

Building a better Portland for people experiencing poverty

Welcome to the 2012-13 Street Roots annual report. This past year has been an exciting time for Street Roots, as we continue to grow as an organization and media outlet.

At the heart of Street Roots is community. More than 300 men and women earned a dignified income this past year with Street Roots. More than 15,000 readers engaged with those vendors on street corners and in neighborhoods around the region.

Hope was established in the lives of people on the streets, and the general public who believe that we have a responsibility to maintain a healthy community. People came together across class lines, through conversation and a newspaper. Stereotypes were shattered. Lasting relationships were built.

Street Roots witnesses some of the most brutal and unforgiving realities people experiencing poverty face in our region. It would be easy to become bitter and cynical, and to just publish a newspaper that didn't concentrate on solutions or innovation. Both individually and collectively, we refuse to accept defeat.

In many ways, Street Roots is that little train that could. The amount of work the organization produces week-in and week-out, with a small staff and a dedicated crew of volunteers baffles me at times. The human spirit and the power of love should never be underestimated. Marry that with smart, innovative people, strategic thinking and a willingness to change the world and anything is possible.

Is it possible for a man to gain hope, after 25 years of being lost and homeless, or for someone coming back from war to regain their trust of humanity? Can a woman go from the depth of hell and domestic violence to standing on her own two feet and providing for herself? We see it happen every day at Street Roots.

We watch in awe at times, when readers like you come together to pay for new dentures for a vendor, or help someone with a surgery, or get a new pair of eyeglasses.

There's nothing sweeter than watching a vendor get his or her first set of house keys after years of stress, trauma and abuse. There's nothing more defeating than seeing another person struggle, only to die literally, on the streets without ever being able to overcome poverty. It's these individual stories and relationships that drive Street Roots to do what we do.

It is not easy being an organization that will say, or report what others can't or

won't. It takes its toll on the organization financially, and sometimes politically. Saying that, Street Roots will never waiver from doing what we feel is right based on our experience and knowledge in the field and the hundreds of hours of research and relationship building it takes to develop the quality journalism in the newspaper.

That's why the support of Street Roots ultimately lies in the reader's hands. Since 2007, Street Roots has gone from \$30,000 annually in individual donors to nearly \$100,000. That's during the biggest recession since the 1930s. That's impressive and testament to the public's support of Street Roots and the work we are doing.

What are we doing?

Street Roots published more than 300,000 copies of the newspaper that put an estimated \$600,000 into vendor's hands this year. Nearly 70 percent of those sales happen during the first week of our biweekly news schedule. During the first week of sales, vendors do well. During the second week of sales, vendors tend to scramble and are not as successful.

That's why it remains the organizations number one objective to publish weekly. We believe that sales of the newspaper would increase dramatically week-to-week, giving vendors more stability in their lives to improve their

quality of life.

The organization launched an organizational and news website (news.streetroots.org) this past year. Partnering with the open-source software community and OMBU, a local web development company – the technology industry donated more than \$100,000 of in-kind services to Street Roots to make sure we stay on the cutting edge of technology and expand our readership statewide.

The organization continue to work towards centralizing our internal communications and systems to improve the work we do and to streamline the services we provide to vendors and the general public.

We added administrative, development and editorial staff. We accomplished this through partnership with the Meyer Memorial Trust and the Oregon Community Foundation.

We partnered with JOIN and Northwest Pilot Project, among others, to help facilitate housing more than 50 individuals. We estimate that we helped prevent more than 100 people from falling into homelessness.

We partnered with Precarious Egg, a local film production company to create a 15-minute training video that gives people experiencing poverty the tools and training they need to sell the newspaper in the community. More than 10 vendors took the time to be part of planning and starring in the training video.

The organization published more than 100,000 Rose City Resource Guides, distributed to nearly 400 organizations and institutions in the community.

We published the second annual Domicile Unknown, a report on homeless deaths in Multnomah County, in partnership with the county health department. We helped facilitate countless conversations about solutions to poverty at local universities, through the media and at conferences around North America.

Street Roots helped lead important advocacy efforts to preserve millions of dollars for housing and homeless services through the safety net campaign. We continue to facilitate, and be a part of a range of proactive and innovative conversations concerning issues of poverty – ranging from the civil liberties of people on the streets to resource development for housing.

Street Roots continues to experiment and provide a robust social media presence in the community, including spending 24 hours on the streets and delivering the experience of homelessness through Twitter. We also work weekly to highlight the voices of vendors and people on the streets through the newspaper and social media. We are constantly working to maintain the relationship between the public, technology and poverty.

