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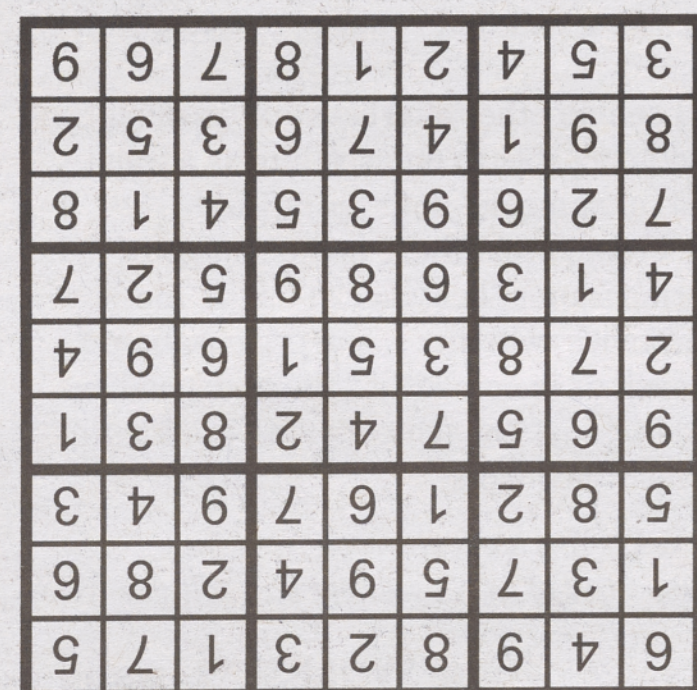
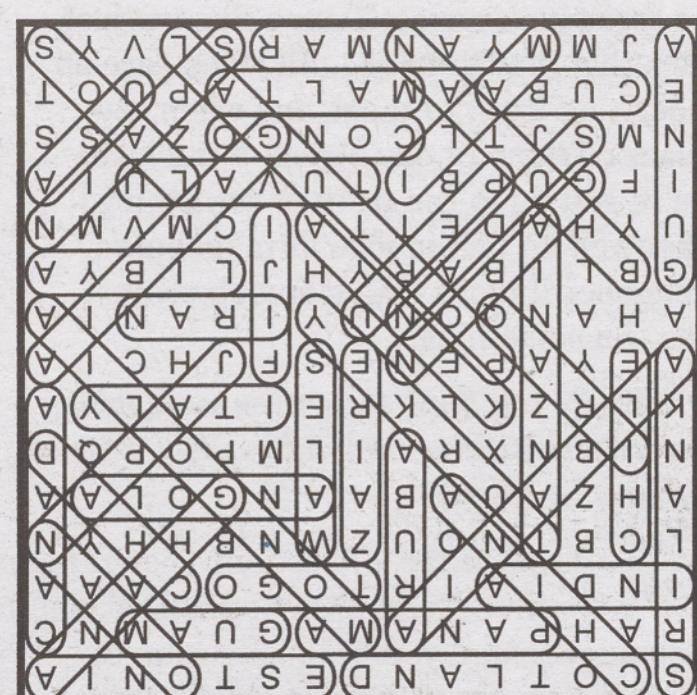
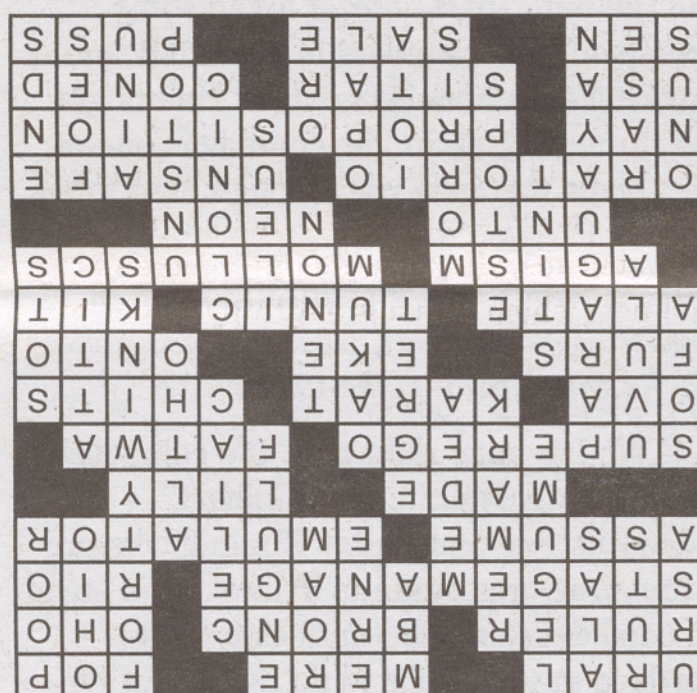
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Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



