

For the RECORD

A compilation of facts, large and small, about our community

- HIV/AIDS remains an important public health problem in Oregon. From 1981 through 2011, 9,028 Oregonians were diagnosed and reported with HIV infection; approximately 40 percent have since died.
- 5,384 Oregonians are living with HIV, in addition to an unknown number of others with HIV who moved to Oregon after diagnosis.
- During the previous decade, approximately 280 Oregonians were diagnosed with HIV each year.
- Over the past decade, an average of 84 persons with HIV died each year.
- Diagnosis rates for HIV have increased among 20–24 year-olds.
- Fifty-five percent of people living with HIV in Oregon resided in Multnomah County when they were diagnosed.
- New diagnosis rates were 3.5 times higher among blacks and African Americans than whites. The rate of new diagnoses for Hispanics was 1.9 times higher than for white non-Hispanics; other races/ethnicities accounted for roughly 7 percent of all diagnoses.
- Child poverty rate among children of color in Multnomah County is 33 percent; that of white children is 13 percent.
- Median household income among black and Native American residents is 47 percent and 48 percent of citywide median.
- Alder School in the Centennial neighborhood has more than 60 percent English language learners.
- 40 percent of kids in Lents, age 5-17, speak a language other than English at home
- More than 50 percent of Multnomah County residents under 40 are not registered to vote, even though they are eligible
- There are 800,000 Oregonians not registered to vote who could be.

Sources: Oregon Health Authority, Our Oregon, Portland Development Commission

Kindness is universal, no matter who, no matter where

The other day my friend, Kathy, called me to tell me this story:
She was shopping, rushing around like you do at this time of the year, looking for something that was hard to find and ended up at a Rite Aid store at the shopping center near her home. She parked her car, got out, hooked her keys onto her purse and went into the store. One the way in she noticed a guy who seemed homeless, nervous, cold, sitting on a bench near the store — watching people going and coming with an intensity. It was the look in his eyes that troubled Kathy but other than wishing him well she went into the store to purchase her product.

She found what she was looking for, went to the cashier to check out but realized her keys were gone as she opened her purse. She went back to the shelves and isles she had just visited thinking she had lost them there or laid them down somewhere. They were not in the store. She went back out into the parking lot looking into her car window, went around her car, retraced her steps from the car to the store a couple of times.

As she was busy trying to find her keys she realized the guy on the bench was watching even more intently. It occurred to her that maybe he took them but didn't want to entertain that thought thinking she was being judgmental, prejudice, or critical.



Grace E. Reed

Grace E. Reed is a published author and writer for several online journals, a broadcaster on KBOO and KPSU radio and an elder activist in the Portland community.

Kathy is a positive person and does not like to think badly about people who are already down. But the thought was there and it bothered her. She dismissed her mind noise and went back to the car to look one more time before going back to the store.

She noticed this woman coming out of a coffee shop next to Rite Aid with two cups of hot drink. She walked up to the bench guy, gave him one of the cups, the steam coming off the top. He reached out for the cup, held it close to his face, took a drink. The woman went on to her car. Then he got up and went into the Rite Aid store ahead of Kathy. He was coming out as Kathy passed him going in. She got to the counter to pay for her purchase and the clerk said, "Hey this guy came in with these keys. Are they yours?" Kathy realized he had returned her keys.

She was overwhelmed with emotions, feeling gratitude. When she called me with this story I had to share it. I too have

witnessed the power kindness has on people. I too have had the good pleasure of giving kindness to others and have received kindness from others. God bless the bench guy for his "pay it forward" action and good choices and I hope this article finds him warm, well and happier.

I think people are screaming for kindness more than ever yet I look around and see pretty much the opposite. But, I also see people doing the best they can with what they have and when there is not much to have — well — anyway, even in the worse of times we the people who get what it is like to be compromised financially, with health and/or mental wellness, and housing issues actually have much education to give to the general community that may not get what it is like to be in poverty or low income.

I find many opportunities to 'shine' when I really have every right to gloom up and get all bitchy. Hey, I am a 70-year-old in a wheelchair with MS and on the bottom of the food chain with very low income. I look pathetic on a piece of paper. But I know I am not pathetic. I am rich in spirit and kindness and I try to give that every day to my community by staying active and engaged. I encourage all who are screaming for kindness to give it and yep, it comes around to hug you! Good to know.

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Me, The Night, The Sidewalk and The River

by Avendor

Looking back on past sins, or misconduct
my soul becomes unsettled

It is like a rock formation on a hillside
a part of which, for no apparent reason,
crumbles, and rolls down the slope.

It is like a bald eagle
who catches my eye
then flies away.

My soul becomes immersed in all of this,
Then seeks refuge in my mind's defenses
I seek the spirit of god, or something like that,
to cleanse me of all of this.

For if each of my misdeeds addressed my garments
I'd have a king's wardrobe of spotted attire...

Maybe I can go down to where the dragon boats are tethered
do my laundry there, in the Willamette
late at night,
when the majesty of our city
shines over our all too meek river
come out of it perhaps a little more resolute
if not also a little worse for wear.
Walking the waterfront renewed
me, the night, the sidewalk, and the river

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