

No matter the obstacles, Street Roots changes lives

As many of you know my time at Street Roots is winding down. I have only three and half weeks left in the office before I hand over the leadership of the organization to Kaia Sand (See page 7).

It's more than surreal. I've spent most of my adult life, 15 years, married to the street

newspaper movement and homeless advocacy, and most likely will continue to do so after taking a short break this winter and spring.

Many supporters have asked if there's

going to be a fund set up in my name that people can give to this holiday season. I have to admit, it's a little funky for me to think about. It's never been me to use my own work as the reason for why people should give money to Street Roots.

The truth is I never expected to be an executive director or a leader in the community. I started at Street Roots as a volunteer and poetry editor, then became the office manager and eventually would be asked to be the executive director.

Prior to my time at Street Roots I was a convenient store clerk at 7-11 and Peterson's downtown and worked in retail at the William Temple Thrift Store. I have a 10th-grade education and have never made more money than I make today, which by industry standards isn't a lot.

I've never really cared about climbing a political ladder, running for office or who was talking what behind my back. What I've cared about first and foremost is trying to make Street Roots the best it could be and helping create the political will to give people a safe place to call home.

I've made mistakes. Gone down roads that I've had to turn around, fell on my face and failed, and had to rethink the way I've approached the work on more than one occasion. Saying that, I've also been a part of many things I'm proud of and have had many great mentors and friends along the way. Without them I'd have been totally lost. Thank you!

At the end of the day, giving a donation in

my name is less about me and more about the people that we serve.

It's about the people that have died long before their time. Kevin Hull. Birdman. Scarface. Ted Jack. Nick Gefroh. Bruce Heino. The list goes on.

It's about the people who have overcome great odds and have found a safe place to call home. Richard Falconer. Art Garcia. Louis Adams. Jim Dienes. Hundreds more.

It's about the people that are currently surviving the hell that is homelessness.

I often say that Street Roots is a small train that carries a heavy load in the community. What we all are most proud of at Street Roots is being able to deliver a professional newspaper every single week to more than 160 human beings improving their quality of life.

Street Roots has never been about one person. It's been about a collective group of people all moving in the same direction with an idea that no matter what obstacles we faced, we would do the work to give people opportunities and create some social change along the way.

So, yes, I am asking you to give a donation to Street Roots this year through the Willamette Week Give!Guide (giveguide.org) or online at Street Roots (streetroots.org). You can also mail in donations to Street Roots at 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209.

If you'd like to give a donation in my name, please do. More than anything I hope you give a donation to support the work maintaining quality journalism and giving people on the streets a voice. I hope you give for the many people that have come before us, some of which aren't with us anymore, and some that are thriving. I ask you to give a donation because giving to Street Roots is about believing in humanity at a time when it feels like there's not a lot to believe in.

I appreciate all of the readers and supporters that have made my time at Street Roots an experience of a lifetime, but more than anything I appreciate you believing in something bigger than ourselves.

Big love!



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

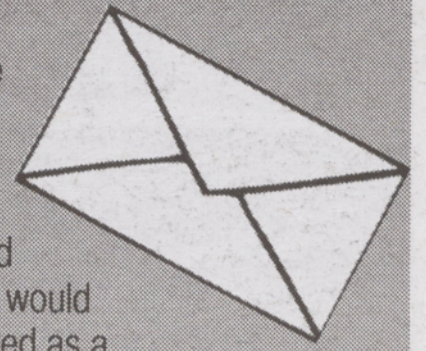
Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org or follow him on Twitter @israelbayer.



Israel Bayer, left, with vendor David Boston.

Write in

If you would like to have something that you've written published in our pages, or would like to get involved as a member of our reporting staff, contact Executive Editor Joanne Zuhl at 503-228-5657, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.



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