilot Projects. He suggested I go see these guys and I did. Street Roots, Northwest Pilot Projects and AA – thank you! AA was the main thing because it basically kept me sober, and that's what kept me going.

I just want to thank everybody for their responses. I got Christmas cards, housewarming cards from my customers. An anonymous reader gave me a gift on Christmas Eve where I live. To everyone who saw me on Facebook, I want to thank them all again!

**Saul Cortes:
Northwest's
Shaman in
training**

BY COLE MERKEL
STAFF WRITER

Saul Cortes watches over the community around him. During our interview at his sales location, the Whole Foods at Northwest 13th Avenue and Couch Street, he had conversations with many passersby. It was a cold day and he asked a friend who passed, "You need some handwarmers?" She was fine, but the offer opened five minutes of conversation between the two. A few minutes later he yelled, "Hey! Check your bag!" to a mail carrier up the block who had dropped a few letters from his pack.

It's amazing how many ways Saul has developed to greet people in the community. "Hi there," he said to one person, followed rapidly by, "How you doing there?" then, "Howdy, howdy." He has developed a personalized style for each individual he encounters. "I'm just trying to basically sell papers," said Saul. "It's actually a no-sale sale: saying 'hi,' being cordial to people, trying to remember what they like, getting to know the people. There are quite a few people who are basically full-time customers. I don't have an extra story for them."

A conversation with Saul is straight to the point: he tells it like it is, as he sees it. His self-assurance and confidence in his philosophy of life are refreshing.

"It's all about tolerance, compassion and community for me," said Saul. "We're all part of a community; don't think you're by yourself." As part of the community, Saul encourages people to rely on him and each other. "Use what you can from others when you need it, but at the same time realize you've got to put the effort out there for yourself. There's really nobody else who's going to take care of your problems unless they can see your problems."

Saul's proclivity toward compassion can be traced back to his youth in The Bronx. The oldest of 14 siblings, Saul has been responsible for others since he can remember. He vividly recalled a key moment in his development: "One day I slammed the door on my little brother,

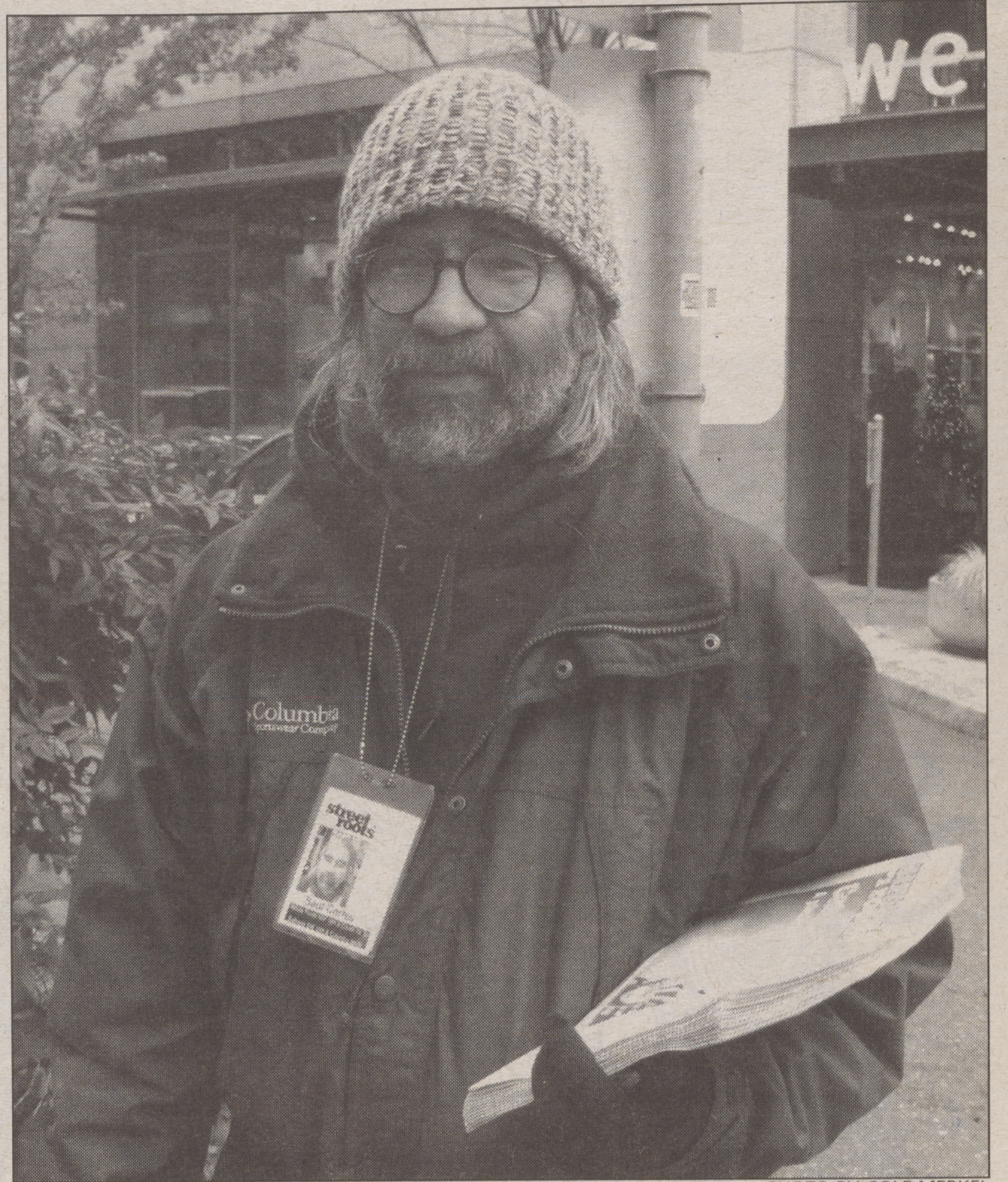


PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

didn't realize his hand was in there, and I clipped off the tip of his finger. I freaked, and I realized from that moment on not to do something that stupid again, to never be inconsiderate."

