

EDITORIAL

A job well done deserves a statewide encore

When the snowstorm ended and the ice thawed — there was a lot to celebrate. During the snowstorm, a coordinated emergency effort led by the Portland Housing Bureau and others brought together an army of city and county workers and volunteers to do outreach for people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

The Portland Police and Fire Bureaus, along with 211Info and JOIN outreach teams, worked with local emergency shelters around the clock to ensure that people experiencing homelessness had a chance to come in from the cold.

While one person did pass away from exposure in Clackamas County, in Multnomah County the Medical Examiner reported that there were no fatalities for people experiencing homelessness. That's an amazing accomplishment, especially considering that in other

communities around the country, that hasn't been the case.

In San Jose, Calif., seven people froze to death on the streets during a similar storm in December. Around the country, there have been numerous reports of people experiencing homelessness left out in the cold and freezing to death.

At a time of growing discontent and compassion fatigue surrounding the issue of homelessness and poverty, Portland rose above and was able to show great compassion.

What's needed is both a regional and statewide best practices for communities to use during emergency weather. Imagine if all of Oregon was able to implement a similar strategy to Multnomah County.

A Housing and Urban Development homeless team could mandate local communities to have an emergency response strategy in place before allocating funding. In a time when government is looking at a more strategic approach to ending poverty, a uniform emergency response plan makes sense.

We know that in Multnomah County dozens of individuals experiencing homelessness die each year on the streets. Having an emergency response plan in place saved lives this past week. Working to create and maintain this kind of coordination year-round is critical to being able to save individuals and families lives on the streets in the future.

Salem and Washington D.C. should be looking at both tracking individuals who die on the streets and these emergency plans. Understanding why people are dying on the streets and being able to save peoples lives is something government both could and should do.

While homelessness at times may feel like an obstacle our city can't overcome, we know that together, regardless of our political beliefs or own experiences, we are able to accomplish great things. Multnomah County, we salute you.

A snowstorm, a tent city and Chief Reese

What a week on the homeless front. A partnership between some of the most powerful interests in the city and a group of homeless activists, a

snowstorm, and the Portland police chief announcing a plan to address homelessness downtown. Wow.

I haven't even mentioned that there's a plan in the works to potentially move a prominent downtown

shelter to the Eastside, but honestly, that's a story for another time.

I go on the Internet and see reporters and pundits making fun of the conditions in Sochi during the Winter Olympics and then walk out the door at Street Roots in Old Town to see a 64-year-old man freezing in the doorway. You tell me. First things first, a big kudos should go out to all of the men and women who have been working around the clock to serve people on the streets.

Individuals on the streets endure much and none more than during the current snowstorm. There's nothing logical or remotely civilized about watching people struggling without a home during the dead of winter.

There's been an army of social workers, do-gooders, police officers, the fire bureau and many others, working around the clock during these cold nights. They have one simple goal — to not let anyone freeze to death. They do it with compassion and heart. They should be saluted.

If you're interested in volunteering or donating goods during cold spells, or anytime for that matter, holler. Dial 2-1-1. It's one of the most important numbers you can have in your phone.

Pretty sweet that Right 2 Dream Too continues to navigate, with grace no doubt, in some very complex political waters. I'm very happy they've been able to negotiate the next steps of their journey with the city.

Here we have a group of 70 individuals experiencing homelessness, many from the

Old Town neighborhood, who have managed to collectively pull themselves up by the bootstraps and achieve some amazing feats.

How about giving hundreds of people on the streets a safe place to rest for pennies on the dollar. I mean, we're not even talking breadcrumbs here. More so, the group has held its head high, while being ridiculed and undercut, sideswiped and pushed down by some of the most powerful downtown interests in this city. That's what I call some big-time resilience.

So what about Police Chief Mike Reese dropping a pretty big surprise on Portland this week, when the mayor was out of town? Not many people saw that coming.

In case you missed it, Chief Reese unveiled a plan to tackle downtown homelessness using a range of services — for the most part supported by the community, but led by law enforcement.

Before I even start. I have a lot of respect for Chief Reese. I've watched the man de-escalate some pretty serious mental-health crises with my own two eyes. I've also been involved in different processes with him to deliver real outcomes in the community for people on the streets. The man has heart.

That's why I was a little taken aback when he laid out "Portland Prosper," a complex strategy to curtail homelessness downtown. A lot of what was presented has been worked and reworked for years. What made this proposal different is that it comes at a time when there have been a range of different processes taking place to try to come up with those same solutions.

Let's step back for a minute.

First, it's my assumption that the Portland Business Alliance and some folks downtown are mad as hell. They may not say it publicly, but let's be honest. They haven't been able to move sidewalk legislation forward in two years. They have to deal with a homeless camp called Right 2 Dream Too, and insiders who believe homelessness is actually driving business away from downtown Portland.

Their whole message, packaged in various

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DIRECTOR'S DESK

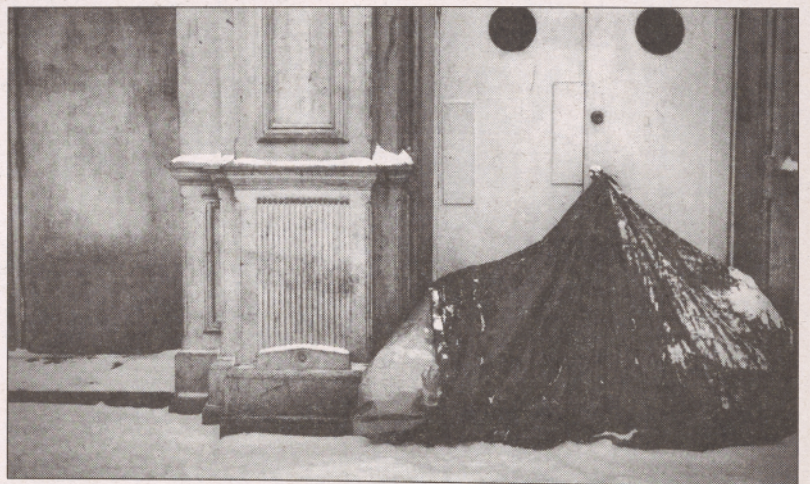
By Israel Bayer

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

During the recent snow storm in Portland, a homeless person huddles under a makeshift tent in Old Town Chinatown.

PHOTO BY ISRAEL BAYER



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

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Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.