The newspaper continues to grow and expand its coverage. Tackling a broader range of issues related to poverty, social justice and other taboo subject matters that you're not going to read anywhere else. The partnership with the International Network of Street Papers continues to grow – working with other newspapers from around the globe to share best practices and content.

All and all, Street Roots remains healthy. That doesn't mean we aren't flying close to the treetops like every other media outlet in Portland. Saying that, we haven't been this strong in our 15-year history.

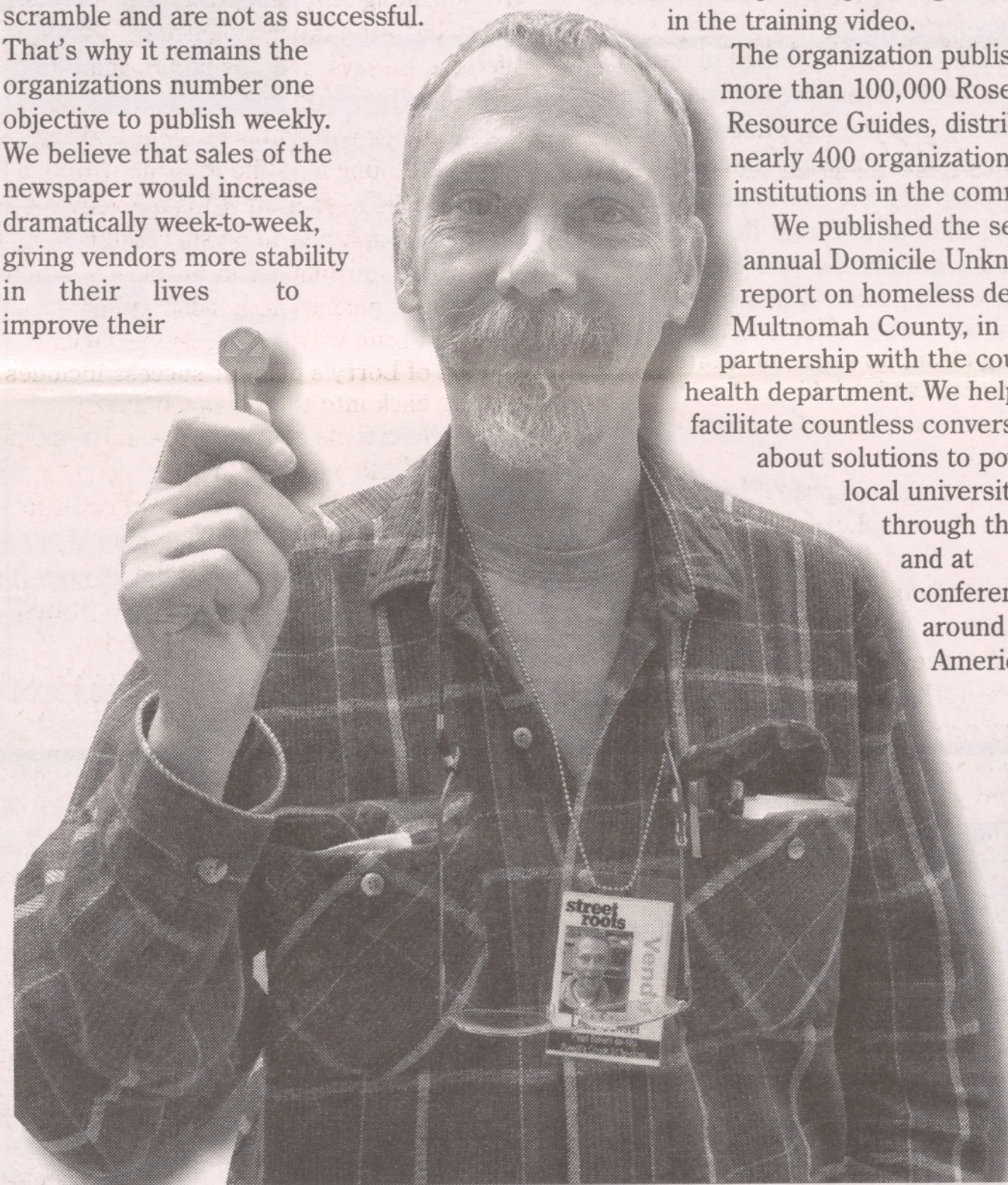
What's to come?

Weekly publication remains the goal. We hope that in the next year we are able to gain the momentum and financial support to give vendors a stable income week-in and week-out, while becoming even more relevant in today's media market.

We will continue to work on developing support and to create the best opportunities for vendors selling the newspaper – ranging from a motivational speakers series for vendors to creating a speakers bureau.

