

Living on the streets, one always encounters noise and more noise and then more. Only a couple hours of silence to get good rest, if dry.

PHOTO BY ROBERT BRITT

24 HOURS, from page 8

Over at City Hall, a regular vigil was taking place – protesting the city’s anti-camping ordinance. Despite recent changes to police guidelines, the city ordinance still prohibits camping on public property in the city, an act that can be as simple as curling up inside a sleeping bag. A sign inside vigil says, “Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and whispers, grow, grow”

By the time people were settled in, one reporter counted seeing more than 300 people sleeping outside that rainy night, each staging a kind of civil disobedience out of necessity and survival.

One Street Roots vendor is camping outside City Hall. He is homeless. His mother has Alzheimer’s but he has no resources to care for her. Everything he owns, he says, is on his back. Sleep is nearly impossible because of his PTSD, and he deals with sleep deprivation on a daily basis. But he feels safer outside City Hall.

It’s raining harder now. Headed under the bridges and along Waterfront Park

Life is hard. Man sleeps under tarp in front of City Hall.

It’s almost impossible not to get sick out

here. Most vendors sleeping outside this winter will get walking pneumonia.

People die homeless all of the time, rarely makes headlines. Violence, addiction, health. It’s a hard knock life.

As the evening drifted on, people were establishing their spots for the night.

Couple walking past Lan Su (Chinese Gardens), one wearing soggy sleeping bag and one with many belongings, looking for a safe spot to bed down.

Two individuals, one with a horrible cough and one with the thinnest blanket ever, bedding down at MAX stop till they get roused in a few hours.

Just passed Right 2 Dream Too, which is the quietest and most orderly thing on this entire block.

It was because of these conditions that a group of people on the streets formed Right 2 Dream Too, a rest area at Fourth Avenue and Burnside Street for people experiencing homelessness. By the time Street Roots arrived that night, they were already having to turn people away. They were at capacity with 80 people seeking shelter for the night. It’s primitive, but it’s dry and safe, one person notes. “I’m cold, so cold,” one shivering woman says at the gate. They

make room for her inside.

There’s a lot of resources, but sometimes it’s hard to get to a place to ask for help. It’s not a dignified experience, says Heather.

“Being here made me realize just how many people are struggling. It’s unbelievable,” says Heather.

“When you are a single mom and find yourself homeless, the stress is unreal. I can’t even describe it.”

Heather’s 10 year old is in 5th Grade and says her dreams are to be a singer.

There are four family shelters operating in Multnomah County during the winter months, and the workers there report seeing more homeless families this year than in the recent past, including more two-parent families in need. Each of the shelters can accommodate 50 people, and one can expand to 80. All four shelters are full.

The city is slowly waking up. Machinery sounds, delivery trucks, etc.

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About 15 ppl lining up at Union Gospel Mission. A new day is beginning. Mood very subdued. Raining.

Talking w/ a man who has been homeless

for two and half weeks in Old Town.

He says he was laid off and got an eviction. Is currently working in the service industry as a server in the day.

Doing best to find full time work & get off the streets soon. “I’ve only been homeless for two weeks of my life. I’m 50.”

As morning arrived, the city rustles with cold, soggy people regrouping to start another day. Reporters sent in their final posts around 6 a.m., 24 hours since the first crew visited the shelters. Soon the cycle would begin again. But all who returned to the office – people familiar with the world of homelessness – were still taken aback by the striking numbers of people huddled under bridges, awnings, in doorways or just with each other. At night, any disguise of normalcy is stripped away.

Early morning workers emerging, gliding down streets with coffee in hand. A soaked camper walks by, shivering against the cold.

Sometimes, and right now, I wish we had a dryer @streetroots. So many people simply wet all the time. So many frail canvas shoes.

Comments are still welcome at #SR24, where you can read the complete feed on Twitter.

