



A friendly visit from a former vendor

We got a visit recently from former vendor Chris Caldwell. When he showed up to SR last spring, Chris, a professional painter, was out of work and experiencing homelessness.

While selling with us, Chris got two great opportunities: a full-time painting job and a three-month stay at the Clark Center shelter. Chris was able to save several paychecks along with his Street Roots earnings (he was still selling papers after work) and used the money toward a security deposit and first month's rent on an apartment.

Last week, Chris showed up with paint on his arms and a smile on his face driving the truck he'd just purchased.

"I'm so grateful for all that Street Roots has done for me," he said.

Mexico City to launch new street paper

BY LAURA KELLY
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Among the colorful markets, historic plazas and grand cathedrals of Mexico City, there are tens of thousands of homeless people living on the streets. Many live their whole lives without ever having a place to call their own. Some are the third generation of their family to be born into homelessness. Opportunities to escape the cycle of poverty are limited, and violent gangs prey on the estimated 40 percent of the country's population who live in poverty.

In this challenging and dangerous environment, 26-year-old artist Maria Portilla is leading a team of six brave young women — all in their mid-20s, and without any prior experience in the magazine industry — to bring her home country its first street paper. Mi Valedor will launch this month to join the nearly 120 similar projects, including Street Roots, that are part of the International Network of Street Papers.

"Mexico City needs this," Maria says. "There are grandparents who were born in the streets and have lived their whole lives there. There are very few organisations, or laws from the government, to help homeless people. The government doesn't even have a proper count of the people living in the street. So they are super-excluded. They don't have any good attention or facilities."

Mi Valedor was supported by the INSP

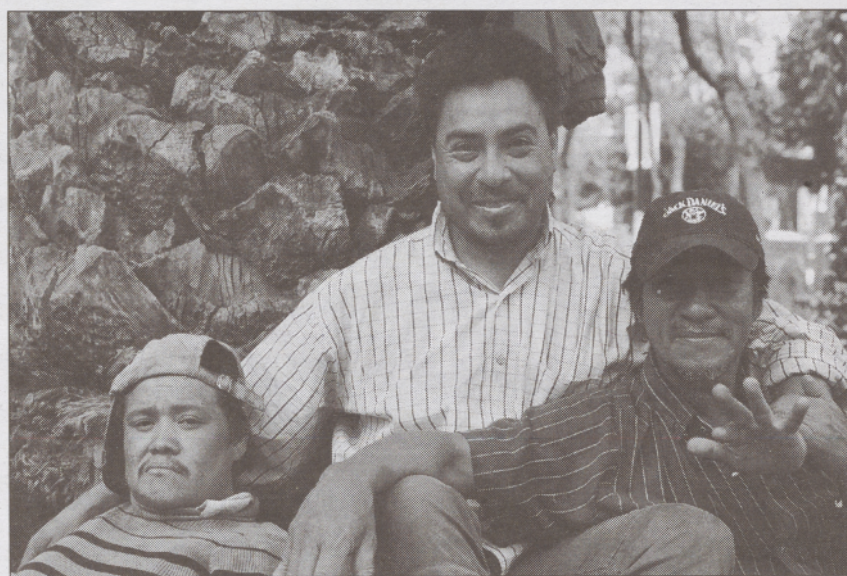


PHOTO BY MARIA PORTILLA

Vendors of the new street paper, Mi Valedor, which is set to launch in Mexico City.

program to help fledgling street papers. Mi Valedor is "my pal" in Mexican slang, but Maria says its meaning for them is "something like 'my protector' or 'someone who looks out for me.'" That's what the street paper aims to be for its vendors, she says.

Alongside Catholic charity La Carpa (The Tent), they have already recruited 10 vendors to start selling their publication. They hope to add to that number soon with help from Street Soccer Mexico, the local organization that sends a team to the Homeless World Cup each year.

Over the past weeks, the women have been getting to know the people who will be selling Mi Valedor. Having based the Mi Valedor office in a creative area, they aim to link their vendors into that community. They recently ran a knitting workshop for

the group.

"All of them have lived many years on the street. Three of them have lived all their life on the street, since they were children," Maria says.

The stories of how they became homeless may be varied but one thing binds all of the vendors: they want a way out of homelessness and off the streets. "They don't want to be there anymore," Maria says.

Miguel Angel Valencia, a 53-year-old Mi Valedor vendor agrees. "Today, I woke up with the motivation to keep going, and not return to the way things were before," he says. "I learned from the streets; it's easy to lose yourself there, as an addict, no job, just wandering. Now, I am looking to correct things. Employment is what I was looking for."

Better health here for you

Delivering physical, behavioral health and dental health care for over 230,000 children, families and individuals on the Oregon Health Plan in the Portland Tri-County area.

Together we are **health share**
Health Share of Oregon

www.healthshareoregon.org

Gary Cobb
Community Outreach Coordinator,
Central City Concern

Transition Projects
believes **no one**
should have to be
homeless.

Transition Projects

650 NW Irving St.
Portland, OR 97209
503.280.4700
www.tprojects.org