Studied Vengeance

by Avendor

A snake
slithers out from under the bush
you quickly move back.
but the Almighty says
"Sorry son,
but this here's payback".
And as you lie there
holding your leg
cringing on the ground.
Remember he's the boss
he owns this joint
and lovingly runs this town.

VENDOR PROFILE

Amy Turco

BY HELEN HILL
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Spending an hour talking with Amy Turco is like a breath of fresh air. Her calm, essential kindness is contagious, and her philosophy of living for others refreshing. Amy doesn't smoke or drink, and she's never done a drug in her life, she said. Her advice on the matter is: "If you're trying to quit, don't ever start." She sees the toll drugs and alcohol have taken on people close to her and on others who, like her, live on the streets.

Amy wants most of all to be an advocate for those in need. She would like to return to school some day to take classes in social services.

"I know how to listen, how to *really listen* to people who aren't being listened to," she said. "Homeless people need someone who cares, and they need laughter and smiles. Everyone needs laughter and smiles.

Amy said listening is an important part of her work as a Street Roots vendor. She's been working off and on as a vendor for five years.

She sells papers at the Broadway Safeway, across the street from Sean, her boyfriend, who sells in front of Broadway Goodwill.

"How's your day going?" she likes to ask passers-by, and she really wants to know the answer. She often wears her lucky necklace, a round silver ring. People comment on it; she said it's a great conversation starter. Amy likes working the northeast part of town because people seem friendlier, less rushed than they are downtown. She said she is proud to work for Street Roots, and she would like to always be a part of the organization.

"What Street Roots does for Portland is unbelievable," she said.

Sean and Amy spent the last four months of a very hard winter and spring in a tent under the Morrison Bridge. A few weeks ago, their tent and all their belongings were swept and dumped in a stream of gutter water. Their things were ruined, but she feels no ill will.

"Maybe it's easier now," she said. "We're more mobile. We can just wrap up and go. I was starting to collect too many things when we had a tent, and the less stuff you have, the less you have to worry about," she said with a wise smile.

It's harder on Sean, she said, because he carries their sleeping bag and clothes on his back all day. Every two weeks or so, they like to save up for a motel room to give Sean a rest, so he can lay down the backpack and they can sleep in a real bed.

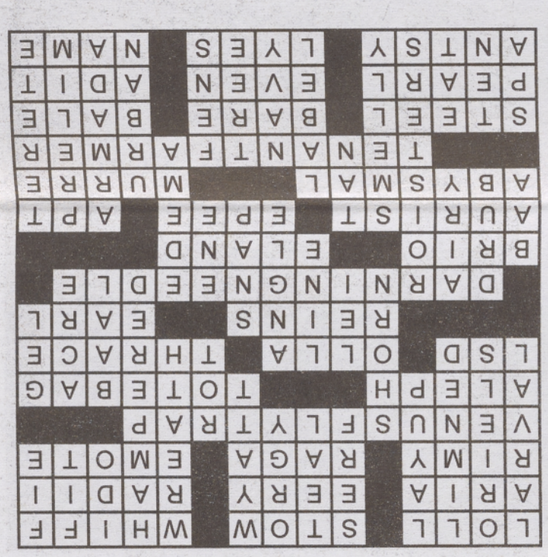
Amy is working at the airport Starbucks now in addition to selling Street Roots, so with their combined income, they can afford a room once in a while, as well as a cherished trip to Killer Burger on Third Avenue.

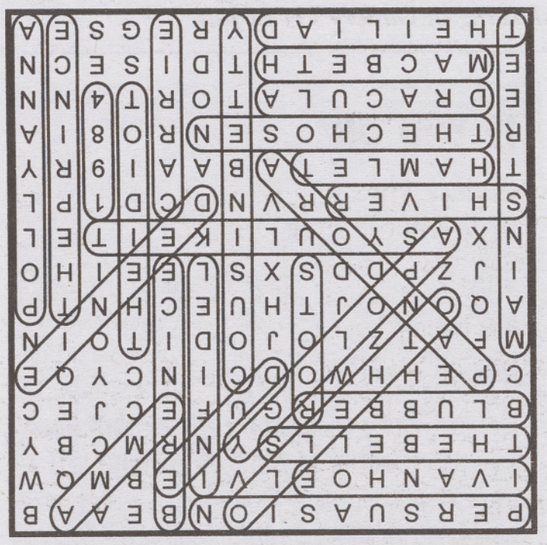
Amy comes from a small town in Florida called Wesley Chapel. She has been able to visit in the past few years, but her love for Portland and Sean always draws her back. Sean and Amy have a few doable dreams: They'd like a nice, affordable place to live, and they'd like to visit the coast. Amy has never seen the Pacific Ocean. But the dream closest to her heart is her goal of finding a way to be a positive, listening advocate for others.