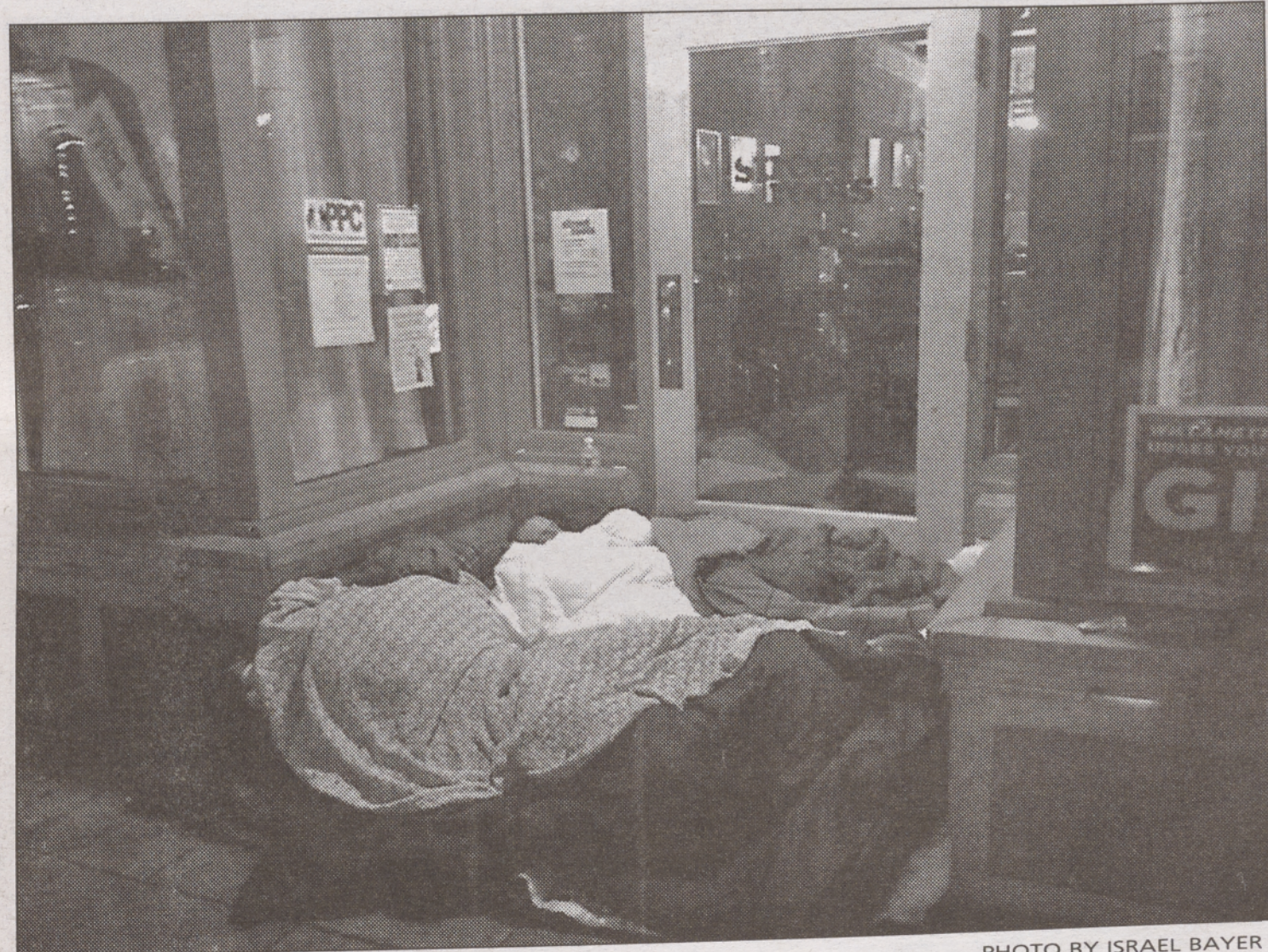


PHOTO BY ISRAEL BAYER

Campers pack the stoop of Street Roots late Thursday night.

