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VENDOR PROFILE

Kerry Anderson

BY MEGAN SMITH
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In our increasingly polarized environment, Kerry Anderson has some advice about connecting with people across the political divide.

"Don't get angry when someone says something that is the complete opposite of what you believe," he said. "Figure out where the other person is coming from."

Kerry, 57, is a dyed-in-the-wool conservative and an avid reader who loves to discuss philosophy and politics with everyone, even when they disagree with him completely.

"Being a native Oregonian, I can get along with most everybody," he said.

Born in Gresham, Kerry took an interest in writing and politics in junior high school. He had early ambitions of a career in journalism and majored in political science at the University of Oregon. It was there, as a College Republican, he learned important lessons about getting along while remaining true to his convictions.

"I caught a lot of heat at U of O, you can imagine," he said. "It served me well. All my friends and professors made me really defend my beliefs."

After graduating, Kerry went into business selling insurance, and lived throughout the Western states before returning to Oregon.

When he lost his job and then his apartment in Oregon City last fall, Kerry put what belongings he could into his RV and parked it in storage. He lived on savings until they ran out. Then he lost his ID and his phone, interrupting his job search.

"I'm a 'by your bootstraps' kind of guy, always have been. But when you get smacked down so hard, it's hard to get back up."

Kerry started selling Street Roots in December.

"I had no job, no place to stay. I was in a pickle. Street Roots was the only place where I could make some money to get by," he said.

"I used to buy Street Roots because I would see a guy down and out," he said. Only when he started selling the paper himself did he realize, "Hey, I'm no different from these guys." Kerry



appreciates the camaraderie he has found selling Street Roots.

"All the other vendors and the staff there have accepted me," he said.

Which is not to say that he agrees with the paper's editorial stance.

"I'm more of a National Review, William F. Buckley type," he said. "But there are stories in here you won't get anywhere else. So, that's good."

As a writer, Kerry said he enjoys observing and interacting with people while selling the paper at his favorite spots around Providence Park and Pioneer Place.

"I wish I could tell some people, 'Hey, I disagree with this article, but read it anyway,'" he said. "Give a dollar. Get something out of it. And, if nothing else, there's the crossword. Hey, I've got a job here."

Kerry said being homeless has him reflecting on the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes.

"Hobbes in the 'Leviathan' said life is 'nasty, brutish and short.' I used to be out ahead of the game and I thought, life's not that bad. But life really can be that bad. You know, I've slept out in the snow. People look at you and judge you without even knowing you."

Nevertheless, Kerry is hopeful about his future. He is getting support from

Transition Projects, a nonprofit that serves people experiencing homelessness. He hopes to resolve his ID issues soon. Then, "find a decent job and a decent place to live. And start mending those bridges that have broken. I'd like to start writing again," he said.

Kerry says his recent experience has informed his world view.

"Being homeless has changed me," he said. "It's imprinted in me now - to treat all people the same."

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles

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