

## EDITORIAL

## Walking beats key to keeping our streets safe

Street Roots and its vendors witness and experience both legal policies and illegal activities that play out on the streets of Portland.

That's why when law enforcement and community groups target one neighborhood or area of the city, we see first hand how it affects a geographical area or a population of people in another. When things flare up, or there is a heavy push by law enforcement to target a specific population such as drug dealers, drug users or homeless people, it sets off a chain reaction that often times comes with consequences.

For example, when law enforcement targets Old Town-Chinatown for drug dealing, the game simply shifts to the Pioneer Courthouse Square area. When Pioneer Courthouse Square becomes the target, dealers may move to Third and Fourth Avenues, and so on.

**Having police officers assigned to a walking beat in the downtown core would create a presence for which drug-dealers couldn't hide from.**

Unfortunately, what happens in this process is that other groups of people, those some consider the undeserving poor (panhandlers, drug users), and the deserving poor (Street Roots vendors, canvassers, etc.) are then affected. Businesses are almost always caught in the crossfire, hence, the Portland Business Alliance advocates for strict laws across the board to protect the interests it represents. Finding the balance is tricky business.

When these events are set into motion, the streets often become tense and unsafe. If you push dealers, users and aggressive panhandlers out of one area, once-stable street corners that have Street Roots vendors, canvassers and others suddenly become the target of the more aggressive population. These are the turf wars we see repeated throughout the city.

Recently, drug dealers have been targeting Street Roots vendors in the central core of the city, especially near Pioneer Courthouse Square. After two months of squeezing out the Old Town-Chinatown neighborhood through the newly created drug-impact areas, dealers are now moving their operations to a more densely populated area where Portlanders become the cover for drug transactions.

It's impossible to staunch the flow of drugs into Portland or any other community in the United States with our reactionary policies. It's impossible to slay the dragon with police sweeps of drug dealers that are equal parts political theater and squeaky wheel grease. It simply will not curtail the problem.

What's the answer? In the long-term, it's much more complicated and something the city with the current budget crisis simply doesn't have the resources to achieve — outreach workers, economic development and other harm reduction models. In the short term, we believe it's simple. Put more police officers on a walking beat, something Street Roots and other community groups have advocated for years as a proven means of keeping our streets safe.

This doesn't mean more uniforms on bikes or Segways, which reinforce the distance, but officers actually engaged with the streets, top to bottom. Having police officers assigned to a walking beat in the downtown core would create a presence for which drug-dealers couldn't hide from. Police officers would become better acquainted with business owners, neighbors and others living, working and surviving on the streets. Real relationships would be forged and together we could face the problem head on. Walking officers could also cut down on fuels consumption, carbon emissions, and even boost physical fitness opportunities among the ranks.

Chasing crime around this city doesn't make us any safer. But we can fill the vacuum that attracts criminal activity with a positive presence that walks in our shoes.

## All of us can play a part in a safer winter

For many people on the streets, including SR vendors, this time of year can bring a range of hardships that make every day a matter of life or death. Any number of ailments and sicknesses can spiral into an emergency situation. Making sure that individuals and families have proper cover from the rain and cold is challenging. When temperatures fall below freezing, it's even more challenging.



## DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org

Portland has a great system in place when it comes to emergency situations and bad weather. A network of outreach workers and emergency shelters are in place to respond to the growing number of people on the streets. Unfortunately, that's sometimes not enough. Sometimes, it is the goodwill of random strangers that may mean the difference between someone living and dying on the streets.

Here are a couple of things you can do to possibly help someone on the streets. If you have a relationship with someone on the streets already, it's always great to check in during cold spells. Ask if they are in need of

anything specific, and remind them about the Street Roots Rose City Resource, a pocket-sized booklet listing available services. The guide is available at most social service agencies in the region. If people are in need of a hand-warmer, socks, something warm to drink, have a heart.

You can also call 211 and find out the latest information about emergency shelters and what be available on any given night. The 211call center is open in Multnomah County daily from 8 a.m.-7 p.m. from Nov. 1 through March 31. If you fear that someone may be experiencing a medical emergency, or if someone is not responding, it's always best to go with your gut instinct and call 911. In the age of smartphones, there's really no reason that the entire community can't help in these situations.

If you're looking to donate materials like socks, blankets, sleeping bags, etc. Check out 211's website or tune in to the 211 and Street Roots' Facebook page where we are constantly giving updates and the most up-to-date information.

Being aware of your environment is always important. Being a good citizen is equally important. We know SR readers care. Being tuned in and knowing what one can do for individuals and families on the skids is something we all can be proud of.

## Following the campaign money leads to interesting ends

Great work. (Movers, shakers and moneymakers, Street Roots, Jan. 6) It's awesome to see the numbers laid out like this.

The value of this analysis is how desperately Oregon (and the nation) needs campaign finance reform. Eight hundred and sixty eight donors is Brady's largest pool, yet account for only 10 percent of the donations. While that indicates a large pool of support, it's disconcerting to see that a far smaller pool has a larger stake in the game. While I don't for one moment believe any of the three will allow themselves to be bought, democracy is not well-served by money in this manner.

— T.A. BARNHART  
Portland

inform the housed community of Portland what the truth about being homeless is, and that it's most likely not the fault of the individual but the greed of wall street and the federal government.

— ELLIS EKWALL  
Portland



Movers, shakers and moneymakers

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org.

## Homeless camp has reader's support

As a previous residentially challenged Portland resident, I am full support of R2D2. Please, don't give up the fight to spread and succeed in making sure every living soul who wants a stable place to call home has one. I promise if you all do, I will also continue my efforts to educate and

## TriMet crackdown an aggravation for riders

I commend Annette White-Parks on her article, "Free Rail zone a lifeline for poor, elderly." It should be sent to Neil McFarlane. She summed it up by saying "... hiring inspectors to enforce the crackdown is costing more than TriMet collects." I have even heard that bus drivers do not like what is happening to our transit system. I recently talked to a man that was trying to get home one night at about 8 or 9 p.m., and there was no bus service because they stopped it after a certain hour. He didn't know that, though, and had to take a taxi home. I moved back to Portland for the wonderful transportation, too. Thank goodness, I can afford an Honored Citizen bus pass, since I am over 65. But, I recently had a bus driver ask me for my ID! So, everybody on the bus knew my approximate age. I felt like a criminal and now quickly show my pass and sit down. Maybe TriMet needs a new general manager!

— JOYCE MORRIS  
NW Portland

## Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers.

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## Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting an order of the Rose City Resource for distribution, please write to pdxrosecityresource@gmail.com. Resources are also available online at www.rosecityresource.org.

## Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



**75¢**  
goes directly to the vendor  
who sold you the paper

**25¢**  
goes toward  
printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.