

An open letter to all who shared my journey at Street Roots



Grace Badik has been a full-time Jesuit Volunteer with Street Roots since the summer of 2013. She leaves to begin a new position as a coordinator with Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest.

BY GRACE BADIK
STAFF COLUMNIST

It's hard to believe two years have come and gone. What an incredible time it has been! Filled with many peaks and valleys, with joy and sorrow, trial and triumph. I am a different person, a better person after these two years, and I can't describe the love and gratitude I have for this place, this community and this experience. Leaving Street Roots is bittersweet.

At Street Roots, we call ourselves a family, and as I am about to leave it feels as if I'm leaving my family for the first time, again. Though I have never gotten used to those 7:30 mornings, I will miss the chorus of hellos and sounds of coffee getting ready. My days will be different, no longer filled with getting news ink on my hands and face, Tom Petty blaring from the speakers, those adrenaline filled moments of tension or times of spontaneous story sharing. I'm going to try to put into words what I have learned over these few years. It feels like a herculean task not only because the lessons are many, but because I know I will be forever shaped and influenced by my relationships formed here. Where to begin?

From the vendors, I have learned so much especially in regard to friendship, kindness and community. I felt welcomed from the very beginning at the office. As the months passed, that welcome extended into friendship and community. This is evident in small gestures, offerings of food, asking

about my family, saying "I'll miss you." Daily actions, small gestures with huge impacts. When you show up day after day at a place, that place and those people become home and community. Even on tough days, I found myself still wanting to show up. Good news or sad, I felt compelled to share it with this community. I am inspired by the vendors persistence and perseverance in the face of what seems like insurmountable odds.

From their kindness, in its most authentic and genuine form, has come healing in my own life and a willingness to trust the world and see the goodness in all people. When I first started at Street Roots, I arrived deeply wounded, dealing with a raw trauma from the previous year. I wasn't sure how I would manage my own trauma and that of others. How much suffering could I witness? How much tragedy, mine and others, could I hold in my heart? It was hard, really hard, those first few months. I was overwhelmed by the work. Yet, the persistent kindness and will of the vendors kept me going. Here are men and women battling their own demons and those of a system, day in and day out. Their spirits were not broken; their traumas, past or present, did not entomb them. Buoyed by the feats of the human spirit and drawn out of myself, I came to better deal with my trauma, dive deeper into the journey of wholeness, and stretch my heart. In the recognition and acceptance of my own woundedness and brokenness, I found community where we are all broken. For we are all wounded and broken. I am grateful for

this lesson in community and humanity from the vendors. From all of you, I have learned that what is important is neither our past nor future, just who we are in this moment, for that's all there is.

From the incredible staff, the lessons are endless. What an amazing crew of people dedicated to such intense work. Their unending passion and depth of compassion continuously inspires me. They teach me the importance of nonjudgmental acceptance and unconditional love. They model what it means to do social justice work with open hands rather than clenched fists; of how staying true to yourself is essential for the long haul; and of how play and joy must go hand in hand with hard work and struggle. I soak in their wisdom and bask in the years of their work. Love is truly at the heart of what they do. They have thick skins and soft hearts. Warriors and guardians of giving voice and proclaiming truth to the realities of our society. Thank you for allowing me to question and push back, for letting me grow comfortable in my own skin and finding my voice.

Everyone involved at Street Roots from the vendors to the volunteers to the staff are incredible people. Oftentimes, during periods of struggle in my life, Street Roots kept me afloat. I will miss not spending so much time at the office. I am because they are.

With peace, love and deep gratitude,
Grace.

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CareOregon and our partners make Oregon Health Plan navigation easy!

We offer help with:

- Medicaid medical, dental and mental health appointments
- Medicare eligibility for disabled and elderly adults

Find us at these locations:

City Team, 526 SE Grand Ave.
July 15.....8-10 a.m.
July 29.....8-10 a.m.

Clackamas County Community Corrections-Transition Center, 1024 Main Street 97045
July 14.....1-3 p.m.
August 11.....1-3 p.m.

Folk Time, 4837 NE Couch Street
June 29.....12:30-4 p.m.
July 27.....12:30-2:30 p.m.

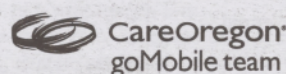
Lloyd Center, 2nd Floor by Cinnabon
July 8.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
July 15.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
July 22.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
July 29.....11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

P:EAR, 338 NW 6th Ave.
July 7.....noon-2 p.m.

Portland Rescue Mission, 111 W. Burnside
July 16.....8-10 a.m.
July 23.....8-10 a.m.
July 30.....8-10 a.m.

Sisters of the Road, 133 NW 6th
July 10.....5-7 p.m.

Union Gospel Mission, 3 NW Third Ave.
July 21.....2-4 p.m.
July 28.....2-4 p.m.



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Vendors sell Street Roots
throughout Portland. If you
want to find a vendor near
you, call our vendor
department at
503-228-5657