VENDOR PROFILE

Eric Fields

BY LEONORA KO
STAFF WRITER

Eric Fields wants people to know that he is outgoing and resilient. "I still have a lot of life in me, if I can be on track now," he said. "I don't have a lot of time to be making any more mistakes, the way I look at it."

Eric was born in Hobbs, N.M., to a loving mother and a hardworking father who ran a dry-cleaning business. When Eric was young, he said, his grandfather gave him stocks and bonds that grew in value. When he turned 18, the assets were worth nearly \$100,000.

"Everybody else was going off to college and working their humble jobs," Eric recalled. "I was just an immature thing and thought, 'I don't need to work because I have money and that money is going to last forever.' I threw those dollars away. I didn't know how to work until I'm almost 30 years old."

During this time, Eric got married, had a house and traveled through Europe, the Caribbean and Mexico. He thoroughly enjoyed the traveling, but back in the United States, he and his wife found it hard to get jobs that paid well. The marriage ended.

"When I was in my late 20s, I got hurt by a few people," he said. "I'd wear jewelry and be flashy. I was getting false friends, I think. So now I learned another lesson, getting more selective on who you make friends with and all."

Eric said he learned how to work as a landscape laborer and made his way up to supervisor.

"So I had my own crew for four or five years. But I made mistakes. ... It's hard being a friend and a boss at the same time, stuff like that. It was a learning process, you know?"

He eventually moved to Houston, where he worked at Tyco Plastics. There, Eric clocked up to 70 hours a week, and when he was off, would spend the first day recuperating.

"All my job was basically: take a roll (of trash bags) and put a twist tie on it and put it in a box," he said. "It didn't seem like that big of a deal, but for 12 hours straight, it was grueling. But you could work extra if you wanted to. I was making \$7 an hour at the time."

Somewhere along the way, he became hooked on drugs. He was in Denver when he hit a low point. Eric said he found the will to go on when he reconnected with his mother after 15 years.

Soon after, he and a friend moved to Portland. Eric entered rehab at Hooper Detox Stabilization Center. He got clean and began job training as a front desk worker and janitor at Central City Concern. But a relapse cost him the program and his housing.

Now Eric goes to the CODA Gresham Recovery Center, where he receives counseling and is treated with methadone, which removes heroin cravings and withdrawal symptoms. He sleeps at the Portland Rescue Mission.

"I suffer from depression, and my mind tells me drugs are going to make me feel better," Eric said. "Drugs alter the way my brain is. My dopamine goes all out of whack,

and there's less to replenish to feel happy. So here you are. You spent all this money, or you don't have any money left, and you're double sad. So you're worse off than you were."

"Now I've learned if you're going to feel sad or anxiety, just feel it. It's one of life's feelings."

He also has discovered other interests. "I learned I like to draw," he said. "That's one of my hobbies that I really like to do. But it's so hard to keep a sketch book because it gets wet (in the rain)."

Eric said he is close with both parents. While his father mostly asks about what Eric is doing for work, his mother talks to him about his daily life.

But he is careful what he tells his mother.

"I don't like to expose her to a lot of things that I'm surrounded by because it's kind of a harsh world I live in. It hurts her to know when I have to sleep on the street ... just the horror of being homeless. I really think I should shield her from that."

He announced he was selling Street Roots newspapers and was surprised by her reaction: "She was proud of me actually."

He said he likes to make his customers smile.

