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VENDOR PROFILE

Allen

BY LEONORA KO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Allen grew up in the Portland area but learned about hard work in faraway and foreign places.

Early on, he worked for 10 years as a deli and catering manager in Chicago. But when Allen started a bakery and a liquor store in Mexico, he worked day and night for three years.

"I was definitely humbled by staying in Mexico. People work, struggle hard there," he said. "But if you want to open up businesses, it's a lot easier to do there."

His former wife was Mexican, and when Allen inherited a little money, they decided to open a couple of businesses near her family in San Bartolo, a town outside Mexico City. His wife worked at their liquor store, and Allen worked at the bakery with her relatives.

"It was seven days a week (with) two shifts," where they made dough in the evening and baked the bread in the early morning hours, Allen said. "We had different contracts with the little stores, and we would drive into the mountains to deliver bread every day. People would also come running up to the car and buy bread."

"It was a lot of hard work, and there's a lot of people down there who are just hard, hard workers. But they still have more joy than people here in America do, you know? So they may not have all our shopping malls and everything might be nice (here), but they still get together and have a good time."

In 2014, things went downhill. He and his wife divorced, and Allen moved back to Portland. On top of having a heroin

addiction, he experienced an episode due to a long-term schizoaffective disorder and ended up on the street.

"The main downfall of my problems out here was the result of self-medicating," Allen said. "When you're doing it, you're thinking it's just making it better. But in reality, it's just making your whole life worse."

He found help through Allied Health Services of Portland, which provides medically supervised methadone treatment and counseling to help people overcome opioid addiction and move toward recovery.

Allen has been successfully off of street drugs since 2014, he said - "thanks to the methadone clinic and the programs they offer."

"Once I was put on the right (mental health) medication, and since I started receiving the drug treatment, things have really turned around. The only setback I've had is housing."

When Allen became homeless in 2014, Transitions Projects placed him and three others in a house in Southeast Portland.

Allen was able to find a full-time job as a forklift operator and began paying his own rent.

However, last December, the landlord

Nothing

bad

happened;

she just

wanted to

move back

into the

place,"

Allen said.

Since then,

he has been

sleeping at the

Columbia Shelter

on the east side of

the Willamette

River, where "it's still frustrating and hard, but it's better than sleeping outside."

This past summer, Allen was laid off from his construction job, and he is glad Street Roots is there as a fallback.

"It's a life saver is what it is," Allen said. "Street Roots is something I can actually do and feel good about myself. (I'm happiest) when I'm talking with people, being social, things like that. Going to Street Roots every morning is very helpful."

