VENDOR PROFILE

Shaggy

BY MEGAN SMITH
STAFF WRITER

From his backpack, Shaggy pulls a long, sturdy piece of bamboo wrapped in lanyards and trinkets that he has come across in his travels. The artfully decorated walking stick is a reminder to this Street Roots vendor that he is letting life take him where opportunity presents itself.

Shaggy, 32, was given his name years ago by co-workers who recognized a passing resemblance to the iconic best friend of a Great Dane in the Scooby Doo cartoon.

"It was just my demeanor," he said, "and my hair as it was growing out. There are things about his character that match for me."

Pointing to his favorite Scooby Doo T-shirt that reads, "What happens in the van, stays in the van," Shaggy says he and his eponym share a talent for remaining open to new experiences and remaining upbeat in the face of obstacles.

"A positive mental attitude can accomplish almost anything. Applying it to any given situation, it could go a completely different way if you approach it with a good attitude rather than a bad one."

Shaggy said his brother inspired him to try traveling.

"He told me, 'Unburden yourself from all of your stuff. Go on the road. Go see new things. Learn some new skills,'" Shaggy said.

"It's been awesome. I've had some great experiences. Just getting to meet people you never would encounter if you weren't homeless. Just cause you might walk past them or they might not talk with you even if you did stop cause they think you're part of a different world."

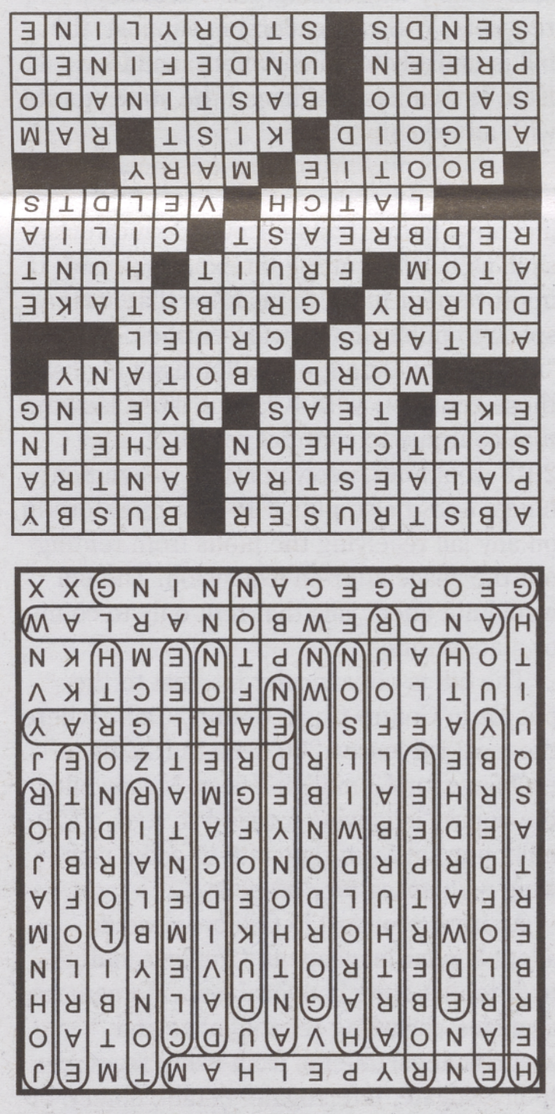
Shaggy said he is testing out the theory that to truly understand something, one needs to experience it directly.

"Being homeless, it's a different way to experience this city. To experience it from the street up is sort of interesting," he said. "Like not having (public) bathrooms, then when you do find one, there is someone in there for 20 minutes ahead of you. You would never see all that if you didn't experience it."

Shaggy quickly connected to Street Roots and started selling the paper and submitting poetry about his observations of living on the streets. He can often be found outside the downtown Voodoo Doughnuts, where he enjoys the lively atmosphere.

"Street Roots is a way to make my own way," he says. "It's been a great way to meet people, customers and vendors and other folks who are on the streets playing the violin or something. It's led to some great conversations with people."

