

Organization

Street Roots celebrates a year of growth and looks toward the future

BY BRAD TAYLOR
STREET ROOTS BOARD CHAIR



As the year winds down, we at Street Roots are finding ourselves enjoying the success within our present moments and celebrating an inspiring past. We are also looking forward to a future that is full of promise.

Street Roots is a driving force for positive change in our community. We share empowering stories, partner with social justice leaders and organizations, and provide income opportunities for individuals struggling with homelessness and poverty.

Looking ahead, we will begin our next chapter with a new executive director and we will find additional ways to add value to the lives of our readers and our vendors while continuing to work to strengthen our local and global communities.

Our editorial department, led by our outstanding Executive Editor Joanne Zuhl, delivers some of the best journalism in the city. With her leadership, we will continue to develop and tell the stories that our community wants and needs to read in ways that give depth to the issues and to the lives of those engaged on the frontlines.

In the coming year, we will continue to not only inform, but also to empower readers and to celebrate the innovators and opportunities for change that surround us.

For instance, as we recognize that our housing crisis is not just a Portland problem. We are embarking on a statewide, two-year project to tell the story of our rural communities as they struggle with their own challenges around housing and homelessness.

As the year ends, we will say farewell to Israel Bayer, who for the last 15 years has masterfully led our organization as our executive director, participating in advocacy efforts across our community effectively and justly. He has touched our community deeply.

Although Israel is moving on to future projects, Street Roots will continue to be a leading voice in advocating and defending the civil and human rights of all people in our community.

We are excited to begin a new chapter with Kaia Sand as our executive director. Kaia is a deep and curious listener, a skilled storyteller and a strong advocate who has a history of using her voice to strengthen the voices of others. We enthusiastically welcome her leadership and her sense of purpose to Street Roots, and we look forward to her enriching and inspiring our community of vendors, staff and donors. Her experiences from the frontlines of local social-justice movements and the relationships she has developed and nurtured throughout her career will serve us well as she guides Street Roots' advocacy voice and efforts.

Our vendor program continues to grow in strength and numbers. Creating income opportunities for vendors remains at the heart of Street Roots' mission, and currently we have more than 160 vendors who are experiencing homelessness and poverty. They sell the newspaper, every single day, at more than 70 locations throughout Portland.

The vendors themselves are the hubs that connect us. The vendors' lives embody many of the stories that the paper highlights. And the vendors literally bring those stories from the pens of the writers to the hearts of the readers. They express the humanity of our organization as they make human contact with you and with me, at a time in our world when human contact is becoming more and more precious.

Expanding our vendor program and expanding our vendor locations are the main focus for next year's efforts. Not only will more vendors have the ability to sell more papers, as we expand our locations farther out from the city core, but more readers will be exposed to the award-winning journalism and the effective advocacy that Street Roots offers. These new readers will find not only a new paper for sale in their neighborhood, but also a new voice to express the stories and struggles and dreams that are most pressing in their lives.

We will continue working to strengthen the role that vendors play within the organization through their engagement in the vendor committee and representation on our Board of Directors. We will continue to support vendors' engagement with the public in ways that allow them to demonstrate their complexity as thinkers, advocates, storytellers and individuals who have skills and perspectives to add to our movement toward greater social justice.

Street Roots is now actively partnering

with the faith-based community to support a vendor outside houses of worship, and to date, more than a dozen participants have signed on. We hope to see this number continue to grow.

As we look back at the success we have enjoyed in the past and the bright future we see from today, we also think of you – the reader. You who help provide income opportunities to individuals experiencing homelessness. You who support the paper that brings the stories that fuel the advocacy that shapes the policies that improves the lives of our most vulnerable community members. You are helping to improve our city and the lives of those of us who live here.

As we move into a new era at Street Roots, our organization is stronger than ever. Our paper and our programs are solid. We are partnering with Marigold Coffee to roll out a selection of Street Roots' inspired blends – Street Roast – that will give us more financial stability while expanding our name and our mission to people who have not yet heard of us. We have a great team of vendors, staff, volunteers and board members who will continue to work together with our readers to carry the organization's mission forward.

