

For the RECORD

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

- Number of volunteer hours contributed to Portland Parks & Recreation in 2013: 475,324
- Number of community and art centers in Portland Parks & Recreation as of 2013: 14
- Number of restroom buildings operated by Portland Parks & Recreation as of 2013: 97
- Number of free, healthy lunches served by Portland Parks & Recreation and its partners during summer 2013: 110,000
- Number of Portland Parks & Recreation basketball hoops as of 2013: 229
- Number of part-time and seasonal workers employed by Portland Park & Recreation in 2013: 2,868
- Number of volunteers who worked with Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East in 2013: 7,569
- Percentage of Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East homeowners who are families of color: 90.5
- Number of homes built and sold to Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East families in 2013: 25
- Number of people in Multnomah County who received SNAP benefits in March: 161,105
- Percent of people in Multnomah County who received SNAP benefits in March who were under the age of five: 10
- Number of calls answered by 211info and Oregon SafeNet in 2012-2013: 121,623
- Pounds of food the Oregon Food Bank Network received in 2012-2013: 86.3 million

Portland Parks & Recreation; Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East; Duncan and Murnane; Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber; Partners for a Hunger Free Oregon; 211info; Oregon Food Bank

Small town heart in a big city

BY SAM BOUMAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Before we sat down at the café around the corner from the Street Roots office, I asked Robert how he was doing.

"Another day in paradise," he said, without a hint of the irony or bitterness that usually colors that response. He has a friendly and open way of talking, and before we were served, he had already chatted up the proprietor, complimenting him on his watch and discussing the pros and cons of the nearby Chinatown shops.

The same cheerful demeanor informs his selling style, which has worked well for him

VENDOR PROFILE

Robert Egan

at a handful of locations along lower Hawthorne Boulevard, primarily Grand Central Bakery. He figures that smiling and keeping an upbeat attitude helps lift up passersby as well as himself.

"I just engage with everybody: Hi, How ya doin', How's it going today, whatever, and they pretty much engage with me the same way. If they want a paper they'll come up and get one."

Robert has been selling Street Roots since January. Last year, he worked at the Arctic Glacier Ice plant through Labor Ready, a temporary employment agency, where he loaded pallets with bags of ice for shipment to supermarkets and convenience stores and chipped away accumulated ice from underneath the conveyor belt. It sounded like a tough gig, but he prides himself in having been part of a team that moved more ice with fewer people than in any previous year. When we spoke he had just finished a job at the Expo Center doing construction for the Cirque du Soleil show, and was preparing to reapply for the summer season at the ice factory. Despite this, he still plans to sell the paper on his

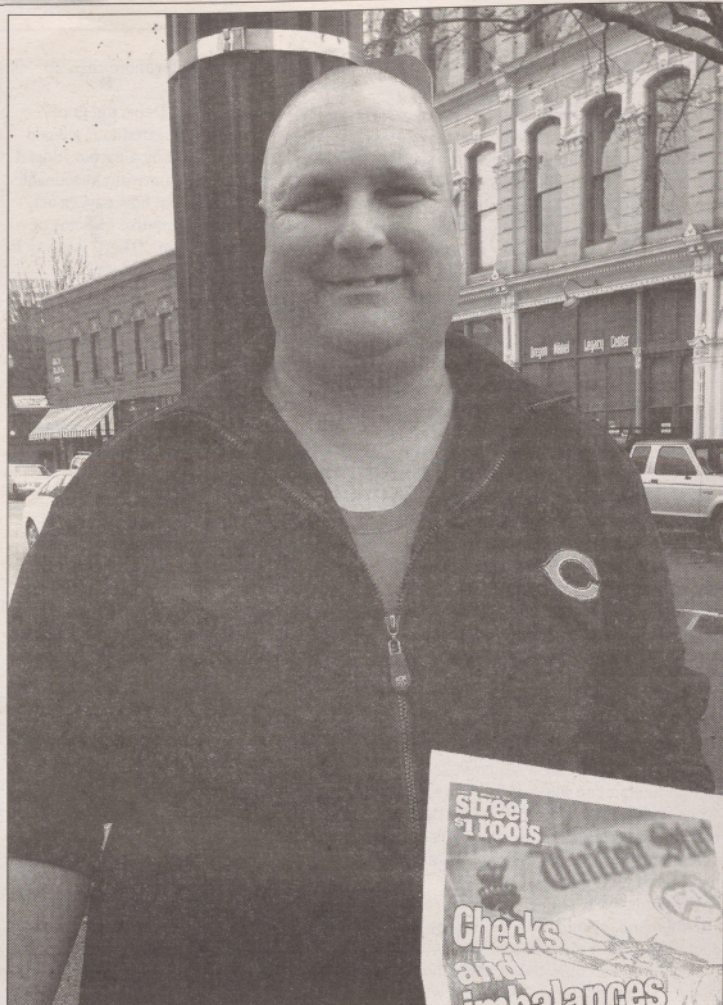


PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

days off.

Robert was born in Salem and raised in the Mt. Tabor area of Portland, and has lived in Oregon his whole life, even as his family has dispersed to New York and southern California.

"I'm a Duck," he says, chuckling. "Quack quack."

He's seen Portland go through a lot of changes, and feels like it might be getting too crowded for him.

"My mom says I have a small-town heart living in a big city," he said, though he still marvels at Portland's small-world qualities and loves meeting people through selling the paper, part of the reason he plans to keep selling it on his days off.

Robert lives at a men's shelter in Southeast Portland, midway between his selling turf on Hawthorne and the Street Roots office in Old Town. While he admits that his attitude hasn't always been so positive, he has come to appreciate the ups and downs of his life as part of the same "box of gems"—though there may be flaws, it's still a beautiful and mysterious thing.

"Earlier you asked me how I was and I said it's just another day in paradise. People sometimes look at me funny when I say that. And I say, you know, if I've got a roof over my head, food in my belly, good people to talk with and an income, I'm alright. Anything else is icing on the cake. If it wasn't paradise, where else would I be?"

Vendors are regular contributors to Street Roots' content, as columnists, poets and artists. Look for your favorite vendor's writings in each edition of the paper.

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Answers to puzzles on page 15