"If you need to talk to someone, I'm here," she said.

A good listener with a sincere heart can make a tremendous difference in this world.

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles





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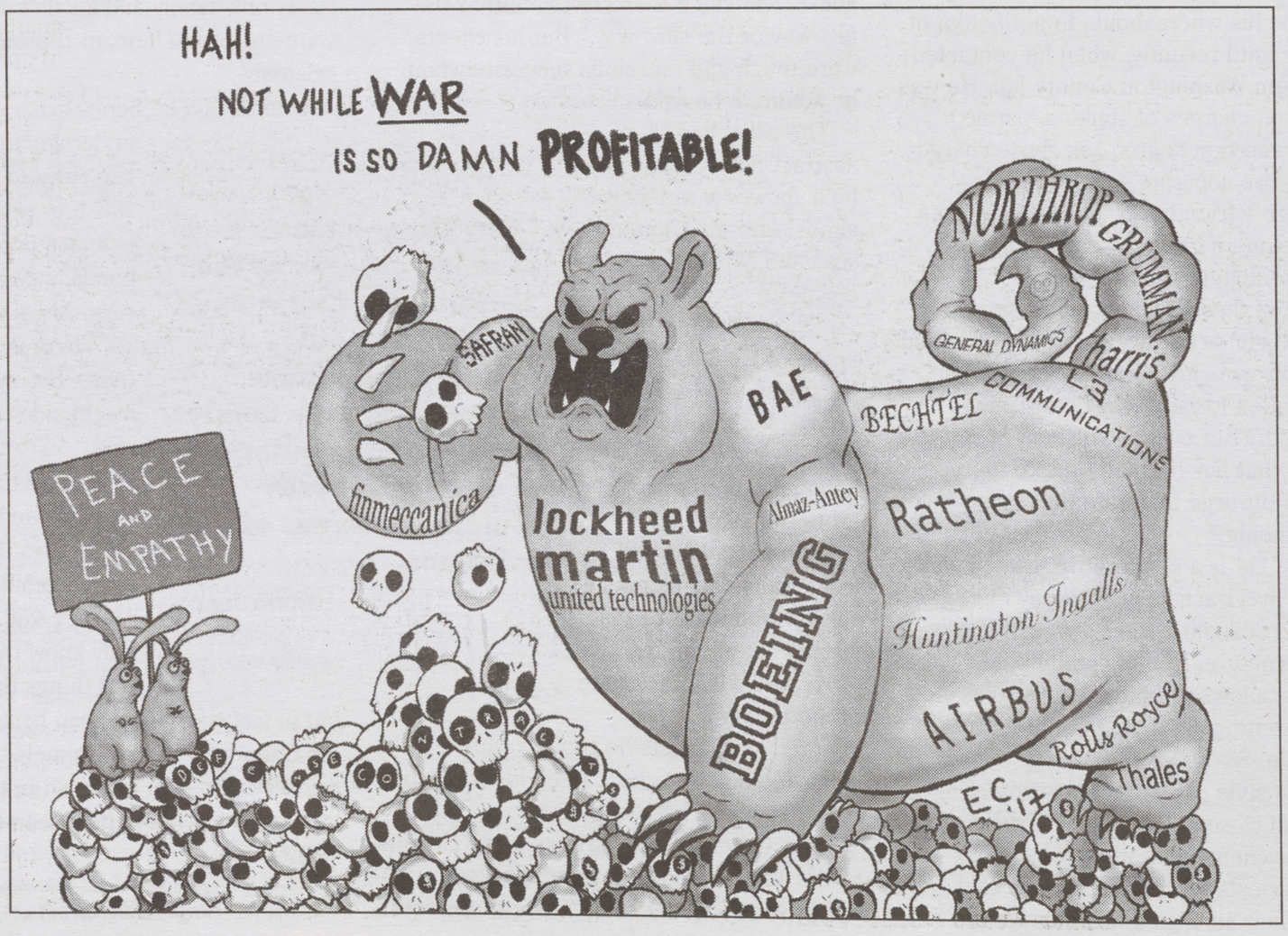
by Elizabeth Considine