We will continue to publish and create new, innovative conversations in the community and through the newspaper and online. We will continue to work toward social change and to create a better Portland. We will also work toward expanding our reach outside Portland and statewide. We believe Street Roots is a vehicle not just for poverty issues, but instead a platform for quality journalism and voices from people working on social justice. A strong Street Roots, means a strong social justice community. We will continue to make a real difference, one newspaper and one conversation at a time.

Israel Bayer
Executive Director

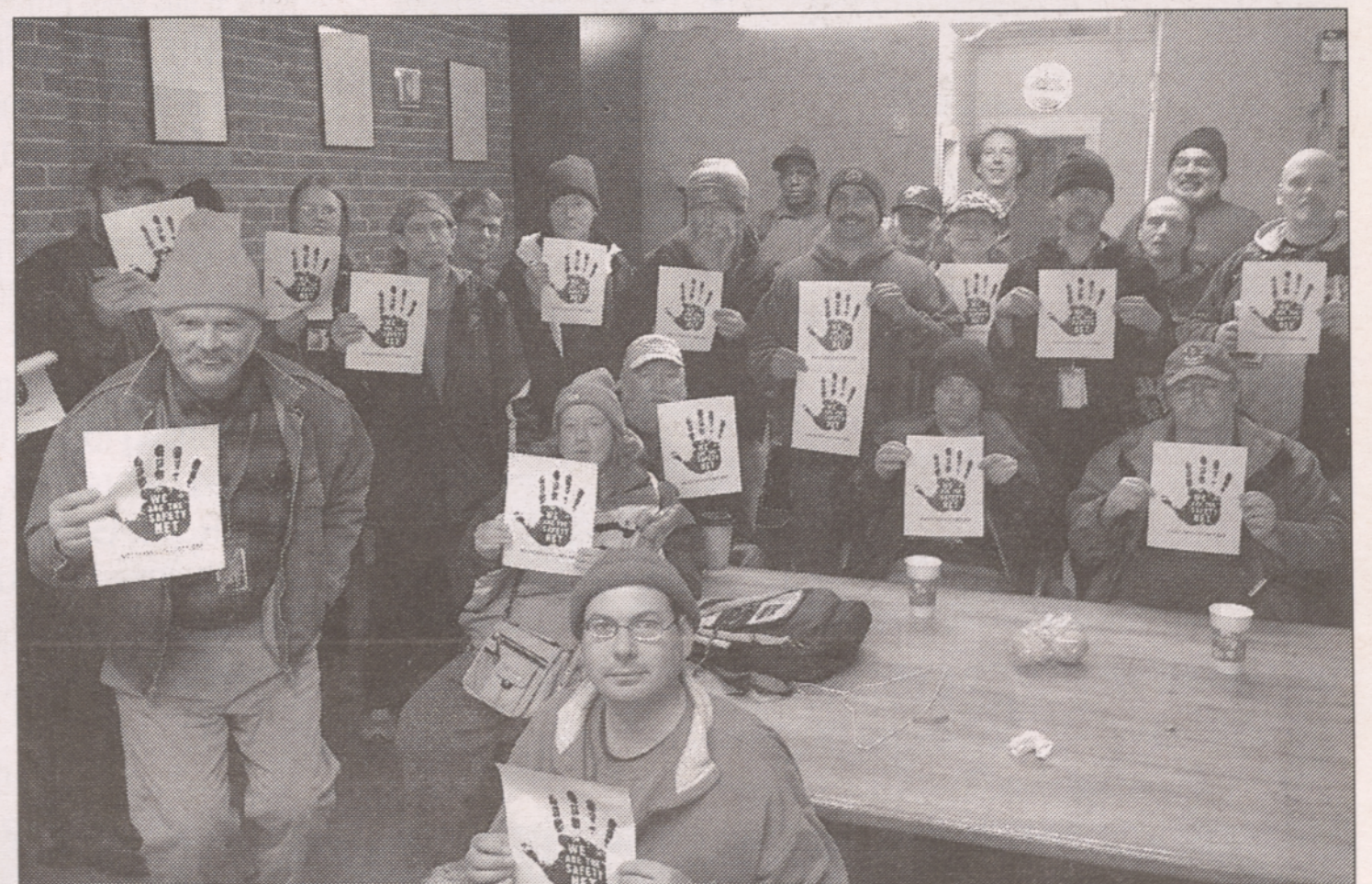


Vendor Luke Sensei shows off the key to his new apartment and a new life



"What I like about Street Roots is it made me a better person," he says. "I find myself being more polite. I'm more patient. I feel better about myself because I'm working for Street Roots."

— RICK PHILLIPS



Street Roots vendors do their part for a campaign to preserve funding for people in need. Street Roots helped lead the successful campaign titled "Safety Net," to secure \$2 million in housing and homeless services at the city of Portland.