

WISDOM, from page 4

it's people, it's relationships, it's the moments. They can teach us so much about gratitude and the preciousness of the moment and having good health and making amends.

J.T.: *Were there any stories that really stuck with you?*

L.R.S.: Many of them. I dedicated the book to a man named Glasker Rankin. Everybody was anonymous except Glasker, and that's because he asked me not to make him anonymous. I met him through Sisters of the Road.

He was really excited about doing a wisdom will because he didn't have much money. And he wanted to give this as a gift to his sister and his nephew. It was going to be his Christmas gift. And I took it back to him, and it ended up being on his 50th birthday. So then in December he gave her his wisdom will. Then in February, I found myself in a little church in Northeast Portland at his funeral. He had died unexpectedly. He was 50 years old, and I didn't know he had anything wrong with him.

(Sisters of the Road Executive Director) Monica Beemer, while he was dying, put his wisdom will up on the wall in his ICU unit, so that the doctors and the nurses and the patients and visitors could read his wisdom will so that they knew he was in that bed. And at the funeral, the minister read from his wisdom will as well. I was so proud of him doing that because you know there's a memory of him that will live on forever in the community and in his family. It's a way of assuaging the pain of losing someone. You have something tangible, it becomes a talisman. I think you owe it to your family to leave something like that. It covers what life meant to you so far, what got you through the hard times, what you value, who you love and why, how you want to be remembered.

I dedicated the book to him because it was one of the first ones I did and he died. He had been clean and sober three years when I met him, and he wanted to be remembered as someone who was clean and sober for a reasonable amount of time before he died.

J.T.: *Do you maintain contact with the people you interviewed for the book?*

L.R.S.: Yeah, I still see Mary and hear from Mary,

and she's had five years of sobriety. A couple of them came to the book signing. It really enhanced their self-esteem. I gave them all as many copies as they wanted. It took from 2005 until last year to get it published, so some people I can't find.

J.T.: *You hoped that the book would change peoples' perceptions homelessness. Did it change any perceptions you might have had?*

L.R.S.: I learned what a sense of community there is with people who live on the streets. They take care of each other in ways you wouldn't expect. They take care of each other, and they keep track of each other, and that's amazing. We're so frightened of what we don't understand.

J.T.: *Were there any commonalities in the stories?*

L.R.S.: Yes. All of them had commonalities. A lot of dysfunctional families. The one surprising story that people talk about is Brian because he was brought up in a normal, average blue-collar hard-working family and became a hardcore heroin addict. He didn't go to his graduation because he was trying heroin for the first time. And of course you can't try heroin for the first time.

A lot of them had a history of alcohol and drug use. Almost all of them were abused. A lot of trauma. So there's hardship. You continue with your addiction and your hardships just snowball. You keep losing until there's nobody who wants a thing to do with you and you hate yourself. And you do the only thing that makes you numb out unless you have some sort of awakening experience. Almost all had epiphanies about stopping and starting. They have this *a-ha* moment that maybe drugs and alcohol are the problem. When you start using you stay pretty much emotionally the same age until you quit, and you can't accelerate and grow up. If you start using at 16, you stay 16 even though you're 40.

J.T.: *You're a certified grief counselor, did that inform your work?*

L.R.S.: Yeah, it informed the book, certainly because I see writing a wisdom will as a talisman for people to help assuage the grief after losing a loved one, and it's a way of reviewing your life and seeing that everybody has a story.

Street Roots awarded for coverage on traumatic brain injuries

STAFF REPORTS

Street Roots took home five awards from the Society of Professional Journalists' 2011 Journalism contest, including two first place awards.

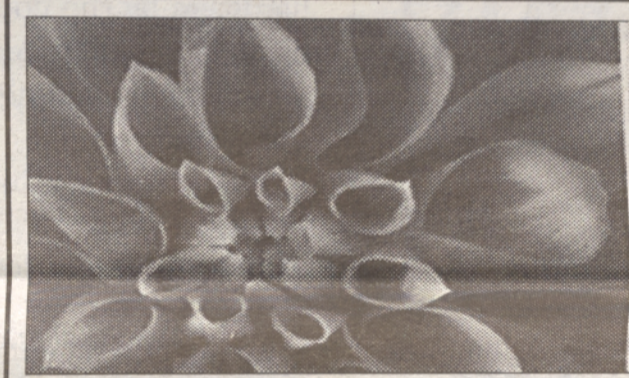
Street Roots' landmark series on the links between traumatic brain injuries and homelessness received top honors for writers Stacy Brownhill and Kate Cox in the social issues category. The series examined the misdiagnosis and lack of research on traumatic brain injuries among people experiencing homelessness, as well as the challenges to treating such injuries while living on the streets.

Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl received first place honors for her interview with artist Max Ginsburg, a realist painter who projects his anti-war position in his often controversial images.

Street Roots writer Amanda Waldroupe was awarded for her report on people in poverty and homelessness living with HIV/AIDS. Waldroupe also was honored for her report on new guidelines surrounding inmates serving time in the Oregon State Hospital.

Brownhill also was honored for her report on the financial burden faced by low-income families when it comes time to bury a loved one.

Street Roots competed against non-daily publications throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington with a circulation greater than 8,000.



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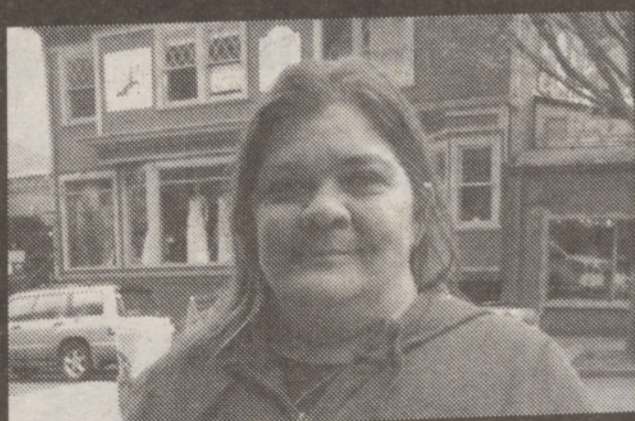
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Vendors are regular contributors to Street Roots content, as columnist, poets and artists. Look for your favorite vendor's writings in each edition of the paper.

Sweet Relief

The Native American Youth Family Center

NAYA Students Lend A Helping Hand

As members of the young NAYA community, we have seen many youth and elders struggling with life on the streets in Portland. We are having a bake sale to raise money to help alleviate the effects of poverty for our homeless community.

We will be selling:

Cookies Brownies Pie Cake and more!

We would greatly appreciate if you could bring any food, clothing, and blankets to donate. Proceeds will go to a local organization of the students' choice.

Join us at NAYA, 5135 NE Columbia Blvd., Portland, OR. 97218
11am to 1pm Thursday, June 7

Hope to see you there!



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