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Thank you Street Roots readers for all your support. Happy New Year!

A closed mouth's not gonna get fed

BY ANN-DERRICK GAILLOT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When I meet with Louis (pronounced loo-ey, not loo-iss) at the Street Roots office on a Saturday morning, he can hardly keep his tired, red eyes open. Late night partiers kept him up, and when the streets were empty, what he called the "road noises" began.

"I'd love to take a nap, but you know, that's par for the course."

Born and raised in Vancouver, Wash., Louis spent his time between Vancouver and Portland growing up. Currently out of

VENDOR PROFILE
Louis Adams

work, Louis has worked as a fisherman and a processor on boats in Alaska and as an auto-body technician in Northern California. Once he was laid off from that job, he returned to Portland to be with his mother and grandmother before they passed away.

Ever since Louis became homeless a few years ago, he has sported an impressive Santa-like beard to help keep him warm. "I used to only have a mustache. That's what I'd prefer to have, but gotta have that beard now," he said. "Not only that, it's not always easy to get a place to shave every day, you know?"

Louis sells Street Roots everyday, working from the moment he wakes up until either it's time to go to sleep or the cold outside becomes unbearable. Even then, his warmest refuge at the end of the day is his sleeping bag, which a kind stranger left by his head as he was sleeping one night. Louis credits the sleeping bag with keeping him from perishing this winter. "I woke up with snow on me the other day," he said. "I opened my mummy bag and all of a sudden snow fell all over my face." Over and over again as we talk, Louis emphasizes just how important Street Roots has been to his well-being. "Thank god for this paper, man. If I didn't have this paper I'd probably perish. This paper's a big help, let me tell you. A big help," he said, adding that he and his customers cannot wait for the paper to go weekly.

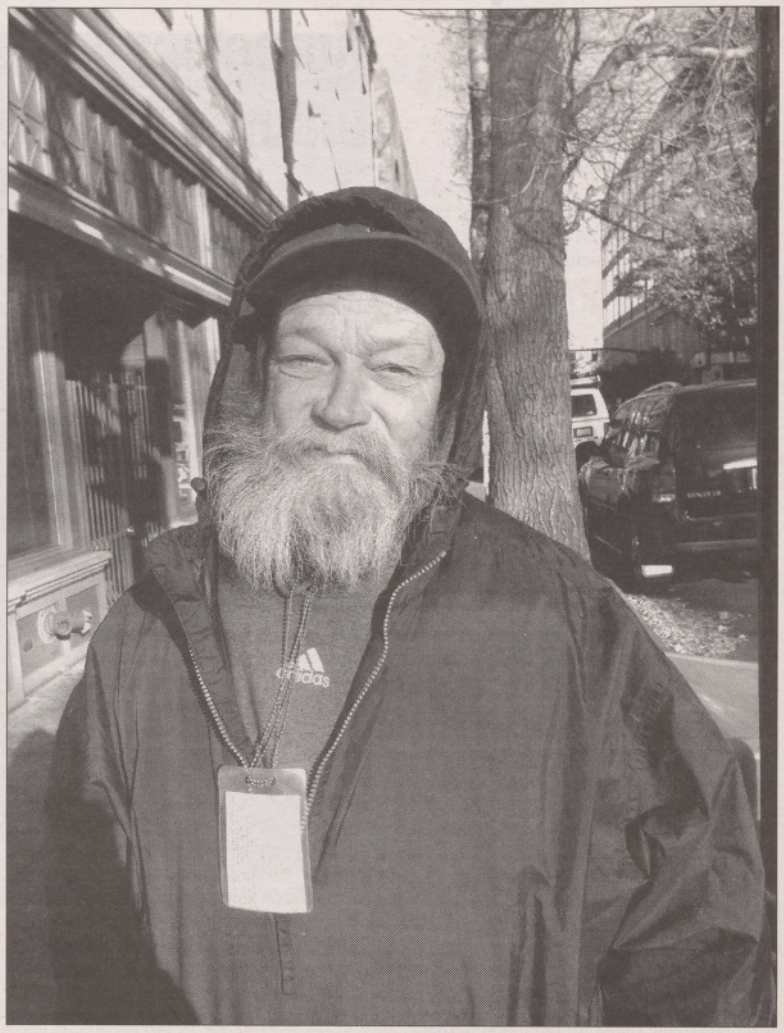

PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

Due to a motorcycle injury that causes his leg to painfully stiffen up, Louis prefers selling the paper around Portland at any place he can. And though he has only been selling Street Roots for a few months he has already become one of the top vendors owing to his ability to talk to people and his mobility around the city. "A closed mouth's not gonna get fed is how I see it."

When I ask Louis how he maintains his positive attitude he replies, "How do I maintain a positive attitude? Thinking to myself that one day I'm gonna be able to call my daughter up and say come over to Dad's house for dinner. That's the only reason I can keep a positive attitude. If I didn't have my daughter I probably would have gave up a long time ago." In the near future, Louis hopes to get service hooked back up to his cell phone so he can keep in touch with his daughter more easily. Though even that, he admits, will be a challenge. In the meantime, he will continue selling Street Roots to customers all over Portland. Their support, he tells me, is what allows him to keep going.

CORRECTION

In the Dec. 6 edition of Street Roots, an interview with Bob Sallinger with the Audubon Society incorrectly identified the title of the Portland Public Water District ballot initiative. It was incorrectly identified as another ballot measure called the Portland Peoples Water Trust.

Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to joanne@streetroots.org

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If you want to learn more about your favorite vendor, check out the past year of Street Roots profiles at news.streetroots.org

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Answers to puzzles on page 15

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