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



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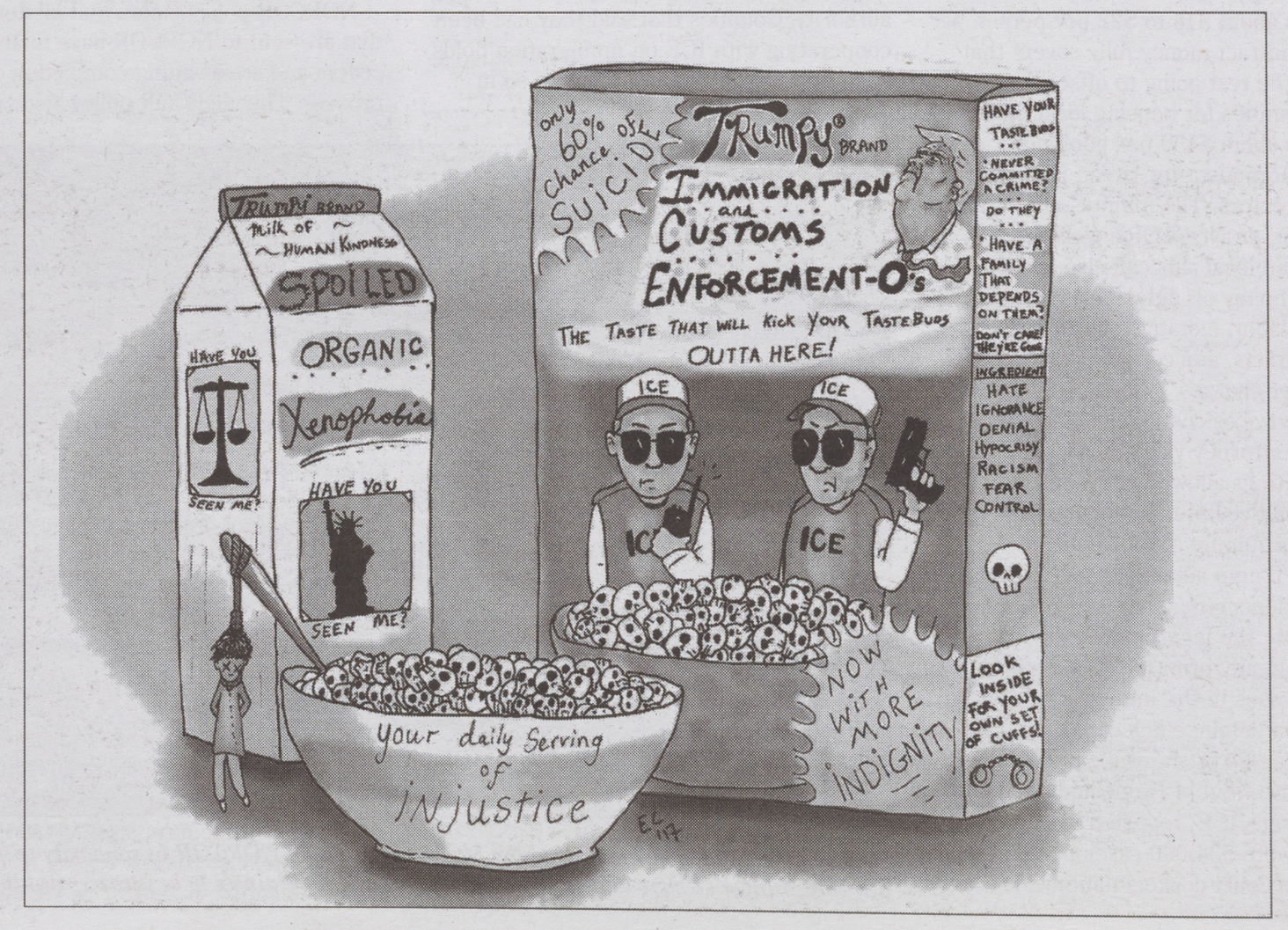
by Elizabeth Considine