

EDITORIAL

A coordinated effort needed to work with homeless camps

It is a sad reality, but it is a reality nonetheless. Homeless camps are no longer an anomaly in our social or economic landscape. They have been decades in the making, the accumulation of job losses, health care crises, financially starved social services and war.

All around our city there are groups of people huddled together in an effort to find some semblance of stability. In any definition of the word, these living conditions are abysmal, but they are the home of last resort for hundreds of people in Portland every night.

So why then do we continue to address these camps and their residents as deviants and criminals? Why is our best solution a combination of law enforcement, bulldozers and

shoulder shrugs?

We shouldn't throw our hands up in the air because we as individuals have no expedient solution. What we need to do is develop a coordinated outlook on ending the driving forces behind such desperation.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is the latest to step into the ring with a series of high-profile sweeps along I-205, where the relatively remote yet urban landscape has become home to multiple homeless encampments. One camp in particular along

Johnson Creek has become the poster child for all that is wrong with the camps in terms of environmental and social impact, when it is the impact on the people living that should be the first thing addressed.

Indeed, this is about people who are homeless, but it isn't about finding a solution to homelessness. These actions do more to aggravate the problem, putting vulnerable people in even more vulnerable situations, with devastating consequences.

Portland is fortunate to have a dynamic social service network. But it isn't enough to keep up with the numbers on the streets. Poverty around Portland is on the rise. Most waiting lists for shelter and services are full, and months away from opening up. The Great Recession ended four years ago, but the rate of Oregonians in deep poverty is higher than at any time between 2007 and 2009. This is a state and national problem, and it will take state and national efforts to correct.

Until then, people will continue to survive. We shouldn't throw our hands up in the air because we as individuals have no expedient solution. What we need to do is develop a coordinated outlook on ending the driving forces behind such desperation. Also needed are coordinated harm reduction efforts to help camps maintain an environmentally friendly environment, including help with trash clean up and waste. When thinking about creating jobs for people on the streets – what better way to give people a hand up than to think about helping people experiencing homelessness clean their camps? It can be done.

Simply clearing camps does nothing but make the program worse. A more thoughtful and strategic approach is needed with City Hall, Multnomah County and ODOT when enforcing camp sweeps. It can be done.

Why a weekly Street Roots matters

Ask newspaper vendors what can help them be more successful at Street Roots, and the overwhelming response is, "Can we go weekly?"



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.

Ask readers what they would like to see from Street Roots and the response is the same.

Street Roots currently publishes 26 editions of the newspaper annually.

That's a newspaper

every other week. We know the vast majority of the sales of the newspaper happen in the first week of publication. We also know readers can be confused on when the latest edition of the newspaper is actually available due to the biweekly schedule.

Can it be done? Going weekly, that is. That's the big question.

There's no doubt that producing quality content and being able to maintain a weekly production schedule is a tall order for Street Roots, or any grassroots media outlet.

In the past three years, we have worked with a range of partners, including a growing individual donor base and local foundations to build capacity to even get to a place of asking the question out loud.

The editorial team, led by veteran journalist and editor Joanne Zuhl, has helped build Street Roots into a reliable and important news source throughout the region. The newspaper has also become a go-to source for conversations on a range of social-justice issues that are important to all Oregonians.

Since joining the Society of Professional Journalists, just four years ago, we've brought home numerous awards, including seven first place awards for investigative, arts and social reporting.

In a time when the media landscape is rapidly changing, Street Roots is playing a critical role in shaping public opinion through the newspaper. Being able to give a real voice to people experiencing poverty is icing on the cake.

Saying all of that, we know that by

offering people on streets a chance to stabilize their lives and to build relationships with readers like you is where the real magic happens.

Street Roots is proud to know that 15,000 individuals like you read the newspaper and are connecting vendors with each edition of the newspaper. Being able to contribute to giving people a hand up and building self-confidence in people's lives is worth its weight in gold. We've witnessed the transformation in hundreds of people's lives at Street Roots. We would like to believe that for many readers, the newspaper has also helped transform your way of thinking and connecting to people that are experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty.

On page one, you'll see we've done something unconventional. We've asked readers to support a campaign for us to go weekly. Street Roots must maintain its current level of funding, while also raising enough money to support two full-time positions on our editorial team – an assistant editor and reporter.

We're asking new readers to chip in this year and to support Street Roots. We're asking longtime readers who may have never given to the organization to support us this year. We're asking longtime supporters to double-down and help bring us into a new era at Street Roots.

In this edition of the newspaper you'll find an envelope to give to Street Roots. We encourage you to take the time to give as much or as little as you can. Your support will help us build the momentum in the next year to go weekly. You'll also find a QR code on the side of this column. Scan it and donate in a matter of minutes.

Lastly, Street Roots is also a proud partner with the Willamette Week Give!Guide. Starting Nov. 6, you'll be able to give to Street Roots through the guide to support our efforts.

We can't thank you enough for your love and support. If there was ever a time we asked for you to double down to support us, this is that time. Your donation will go directly to supporting giving people a hand up. Help make us strong.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to Street Roots, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org.



Scan this code with your smart phone to donate to Street Roots through Democracy In Action.

Vendor experience brings a smile to another satisfied customer

My great Street Roots story of the month: A few weeks ago, I picked up the latest issue from my regular (but fairly new) vendor, George, who posts up outside the front door of Powell's (which I cut through on my way to work). I only had a five dollar bill that day and it was pretty early, so George didn't have any singles for change yet. I told him that it was no problem, and that \$5 is a fine price for Street Roots as far

as I'm concerned anyway.

Then at the end of last week, as I'm rushing past George while late to a meeting (typical), having all but forgotten about our last exchange, George says as I whiz by, "Hey, do you want change for that \$5?"

That's why I love Street Roots.

— NATE GULLEY
Portland

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.

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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 guides, call 503-228-5657. 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.