

## The streets need help, before it's too late

*Maddy Brown-Clark is vendor with Street Roots. She sells the paper outside Floyds Coffee in Old Town.*

**BY MADDY BROWN-CLARK**  
STREET ROOTS VENDOR

The housing situation is a serious problem in Portland, so many low-income and no-income people are homeless. Something must be done to address this tragedy.

Sure, there are shelters. But there aren't enough to house everyone. And they are only a temporary solution to the problem of homelessness. One can only stay at a shelter for a short period of time. As good as shelters are, they are like a Band-Aid on a gaping wound.

One of the problems I've run into is the fact that you must have good credit to rent a house or apartment. It doesn't matter how good your rental history is; that's not good enough. My brother, who is still homeless, has run into that problem. In better days, we shared an apartment for seven years. We were never late with the rent and took good care of the apartment. But when we had to move out, we were denied apartment after apartment because we didn't have credit cards.

Many homeless people are disabled and mentally ill, like myself. So they have some income coming in. Yet they are still denied proper housing. Low-income housing is almost impossible to get into. There are long waiting lists. Sometimes it takes up to a year

or two to be housed. What will we do in the meantime?

When I was homeless, I was in my wheelchair on the street. No one would help me and my chair would run out of power – once in the middle of the street. Yet I had an income coming in. But I didn't qualify to rent a place.

I got very sick living on the street. Many of us hallucinate, hear voices and talk to ourselves, yet are harmless. This is because many run out of medication on the streets and can't be hospitalized in mental health facilities unless they are suicidal.

The sad thing is that there are many empty buildings around the city. Why can't these buildings be turned into low-income apartments to house the homeless? There are people out there who do care. Every year there's a blues festival. Often the earnings are used to help the homeless.

In my case, I finally found housing in assisted living. I am one of the fortunate ones. But many of my street brothers and sisters are still homeless. What will become of them?

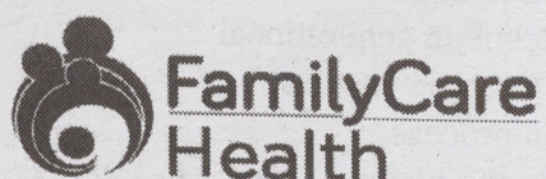
Winter isn't that far away. Some die of exposure. Now is the time to help so they don't lose hope and life. I call for those who can to help before it's too late for anyone else out there on the streets.

## Daybreaks

by Avendor

Rock and roll's  
got my mind spinning  
my neighbor brought me a bowl  
now I'm grinning.  
Kiss me by the Birds of Paradise  
Mother Nature needs our love  
Train me in the warrior clan  
these corrupted times need a shove.  
I dirty my pant leg  
picking up a key  
in the red and violet neon light  
fogging over the city.  
I know these words as numbered  
are somewhat unfit to measure  
but sometimes to lay out the truth  
you must ruffle a few feathers.  
And now that the day's hunger  
has been satisfied  
I'll go to sleep beneath the stars  
with the rest of my pride.  
Should you find me waking up  
gazing into the dawn  
know that I've come here not to fail  
but to be loved, and to belong.

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