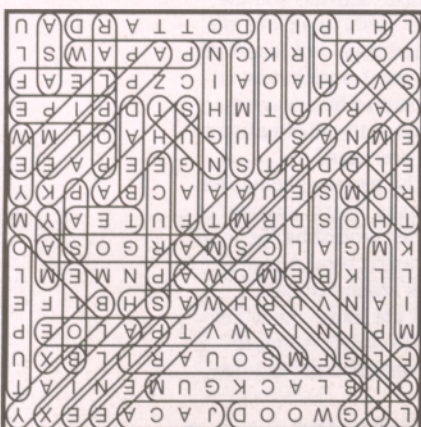
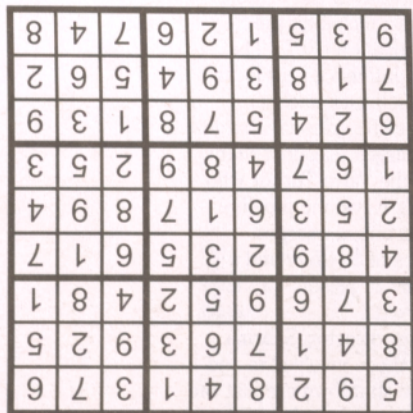
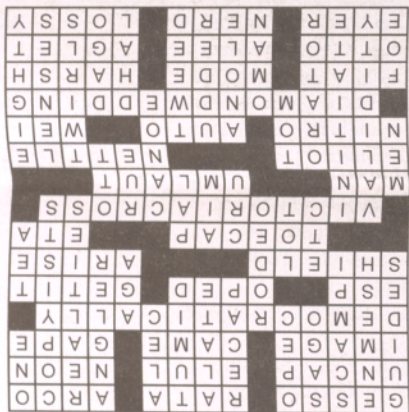


The Abyss of Emptiness

by Brian Nye

Where did the love go
 Relationships were the goal
 Then love turned to pain
 Then came the thoughts,
 I'll never gain
 Hate, rage and discontent
 is what it's become.
 And I'm stuck not knowing
 how to get it undone
 The emptiness in me
 I've named the abyss of emptiness
 I try so hard I'm careless
 With every rejection
 my soul drifts deeper
 into the Abyss
 For a long time my soul
 has been dying
 Then I find myself alone
 somewhere crying

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



VENDOR PROFILE

Shawn Knight

BY LEONORA KO
STAFF WRITER

Shawn Knight is smart as a whip and taking steady steps to get off the street.

He was born in Ohio and grew up in Texas.

"I've been an electronics geek since I was a kid," Shawn said. "When I was 8 years old, I was tearing apart little motorized cars and building robots."

As an adult, he went to college for a couple of years and worked in the tech industry.

"I worked for Dell for 2 1/2 years," Shawn said. "I created the online service program for the original Xbox system. If you called in and you had a question that their normal tech support couldn't handle, you went to my department. I hand-picked the department, I trained them from the ground up, and I created the entire program.

In three months, we handled 4,000 cases."

When the dot-com industry went bust, Shawn moved to various cities and ended up back in his hometown.

"Up until August, I'd been working in Texas," he said. "I had my own place, I had a car, and I was working full time. I was working the overnight,

graveyard shift at Wal-Mart."

A relationship brought him to Portland, but when that didn't work out, Shawn was out on the street.

"Before coming to Portland, I'd never been homeless," he said. "My mom and my stepdad have a huge respect for what I'm doing."

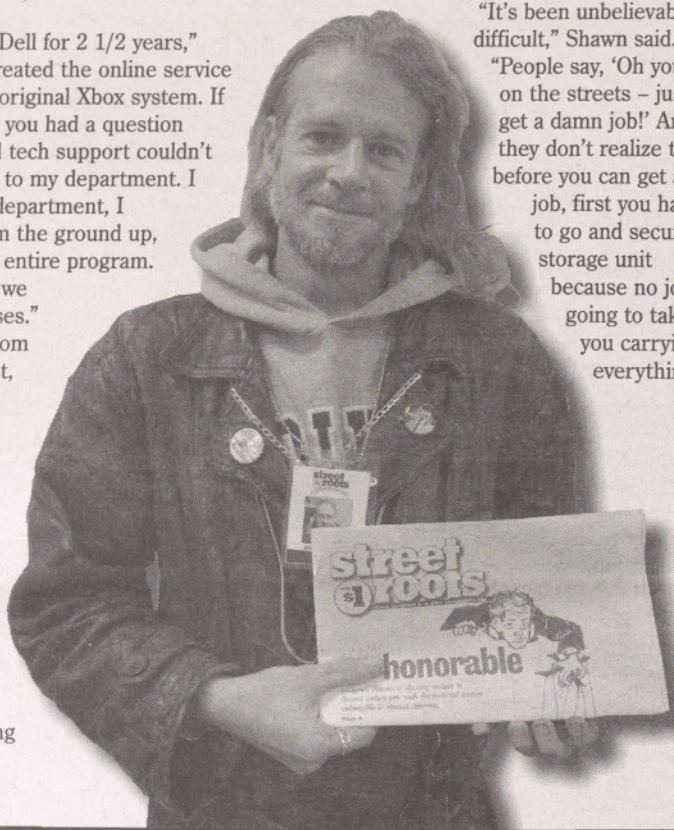
He said he can't go back to where he was.

"I lived next door to where I was physically and sexually abused for half my life," he explained. He said he would drive past the school where he was assaulted. "I mean, the last thing you want to do with PTSD is think about the past.

Life on the street has been an eye-opener.

"It's been unbelievably difficult," Shawn said.

"People say, 'Oh you're on the streets - just go get a damn job!' And they don't realize that before you can get a job, first you have to go and secure a storage unit because no job is going to take you carrying everything



you own with you. Then you've got to figure out a way to get yourself a phone because no amount of resume writing skills are going to eliminate the need for a contact point. There's this months-long process of things you have to figure out how to do, just to take that second step."

He has found that simple acts like taking a shower, washing clothes and getting a sack lunch for work take careful planning and hours of waiting in line.

To pay for storage and phone costs, Shawn has sold Street Roots, but more often he works full time through Labor Works.

As Shawn deals with PTSD, he focuses on the positive and has applied for a permit to work at marijuana dispensaries.

"I am extremely knowledgeable about it," Shawn said. "For me, it's not only about a product that works for (customers), but also helping to educate them. So if they go into a different dispensary, they know what all these goofy numbers mean.

"People ask me all the time, 'Shawn if you had a time machine and you could go back and change anything in your life, would you?' And I always answer the same: No. Because I have been able to turn those experiences into healing for other people."

He has been an abuse and relationship counselor through his church and on the street. To defend himself and others, he has trained in the martial arts.

"I've studied the old Arthurian knights and the Samurai my whole life," Shawn said. "And I've always tried to pattern myself after that: To serve the people, keep people safe and be a protector."

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