For the RECORD

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

- Percentage of children of color graduating from high school on time in Oregon: 64
- Percentage of children of color living in families at or above 200 percent of the poverty line in Oregon: 40
- Percentage of black children graduating high school on time in Oregon: 57
- Number of uninsured children in Oregon: 54,630
- Percentage of children in Oregon experiencing food insecurity: 27.3
- Percentage of children eligible in Oregon for free and reduced lunch program: 51.5
- Total pounds of food collected by the top ten food drives for the Oregon Food Bank in October 2014: 15,132
- Number of libraries in a part of the Multnomah County Library system: 19
- Book capacity of Central Library: 725,000
- Number of books in the Multnomah County Library system: 2 million
- Total number of year-round emergency shelter beds in Portland/Multnomah County: 611
- Number of additional beds available during severe weather in Portland/Multnomah County: 150
- Additional winter shelter beds available Nov. 1-March 31 in Portland/Multnomah County: 297

Sources: Children First for Oregon 2014 Status of Oregon's Children Report; Oregon Food Bank; Multnomah County Library; Portland Housing Bureau

Best friends, through thick and thin

BY SARAH HANSELL
STAFF WRITER

Danielle Johnstone and Charles Mitchell sell Street Roots the same way they do everything else in their lives – together.

"I wanted her to be able to do it with me," Charles said. "I wanted for us to do it together."

The couple have been together since they met four years ago, and have gone through a slew of hard times together, including homelessness, health problems and addiction.

"When I met him, my whole life changed, because I'd never really had anybody be nice to me before," Danielle said, looking at Charles. "You're going to make me cry."

VENDOR PROFILE
Danielle and Charles

"I'm not even saying anything," replied Charles with his arm around her.

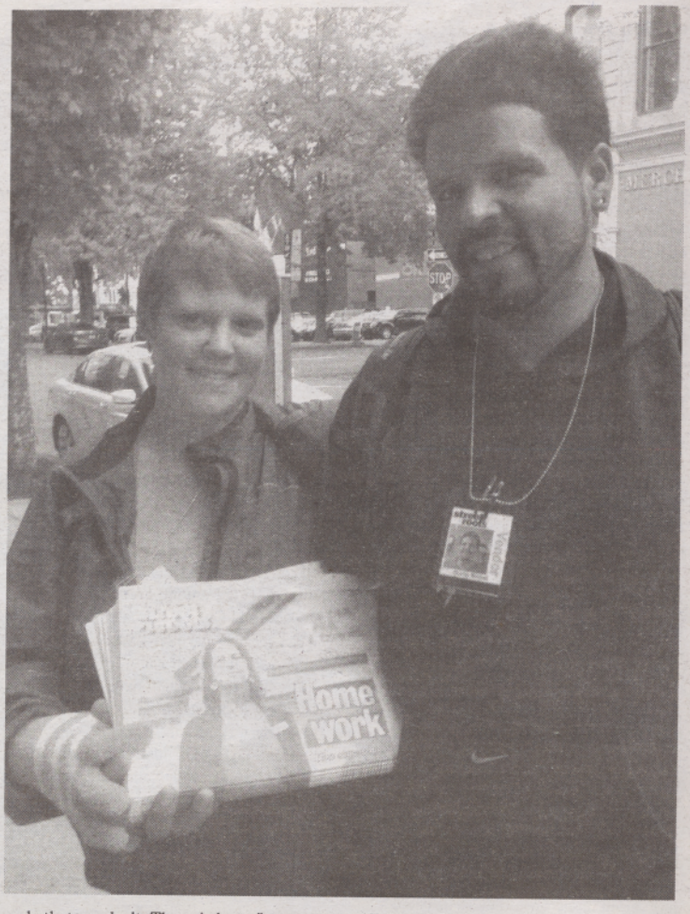
But drug use put a huge strain on their relationship, and after a doctor told Danielle that she would die if she didn't get clean, she and Charles decided they needed to make a change. They quit drugs, and were able to move in with a friend in exchange for helping around the house.

And after being clean for several months, they started selling Street Roots, which offered the sort of stability in their lives.

"People ask me all the time, 'do you make any money doing that?'" Danielle said. "And I say, 'well yeah, we do make money.' But I'm not just doing it to make money. I'm doing it because it's teaching me every day that I can get up and have a job."

Before Street Roots, Danielle hadn't experienced much structure or stability. Street Roots is helping her learn how to take control of her own life.

"It's teaching me that I can do things," she said. "I think a lot of the people stuck on drugs, I don't think they realize that they can quit. They just think, 'these are the cards that are dealt. There is hope," Danielle said. "And I know, as a woman, if you don't have any self-esteem and you don't have any self-worth, it's really hard to get up and do anything with yourself...but when someone smiles at you and tells you that you're doing a good job, for me, that's the biggest reward ever."



It's the people who show them kindness that makes the job so worthwhile to Charles and Danielle, like the man who asked them if they were hungry, then proceeded to buy them lunch without even taking a paper. But even just a smile or a word of encouragement, Danielle said, is enough to make her day.

"I thank more people, just for acknowledging and smiling, more than anything," Charles said.

Street Roots also offers the two the opportunity to be with family again. Danielle and Charles plan to save a portion of the money they make every day until they can afford two tickets to Alaska, where Danielle will be reunited with her kids.

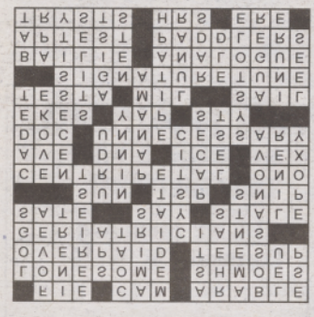
"My kids are excited to see me and see me be healthy," she said.

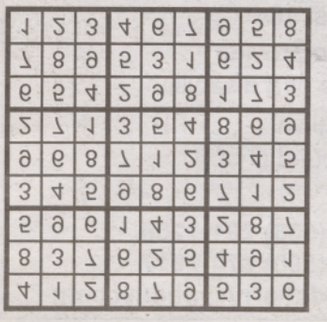
Despite the struggles the two have been through and the unknowns they still face, they seem optimistic. When I ask them what keeps them positive, the answer, is, of course, each other.

"When you're a little kid and you have that best friend you want to hang out with all the time, that's him," Danielle said.

The couple currrently sell Street Roots outside of Food Front at 23rd Avenue and Thurman.

Answers to puzzles on page 15





Street Roots is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers, now more than 120 papers strong, worldwide.

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