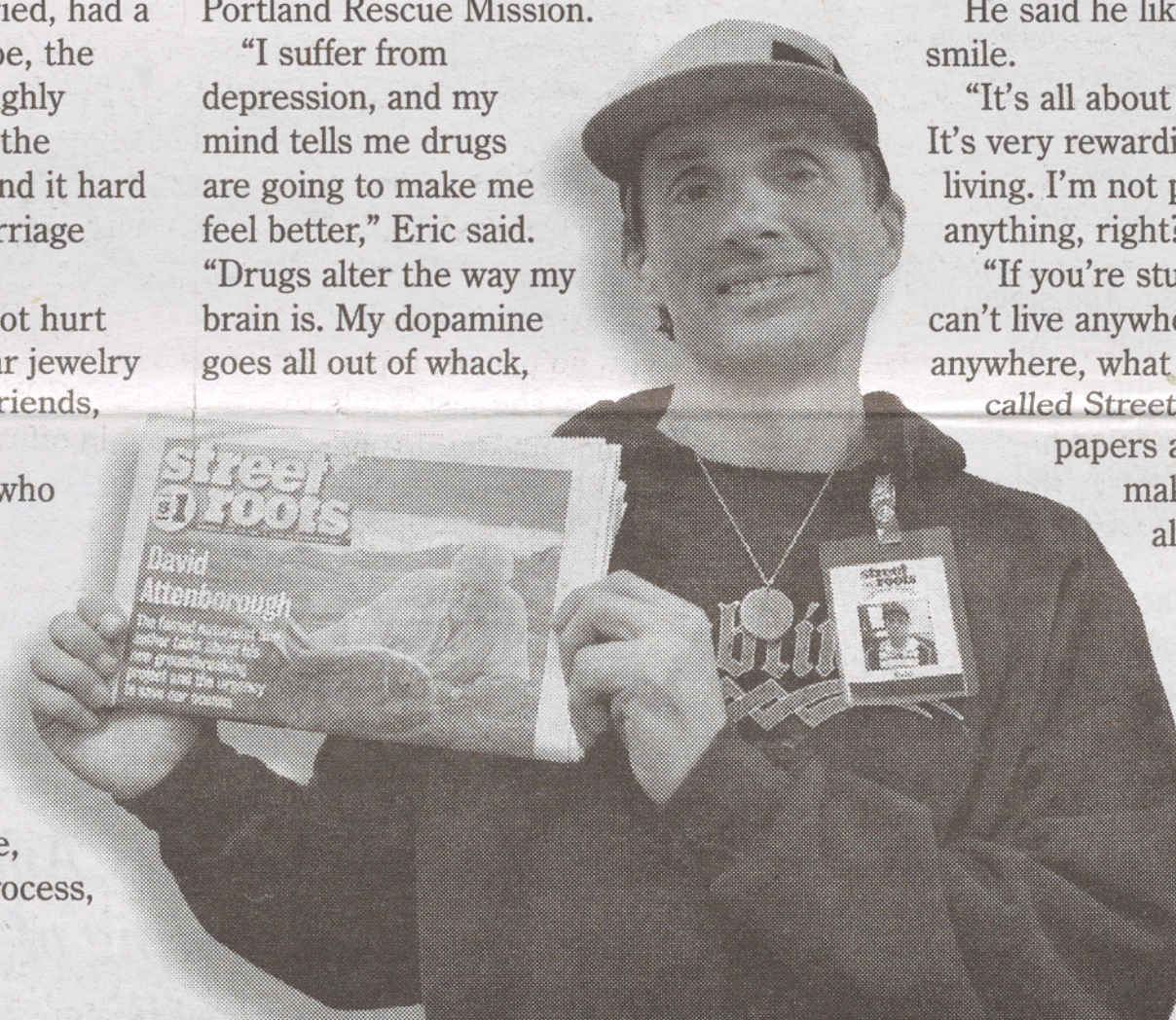
"It's all about being happy, you know? It's very rewarding. I'm making an honest living. I'm not panhandling or stealing or anything, right? It feels good," he said.

"If you're stuck in a cycle where you can't live anywhere or you don't work anywhere, what do you do? There's a place called Street Roots where you can sell papers and make a little bit. You

make a little cash until you get all those things figured out."

Eric said he has made mistakes but is still learning and has goals.

"I wish I had a wife and kids, a career and house, you know?" Eric said. "But it's not too late."



Sheeptoast

by Elizabeth Considine

