

Be a part of the solution, support Measure 101

Last week, as the rain fell hard, a group of Street Roots vendors held a blue tarp high above their heads. The truck had arrived with the bundles of Street Roots newspapers, precious cargo for 170 people who brave conditions of homelessness and poverty to sell this paper. From the truck to

the front door, vendors formed a tent with the tarp, the rain pounding but the papers dry.

The street newspaper movement is one big dream implemented by a whole lot of people in

34 countries. Here at Street Roots, we publish our newspaper every week, our vendors purchasing the newspaper for a quarter and selling it for a dollar. Vendors pitch in in other ways, too. On Fridays, the day when the truckload of papers arrives, vendors, staff and volunteers unload the newspaper, passing bundles from person to person, stacking the bundles onto shelves, dividing the stacks to then distribute. There are a lot of people pitching in to make this dream a reality, sometimes by holding a tarp in the rain. A lot of people who have very little do a whole lot.

Across Portland, people are having conversations about how we can come up with solutions to homelessness. And just like at Street Roots, people want to help.

Here's one way you can help right now: Vote yes for Measure 101.

Homelessness is brutal to a person's health.

People grow sick from sleeping exposed to rain, snow, heat and toxins. In shelters and in camps, people are exposed to communicable diseases. It is difficult to

manage one's health care, from refrigerating medicine to securing a place to recover after a surgery. The challenges of hygiene compromise wound care, exacerbating infections. Untreated illnesses become chronic. Substance abuse and mental health crises contribute to the early loss of lives on the streets. The majority of people on the streets report a disability. People suffer from domestic violence. Sleep deprivation brings on additional illness. Homelessness is a health crisis.

Here in Oregon, Medicaid expansion has made it possible to extend health care to many people suffering from homelessness. Most of our Street Roots vendors now have health care through the Oregon Health Plan – the Medicaid provider – and many through the Medicaid expansion, joining more than 350,000 people statewide who now depend on this insurance.

Street Roots has endorsed Measure 101 because we do not want to lose this. We don't want our vendors to lose Oregon Health Plan coverage. We don't want other poor and homeless folks to lose that care. We don't want children to lose health care: 40 percent of children in our state are enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan.

People want to help when the opportunity arises. Right now, such an opportunity has arisen.

Please cast your vote to sustain funding for the Oregon Health Plan by voting yes for Measure 101.

There is much work ahead of us. Some of this work must be visionary and big.

But just as the vendors grabbed a tarp to collectively protect the newspapers from the rain, some of what we must do is simply protect what we already have from destruction.

The expansion of the Oregon Health Plan is a precious gain, so let's make sure we hold on to it.

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DIRECTOR'S DESK

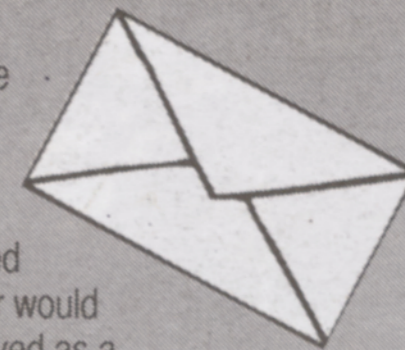
By Kaia Sand



Kaia Sand is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach her at kaia@streetroots.org. Follow her on Twitter @mkaiasand

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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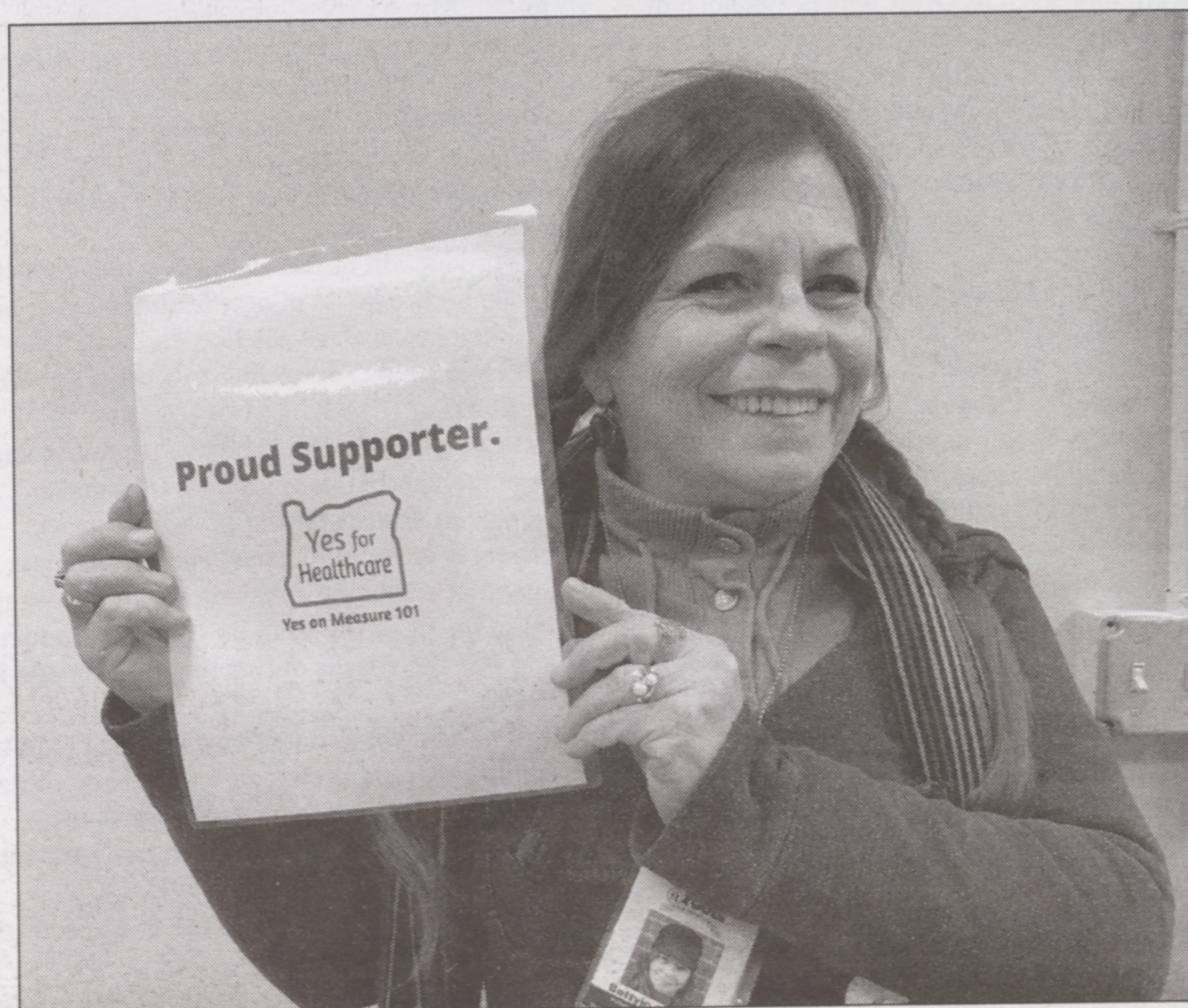
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Street Roots vendor Bettyjo Griffiths