

Given the chance, people will do the right thing

It's about that time. My days at Street Roots are winding down. Next week, I will be writing a reflective piece of my experience at Street Roots and a snapshot of homelessness today.

Saying that, this will be my last Director's

Desk. The new executive director, Kaia Sand, will be taking the reins starting next week.

Most of my adult life has lived on these pages, working to defend the rights of

people experiencing homelessness and being a part of an amazing team helping make Street Roots what it is today.

I've described Street Roots many times as a small train carrying a heavy load. That hasn't changed. I'm proud that Street Roots has nestled itself into the local media landscape while working to change the face of people on the streets.

We couldn't do it without the support of readers and supporters like you. For long-time readers, you've watched us grow from a scrappy monthly publication to an award-winning weekly publication over the past 18 years. Today, we continue to deliver a range of critical dialogue and reporting on social justice issues facing the larger community. That won't change.

In a time when our country appears to be lost at sea, our community divided over the issue of homelessness — Street Roots helps bridge the gaps between the general public and the homeless population. After all, people experiencing homelessness are our neighbors. They are mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers, sons and daughters. They are human beings that simply don't have a safe place to call home.

Street Roots means not only giving people dignity and hope, but becoming engaged with people in an intentional way that changes people's perspectives and offers people a meaningful way to give back.

I believe that given the chance that most people, regardless of their experiences want to do the right thing. I believe Street Roots is an

example of this. Your support of vendors is real. It's tangible. It's right in front of you. It's beautiful.

Everyone at Street Roots works so hard to deliver the newspaper week-in and week-out. One of the things we are most proud of is that the Street Roots office have been open to vendors and people on the streets 365 days a year for 18 years! That's 6,570 days. Given the small team we have, that's an amazing accomplishment. We haven't missed a beat. It's a testament to how much we all care, not only about giving people a hand up, but to also be able to provide a space for readers to understand the issue of poverty at a very deep level.

In celebration of this accomplishment, I'm asking readers to do a few things. One, stop by and thank your neighborhood vendor for the work that they do. Rain or shine, vendors are working hard to improve their lives.

Two, start drinking Street Roast. If you haven't heard, Marigold Coffee launched a new coffee line in Portland. Every bag sold goes to support the mission of Street Roots. Street Roast is available in New Seasons stores throughout Portland.

Lastly, regular readers know I'm not shy about asking for money. It will be the last thing I ask of you after spending most of my adult life dedicated to Street Roots and the street paper movement. I believe in this organization with every once of my being. I believe in the vendors, I believe in the readers. I believe in the idea that no matter where you come from or where you're going, we all have something to offer.

Please take the time to make a small or large donation to support Street Roots. You can make a recurring donation at streetroots.org or a one-time donation at the Willamette Week Give!Guide at giveguide.org.

Thank you, readers, for a great ride. Keep the faith. No matter how hard the winds blow, we are stronger together. Thanks for believing in Street Roots. I believe in you.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

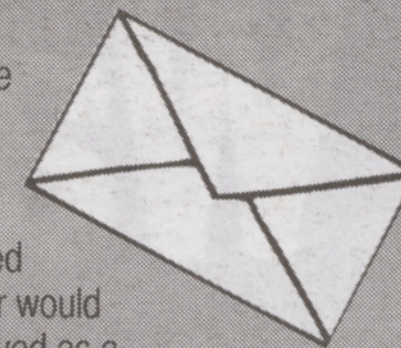
By Israel Bayer

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



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.



Street Roots

211 NW Davis St.
Portland, OR 97209
503-228-5657
Fax: 503-227-3117
www.streetroots.org
www.news.streetroots.org
Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. and 7:30-1 p.m. Sun.

Advertising

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Contact Israel Bayer at israel@streetroots.org

Staff

Executive Director Israel Bayer
israel@streetroots.org
Executive Editor Joanne Zuhl
joanne@streetroots.org
Vendor Program Director Cole Merkel
cole@streetroots.org
Senior Staff Reporter Emily Green
Operations Director Sarah Beecroft
Program Assistant Caelin Miltko, Jesuit Volunteer
Vendor Assistant Scott Jackson, Alex Gillow-Wiles
Development Assistant Rosemary Wilson
Editorial Producer Monica Kwasnik
Reporters Sarah Hansell, Leonora Ko, Emilly Prado, Jared Paben, Amanda Waldroupe, Stephen Quirke, Helen Hill
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