From that instant, Saul was inspired to move toward working in the medical field. He worked in emergency rooms for more than a decade becoming certified as a licensed practical nurse with experience as an EMT and advanced cardiac life support. "Working the medical field, I've seen all kinds of stuff," said Saul. "I've seen that some people live, some people die, and it made me ask 'Why?' I see that we really do need the spiritual side of things. I've always been pretty close with God and it's not just God, but a spiritual framework I try to keep."

Now Saul's dream is to be a shaman. "I'm trying to get to a comfortable enough position where I can start," he said. "I need to really get settled, and I'm wondering if

Portland's the best spot for me to do that, because, on top of the cost, I have to be in a place that I'm comfortable with. Everything about shamanism is about being practical. Right now it's not practical for me to do anything but stay warm."

Whether or not his dream is fulfilled, Saul has positive intentions for his present and future: "I see myself being part of a community, being part of something that matters to me, being happy with what I'm doing and trying to help the most; to pick up the scarred people who need it."

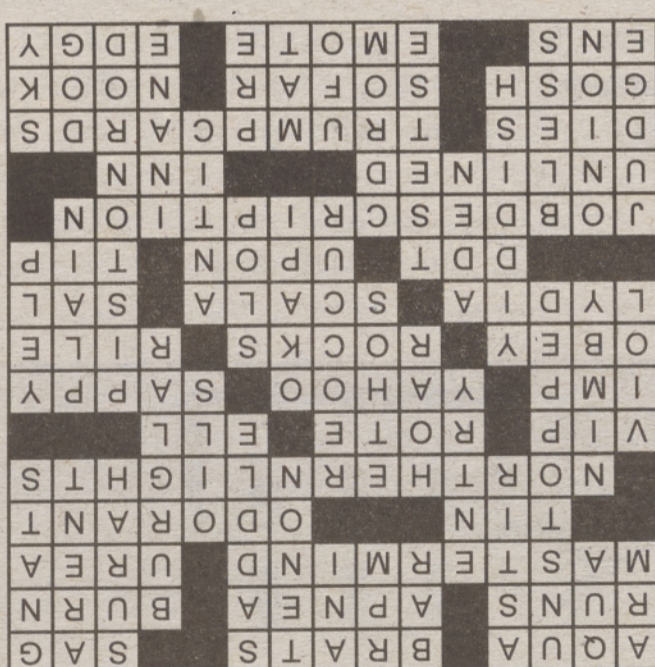
As our interview drew to a close, a woman who works in a nearby parking garage approached Saul and asked, "Are you taking care of yourself in the cold, man?" He told her yes and they chatted for a few minutes like old friends. It is that ease of communication, friendliness and willingness to give that make Saul an asset to his community.

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Answers to puzzles on page 15



1	9	3	7	8	2	4	6	5
4	7	8	1	5	6	3	2	9
6	5	2	9	4	3	7	8	1
3	4	7	2	6	1	5	9	8
5	6	9	8	7	4	2	1	3
8	2	1	5	3	9	6	7	4
9	8	5	3	2	7	1	4	6
7	1	6	4	9	5	8	3	2
2	3	4	6	1	8	9	5	7

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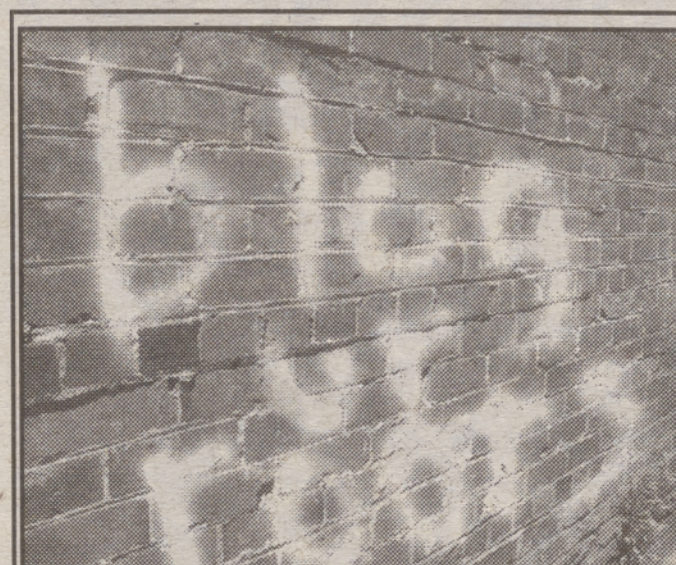
CORRECTIONS

Street Roots strives for accuracy, but we're human. So we also strive to correct errors in our paper whenever possible. Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to joanne@streetroots.org

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