

EDITORIAL

They're doing the right thing,
now let them succeed

What happens when a group of 50 homeless people get together and create a safe place to call home? The verdict is still out.

In a time when Street Roots can't buy a positive story about homeless and housing policy, and local and national leaders continue to communicate bad news on the budget front, Right 2 Dream Too is breaking the mold by providing a refuge for people on the streets.

We could talk about the state and federal governments' lack of support for housing and human services. We could concentrate on the hypocrisies of the city and other groups who stand on the sidelines, shoulders shrugged. We could call out any number of neighborhood and business groups

who patronize Right 2 Dream Too as well intentioned, but fall back on the argument that it's not the solution, and request that the group be removed from the neighborhood. But none of this gets us anywhere, and

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has all been said before.

The reality is, Right 2 Dream Too is doing the right thing.

By refusing to make a simple and appropriate gesture — waiving the fines in this case — the city is passively, but with calculated intention, closing down Right 2 Dream Too. Neither code violations nor a bitter history between the city and the property owners should stand in the way of people seeking a safe and warm place to sleep.

Right 2 Dream Too isn't going anywhere. People who have lost everything have nothing to lose. Imposing fines is short-sighted, and sweeping the camp and jailing people isn't an option. So what's the play, City Hall? We're all waiting to see.

It's possible that Right 2 Dream Too, local government and social service providers can work together to help place people into housing. When Occupy Portland was swept, Mayor Adams and Commissioner Fish called on a number of social-service agencies to do targeted outreach. The city should offer the same kind of support for Right 2 Dream Too and be working actively to help the group satisfy code requirements or find another location.

Dignity Village still houses about 60 people on any given night. It is low-barrier and low-cost, and it has found a way, for better or worse, to succeed on its own. Right 2 Dream Too is building momentum. Many Portlanders support the groups efforts, just like they support Street Roots efforts to help foster an environment where homeless people can do for themselves.

There are many grassroots organizations and groups in this town that go under the radar day-in and day-out on a shoestring budget that help people experiencing poverty. Those groups are not recognized like many of the larger groups, or celebrated with ceremonies, but they serve a life-saving role in our city nonetheless.

Change is seldom easy. When Street Roots began, many businesses disapproved, some people in the city were disinterested or against it altogether. Others saw a good idea. Thirteen years later, we are still grassroots and have a positive effect of the City of Portland every day. There's no reason to believe that Right 2 Dream Too can't do the same.

In today's economic landscape, solutions won't always look like they used to, and they will challenge our community to think differently and work together. Solutions always do.

Stable homes part of city's infrastructure

OK, I'll say it. The City of Portland is losing a great mayor in Sam Adams. To be sure, Street Roots and the mayor have not always agreed on everything, but more times than not, we have. Mayor Adams has been an ongoing advocate for people on the streets and for housing issues (see the mayor's commentary on page 12). We continue to appreciate his service.

We're also looking for the mayor's team and the rest of City Council to prioritize human services in the upcoming budget. It's a must.

On the block, it's desperate times. Good people are forced every day to do horrible things. You can say there's a choice, but after spending most of my life living and working with people in poverty, I would beg to differ. The line between right and wrong isn't always all that clear. It never has been.

People don't just wake up one day and say, "I want to be a drug-dealer, or a sex worker or work 70 plus hours a week and still not be able to keep a roof over my family's head." It's a hard-knock life, and you do what you have to do to survive.

As we move forward as a community, there's no question times are going to get tougher. In order for all of us to weather the storm, it's going to take all of us to give a little. That means working to support innovative ideas, while understanding that not everyone is going to get a piece of the pie. For many years, Portland has been comparatively flush. In order for Portland and the State of Oregon to find the right formula for success, we need our current and future leaders to understand that housing and human services are just as important as other valuable infrastructures such as transportation, jobs and the environment. Having a safe and stable home should continue to be one of the Portland's top priorities.



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DIRECTOR'S
DESK

By Israel Bayer

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.

