

EDITORIAL

Good news abounds, (despite what you've heard)

Headed any bad news lately? Seems like that's all there is these days. From the abhorrently tragic to the flat-out infuriating, 2012's wrap up was a challenge to our spirits.

Indeed, positive milestones seldom grab the headlines like the negative, and it's easy to lose sight of what we have gained, which is the first mistake toward losing it all.

But here are just a few things to keep in mind:

In the big picture, the national initiative to house homeless veterans is working, getting tens of thousands of veterans off the streets in the past three years.

Fresh approaches have resulted in rapid rehousing

We've celebrated with people marking a month, a year or more of sobriety. This year many more of us will do the same, standing shoulder to shoulder with our friends and neighbors: Families have reunited, classes have resumed, and independence has been restored.

programs that intervene with families in crisis before homelessness sets in. We're now seeing more preventative programs like these take hold, breaking the cycle of homelessness and the aggravating factors of substance abuse, mental health crises and so much more.

Locally we start the year with a fresh mayor and a reinvigorated City Council that has proven itself committed to keeping people from falling through the cracks. It has also pledged to work more in tandem with county leaders to plug the holes between individual and family support services. Let's hope that message resonates in Washington, where so much remains in the balance, not just for people experiencing homelessness, but also for families that have a disabled member, or have been out of work, or care for an elderly parent.

And quietly, the city has worked to preserve the affordability of apartment buildings, long after their federal contract expired. As a result, hundreds of low-income residents — nearly all elderly or disabled — are able to stay in their homes.

Far less noticed in our city are the thousands of workers who actually make up the safety net. They include the men and women who are out in the dark of night visiting camps, and making sure people remain connected — and alive. They are the people going the extra mile to ensure someone gets their disability insurance, or that a family can navigate state and national services toward stability.

This past year hundreds of individuals and families had their lives restored with stable housing. This coming year, hundreds more will get off the streets.

We've celebrated with people marking a month, a year or more of sobriety. This year many more of us will do the same, standing shoulder to shoulder with our friends and neighbors: Families have reunited, classes have resumed, and independence has been restored.

Looking ahead to this year, we must keep our eyes on the success stories and the positive movements happening on many fronts. Because it is a mistake to think that poverty and homelessness are the end game: we do so at a high cost to all that is gained on a daily basis.

To be sure, there is always room for criticism — and we embrace the discussion. But let's also give pause for the people who live the lesson that together we have, can and will continue to make a difference.

Together, we'll brighten the season

The winter is settling in. It's rainy and cold and life on the streets is a stick in the mud. From now until early summer, people sleeping outdoors are

faced with miserable conditions. Many of the vendors and people outdoors will develop, if they haven't already, walking pneumonia, or any number of ailments that can become matters of

life or death on the streets.

Before the holidays, the city is swept with an overwhelming feeling of giving and compassion. After the holidays, there's a tendency for many people to settle into the Portland winter and get grumpier and grumpier as the months go by.

The months of January and February tend to be the slowest months for vendors. For many of the vendors sleeping outside, the sales of the paper on any given day may mean the difference between getting indoors at night or not.

For the vendors who have housing, the

money made selling the paper is going to any number of things that help support their quality of life. Some of our vendors are using money to tend to their health care and to pay for medications for themselves or a loved one. Some use the money to pay their rent and utility bills, while others use it to buy quality and healthy food.

Your support and compassion is appreciated. Street Roots works hard to present a newspaper that people not only want to purchase from vendors, but one that they also want to read. Creating an environment where people are able to build genuine relationships while giving someone a hand up is something we all take pride in. Educating people through the newspaper is icing on the cake.

In the coming year, you'll see more of the same from Street Roots: quality journalism mixed with arts and culture from people experiencing poverty. Check out our year in review on page 4 and find out more about what Street Roots has done in 2012. We're looking forward to spending the next year with new and old readers alike. Cheers!



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

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

Still only \$1, newspaper gives meaning to life

I just wanted to congratulate you on your publication, Street Roots. The paper and the street vendor provide a bridge for me to the people who live on the streets, who are my brothers and sisters. Because street people sometimes have mental health problems, sometimes we recoil from them in fear; it is always disturbing to encounter them — especially when we have empathy. I feel a deep sorrow when I see people living in the streets, cold and uncomfortable and dirty, but my money alone cannot solve the problem, it is enough to provide for myself.

I usually buy a newspaper from a street vendor. It always seems like such a bargain. What can you buy for \$1 these days? I feel so proud of the street vendor, because I know that he or she has overcome many obstacles just to be standing there. This year I read almost every word of your publication. I am so moved by the courage and resilience of the people who contribute to the paper, and to those who live in the streets.

The articles are well written and intelligent and remind me that people who live in the streets are just like me in so many ways. Especially, it shows me how people just like me can end up in the

streets. It also shows me how people who have gone through hardship in their lives can end up conquering the overwhelming circumstances that brought them here. We are all so vulnerable; it could happen to almost any of us at different vulnerable points in our lives.

I was especially absorbed in the articles on sexual assaults in sanctuaries, "Stupid Money," the book review of "Twilight of the Elites," "Incarceration is not health care;" the health care debate isn't over (excellent), "Dear City Council," "Harm reduction for the 21st century," the fiscal cliff debate, "Room with a view: One year in housing" (an excellent first-person story of survival, empathy and resilience). And I was impressed by the story about Olympian John Carlos, and especially "Remembering Ted Jack." The cover story was excellent, too.

I am a writer and I love how the paper gives space for the creativity of its contributors. Writing gives meaning to my life. Your paper has given meaning to my life as well.

Keep up the good work!

CAITLIN HICKS
Roberts Creek, B.C., Canada

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.

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.

Street Roots
211 NW Davis St.
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-5657
Fax: 503-227-3117
www.streetroots.org
www.news.streetroots.org

Staff

Executive Director Israel Bayer
israel@streetroots.org

Managing Editor Joanne Zuhl
joanne@streetroots.org

Vendor Coordinator Cole Merkel
cole@streetroots.org

Operations Director Sara Beecroft

Program Assistant Kara Dimitruk, Jesuit
Volunteer AmeriCorps Member
kara@streetroots.org

Grant Writer Sarah Cloud

Development Assistant Cynthia Kiehl

Reporters Jake Thomas, Alex Zielinski, Robert
Britt, Sue Zalokar

Photographers Leah Nash, Ken Hawkins, Kristina
Wright, Christopher Onstott

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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.