CORRECTION

The Oct. 27 edition of Street Roots included a photo of a campsite with incorrect information in the caption. The campsite's owner was misidentified. The photo was taken by Damien Blakeley in the fall of 2016. Also, the photographer's first name was misspelled.

Street Roots strives for accuracy and regrets errors. Please send requests for corrections or clarifications to Joanne Zuhl at joanne@streetroots.org.

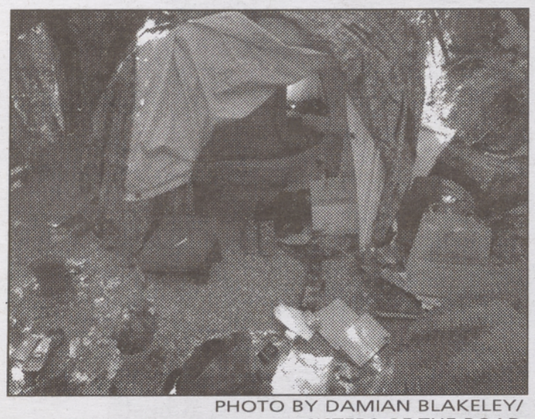
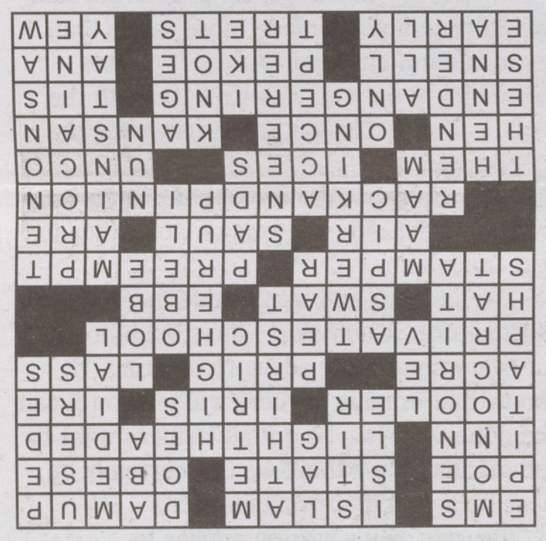
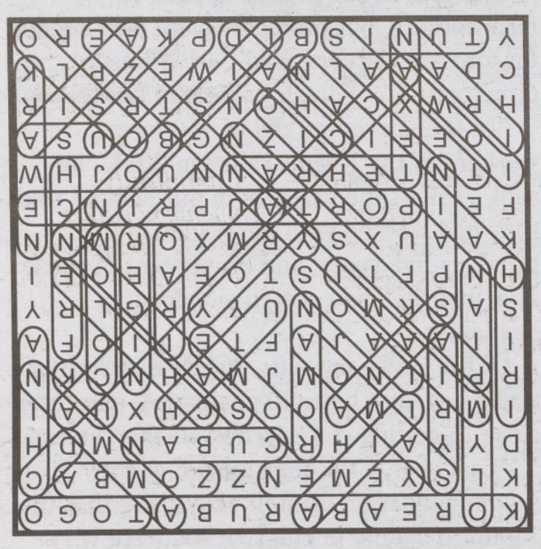


PHOTO BY DAMIAN BLAKELEY/ SISTERS OF THE ROAD

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles





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3	6	9	1	7	8	4	5	2
4	2	7	8	9	1	3	6	5
8	5	6	2	3	7	9	1	4
9	3	1	5	6	4	2	8	7

VENDOR PROFILE

David Samson

BY LEONORA KO
STAFF WRITER

David Avery Samson is a natural leader who makes the world a better place through his art and his activism.

"I have healed myself with art," David said, and he wants to do the same for others.

Early on, David studied art at Clackamas Community College and quickly became a de facto teacher's assistant by tutoring other art students. He also supported a wife and three children, supervised kitchen crews and agitated for the union in the food service industry.

But his world fell apart when his wife left him and took the kids.

"I had built up a rock shop. I do lapidary work – gold, silver and stone," David said. "When me and my wife divorced, I lost my shop. I lost everything, and I kind of gave up for about six years."

He went into deep depression, drank and used drugs and ended up at Dignity Village, an intentional community of nearly 60 homeless people near the Portland International Airport.

At Dignity Village, David took on leadership roles such as village chairman and security head. As a donations officer, he made sure everyone got their fair share. He became a communal chef so that all would have enough to eat. He was also an eloquent voice as an outreach officer and spoke to the Ashland City Council and Eugene Rotary Club.

But David was still having troubles.

"During the day, I was sober and I would attend to all my duties," he said. "At night, I was just getting baked."

David's recovery came through a series of events.

He said he began meeting with Michele Mannix, a gifted drug and alcohol counselor from Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare. Through counseling and after the deaths of two friends from alcoholism, David started asking himself: "What am I doing here? I have education, I have experience, lots of skills. How do I get to the other side?

"I sort of wrote my way out of it. I filled 75 spiral notebooks with political, spiritual and physical observations and poetry. I found my way back to myself with it."

When his stepmother died and left him art supplies, his creative side got blown open: "I realized that she actually had a lot more aspirations and hopes for me than I had ever assumed."

David went cold turkey from drugs and alcohol and moved from Dignity Village to a house where he takes care of his father.

He taught himself Photoshop and created mandalas.

"I started feeling better and better. Now it's to the point unless I do two or three pieces of artwork a day on the computer, I feel kind of weird."

David hopes to start a website and sell T-shirts with his designs.

"I don't want to do anything other than inspired stuff, beautiful colors, patterns and shapes – because the world is full of ugliness. I always believe in bringing in joy."

For now, David and his girlfriend sell Street Roots and beads along a two-mile stretch from the Multnomah County Courthouse to Safeway on Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard.

"Two-thirds of the money that we make is actually beads," David said. "Street Roots is more of a talking point and it fits right in with my personal mission – as a person and as an artist. Street Roots has the luxury of not being beholden to (government or corporations). So a lot of times, those articles are a lot more hard-hitting and to the point. And I like that."

David's goal continues to be sobriety and skills for the houseless.

"The people on the street are not there by choice," he said. "They have mental health problems or financial difficulties or things that are beyond their control. If those people were given an option – a real valid option – they would take it. Almost none of these people would live like this.

"I'm one of the most blessed people where I have choices. Me and Jo have to struggle to help my dad pay bills for the house and food, but we have a house. In back of the house, I've got a wood shop, a metal shop, and I'm starting to grow my rock and jewelry shop again. If I can make enough off my T-shirt idea, just imagine supporting other artists that could come and use my shop.

"There's a power to doing things by hand and creating," said David. "My activism is spiritually based: take it directly to the people."

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