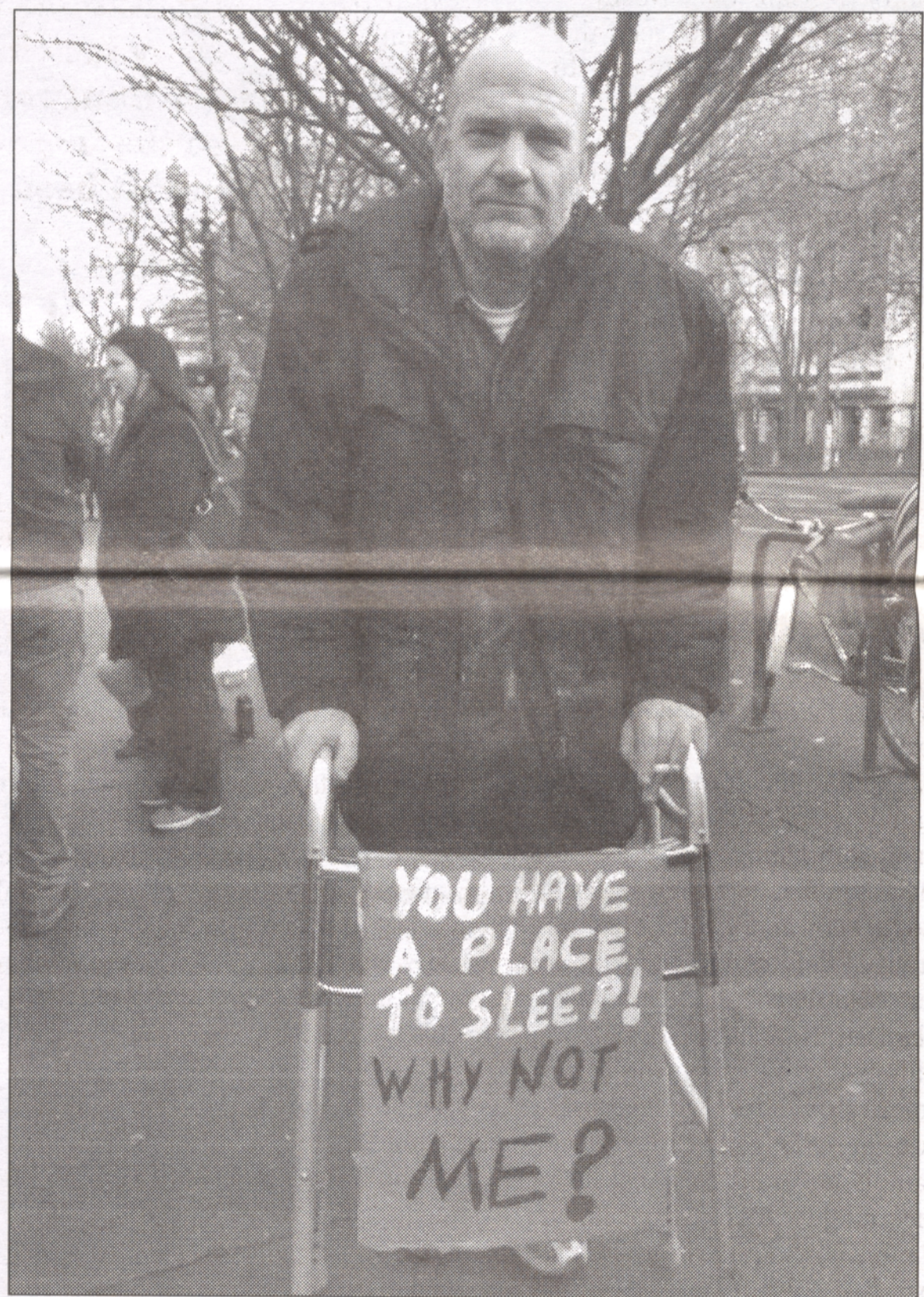


PHOTO BY LUCILENE LIRA

Carey, who stays at Right 2 Dream Too, participates in the demonstration outside City Hall Wednesday morning, along with about 100 other supporters. The group is asking the city to waive the fines against its rest area at the corner of Northwest Fourth Avenue and Burnside. Residents and supporters spoke before the City Council saying their rest area is not a recreational camp, which the city says it is, and wants to fine \$641 a month for not having the proper permits. The council took no action on the matter.

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.