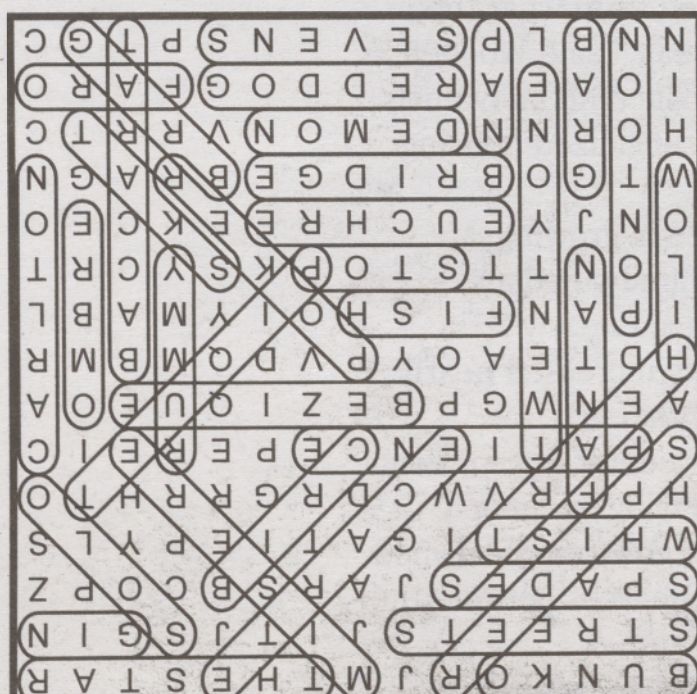
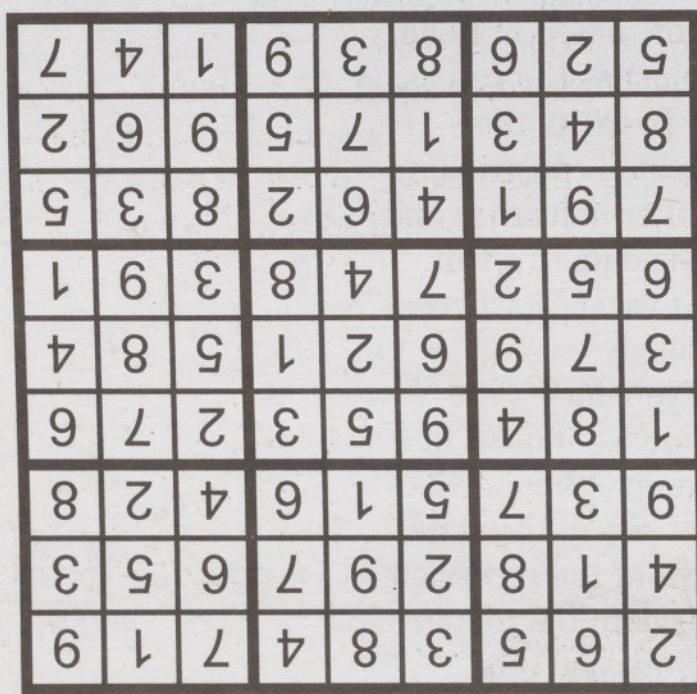
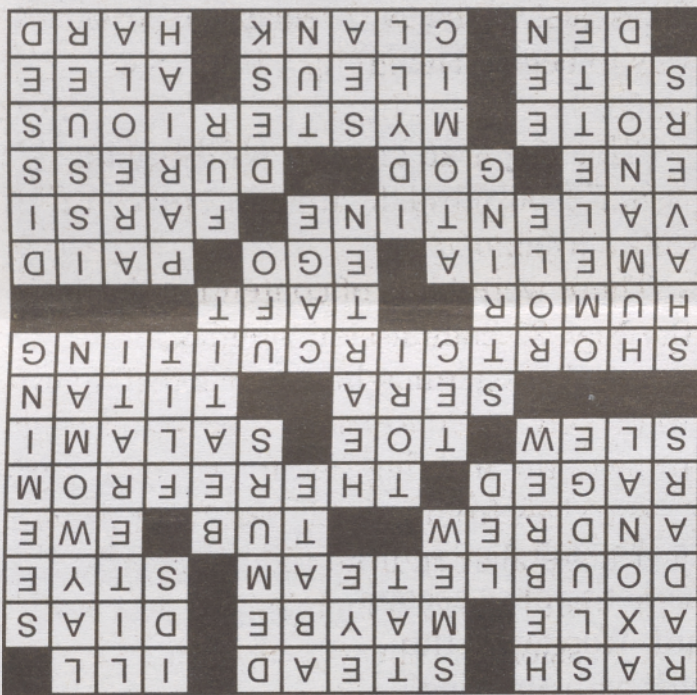
Allen sells Street Roots newspaper at the Green Zebra Grocery in the Lloyd Center District from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekdays.

"My quality of life is one hundred times better," Allen said. "I may be out here again, but I don't have a drug problem now, so things are a lot easier, and it was one of the biggest things in my life. Since then, I've been able to hold down jobs."

Allen has goals of finding another full-time job so that he can pay rent again and have a permanent home. He said: "Giving up is too easy. refuse to be stuck out here."



Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



Sheeptoad

by Elizabeth Considine