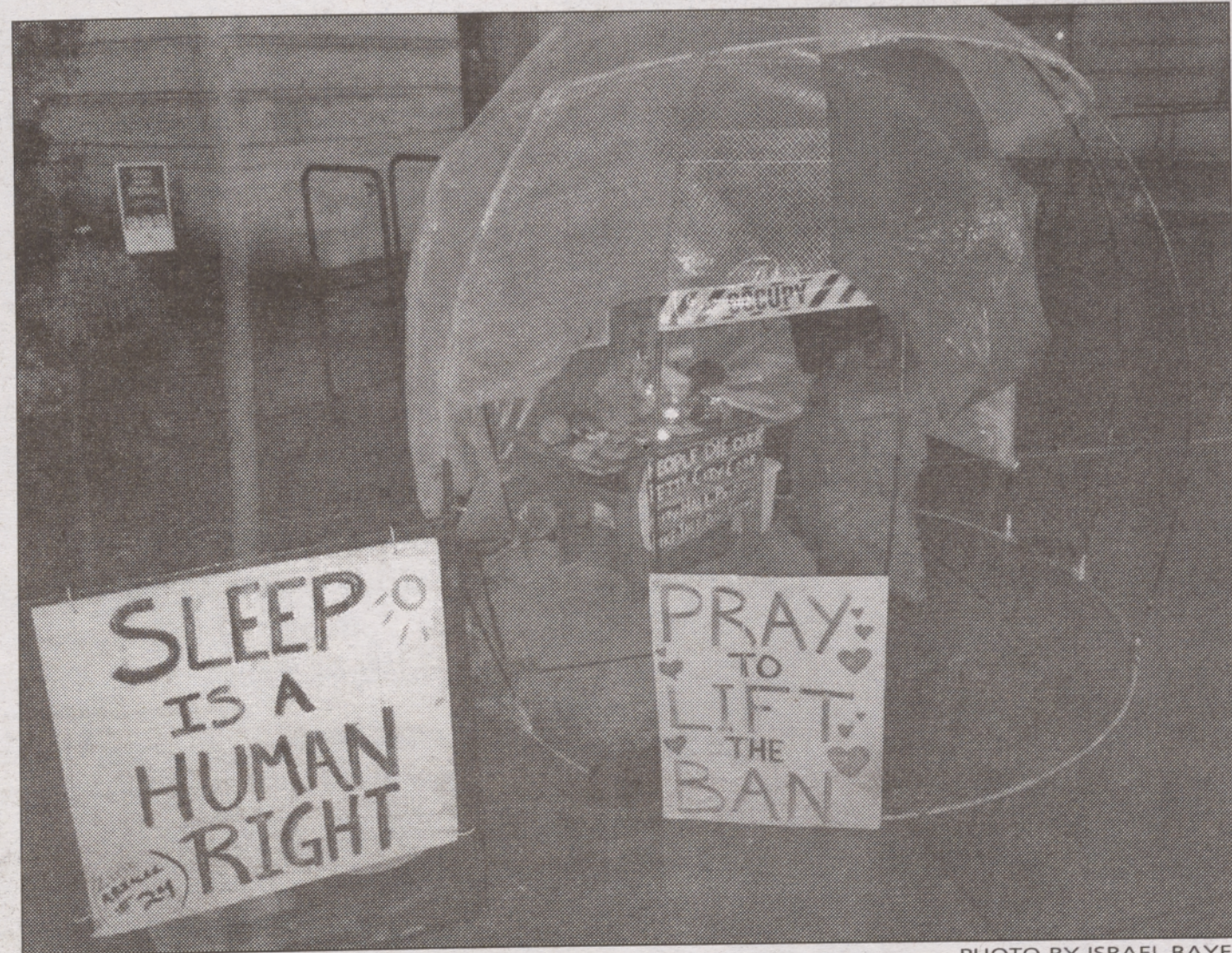


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For more than a year, this vigil outside City Hall has protested the city’s camping ban.