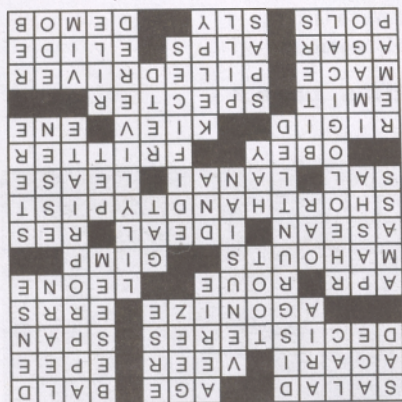
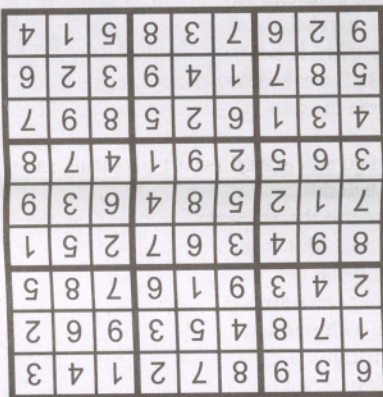


When ride or die Is done

by j.McCurdy

The thing is
Those
Ain't
My
Bullets...
And
I ain't
Taking one
For u

Answers to puzzles on page 15



VENDOR PROFILE Tina Drake

BY LEONORA KO
STAFF WRITER

Honor is everything for Tina Drake. "It's just the way I live my life," Tina said. "(It means) dignity, kindness, keeping yourself honest. It's a big thing with me."

Tina follows her sense of honor when she sells Street Roots at the Starbucks on Northwest 23rd Avenue and Overton Street. She recently bought a coffee for a customer on her 88th birthday.

"She and I will sit there and have a conversation while I'm selling my papers," Tina said. "I had a gentleman come by; he walked past four times. He comes back to me an hour later and he goes, 'You know, I have never seen anybody so kind, so cordial with the elderly folks.'"

"If you don't live with honor, what are you giving out to people? You're giving deceit; you're giving lies," Tina said. "All my life, it always ate at me because I had to hide who I actually was to my family. It ate at me every day."

Tina was born and raised in Utah.

"It was a really, really hard place for me and my (gender) transition that I'm going through. I mean no disrespect to the church, but it is a (Latter-day Saints) run state, and the LDS is against the LGBT community as a whole," she said.

"I knew I was different as early as 9, 10 years old. But because of my family and the church and whatnot, I hid it."

As a child, she was diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder and bipolar

disorder.

Tina came out with her true self two years ago.

"What changed for me was the death of my mother," she said. "She told me in her dying breath, 'I know who you truly are, and I accept you.' That (moment) was what really gave me the strength to follow my heart and be who I am."

In Utah, Tina encountered negativity about her gender identity.

"There's been several times where I have wanted to shut myself up somewhere and just give up because of the way I was always treated. Then I was told about (Portland) and the fact that there was an open, welcome, inviting community. And I have to say it's true."

Tina moved to Portland in early March.

"I wasn't seen as an outsider. I wasn't seen as being something different, something abnormal. I was seen as a person."

She met with Outside In staff and recently learned she will begin hormone

treatments.

"You know that feeling you get when you open that first present Christmas morning? That pure joy? That's what it felt like. It's becoming a whole new person, a whole new woman. There's so much that I missed out on by hiding it for so long."

Tina's fiancée has come to terms with the transition.

"My fiancée, bless her, has stuck with me through thick and thin and is there for me every step of the way," Tina said.

They have been together for seven years.

"We're planning on doing a handfasting, which is an old pagan ritual," Tina said. "It is basically the bonding of two people, a marriage without the license."

Tina credits Street Roots with helping her through her transition.

"Finding Street Roots was honestly one of the best things that happened to me," she said. "I have an income that I'm able to purchase the things that I need - the makeup, the clothing, things like that. I don't have to go around begging for money every day. I don't have to hold up that little sign that says, 'Please help me.' I'm helping myself by getting out there and doing this."

Tina hopes to save enough money for a special project: "I'm actually going to be building a bicycle kit with a gas-powered engine, as well as a pull-along lightweight camper. (It's going to be) home wherever I'm at."

Her goal is to set foot in every state. In the meantime, Tina is feeling less angry and more positive. "Ever since I've been out here, I've actually been able to start being me. I have been so much happier, so much more energetic, so much more open," she said.

"The way I look at it: The rose has finally started to

bloom."



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