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VENDOR PROFILE

Harry Richards

PAT ZIMMER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Harry Richards couldn't believe it. Two of his sisters had met a woman they were convinced was his daughter.

"Nah," he scoffed, "I wouldn't have any daughter that I didn't know about."

She was 33 and had been adopted as a baby. Looking for her father, she registered her DNA on Ancestry.com. The website found a match with a couple of other women who had registered there - Harry's sisters.

One of Harry's sisters met her and knew instantly that she was Harry's daughter. Harry registered his DNA on the site to find out more.

"It came back a 99 percent match," he said.

"It's sad to know I had a daughter and never got a chance to raise her," Harry said. But his life was chaotic for some 20 years. He was working in the restaurant industry, moving up over the years from prep cook to sous chef. At the same time, though, Harry was living the "revolving door" of drug use, prison and parole. His daughter's mother went to a mental institution. Harry went to prison. His birth daughter was adopted and grew up estranged from her birth mother and never knowing her birth father.

A few short days after he found out he had a daughter, Harry had accumulated more than 40 pictures of her and her two sons. They planned to meet for the first time on Easter.

Today, Harry is clean. Not only has he been a Street Roots vendor since 2010, but he is also a longtime artist.

It was in prison, in 1985, that Harry starting drawing.

"I needed to earn money for tobacco, coffee, that sort of thing," he said. "So I got patterns from people, I'd trace them onto envelopes and small cards, and I'd sell them in the yard."

Today, prints, greeting cards and even phone cases with Harry's art on it are available at fineartamerica.com/profiles/moodshade. Disappointed with the 13 percent commission for artists on the site, though, Harry prefers selling his art on the street.

"Make me a donation; I don't care what it is. I'll sign it and give it to you. 'Cause anything's better than what I have in my pocket right now," he said with a laugh.

Several years ago, when he was living on the street and selling art, Harry was approached by a documentary producer. They made several short videos about Harry's life and art, now posted at artfuljourneyoflife.com. Harry had hoped that

venture would develop into art and DVD sales online, but DVD sales were taken over by streaming, and the producer moved on.

What has been constant and positive in Harry's life, though, is Street Roots.

"Without Street Roots, I would have never got cleaned up," he said. "I would have never got back with my family."

"Everybody that comes in, I watch the change in them," he said. "Within a month or two, their whole demeanor changes, because they're not out begging, they're not out stealing, they're not working one job for three or four days just to get that paycheck. They're selling an amazing product. ... Street Roots changes people's lives."

Today, Harry is reconciled with his family. He lives with his sister, paying monthly rent with his Street Roots proceeds. His sister's husband makes them breakfast every Saturday and Sunday. Harry has a room for his art. He makes watercolor postcards for his Street Roots clients, with caricatures of them or winter and summer scenes.

Harry has several projects planned, including an art show in a Northeast Portland park in June. Anyone that has art they'd like to display and sell is welcome. Perhaps Harry's newly found family will be there. You can find Harry at his turf, Southwest Sixth Avenue and Alder Street.

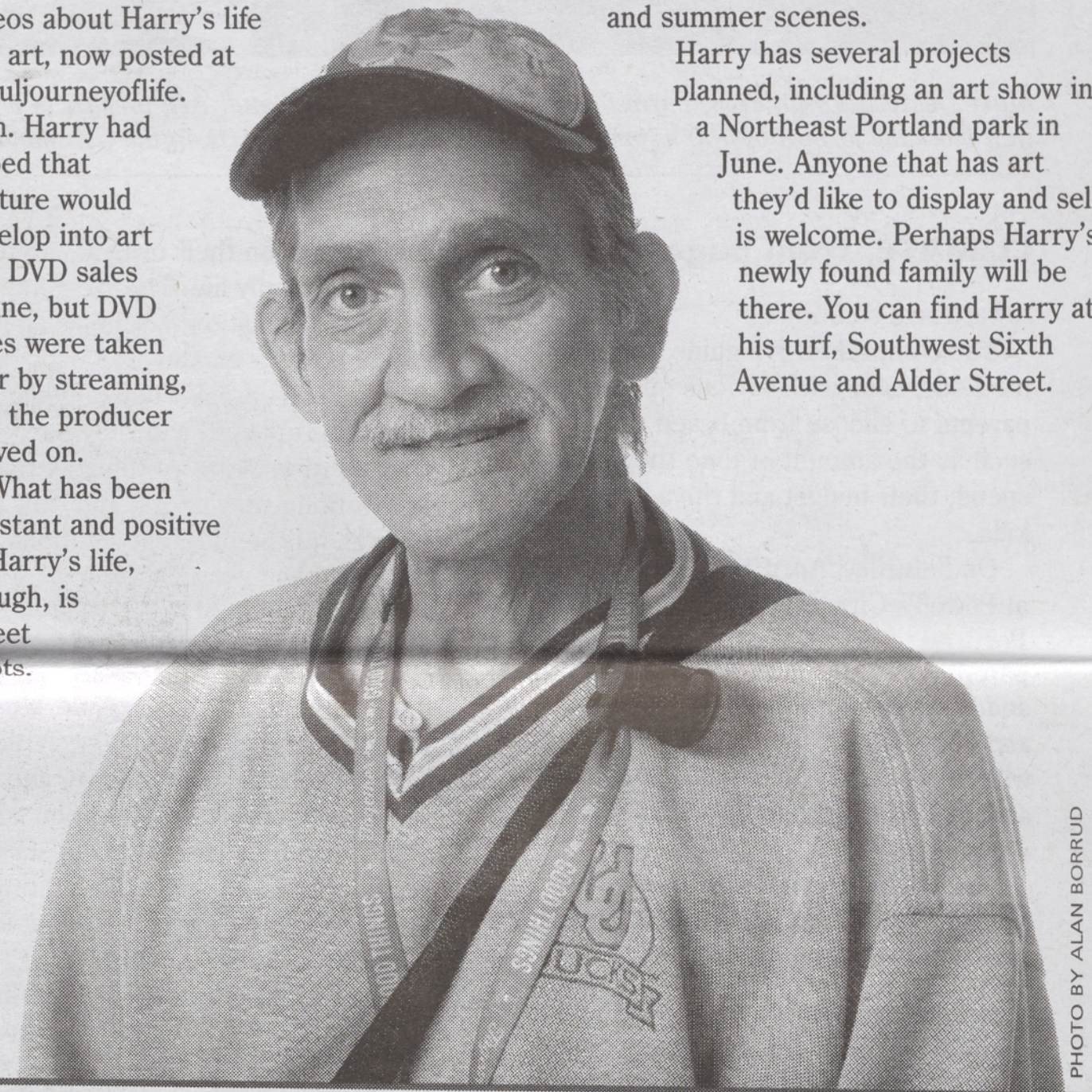
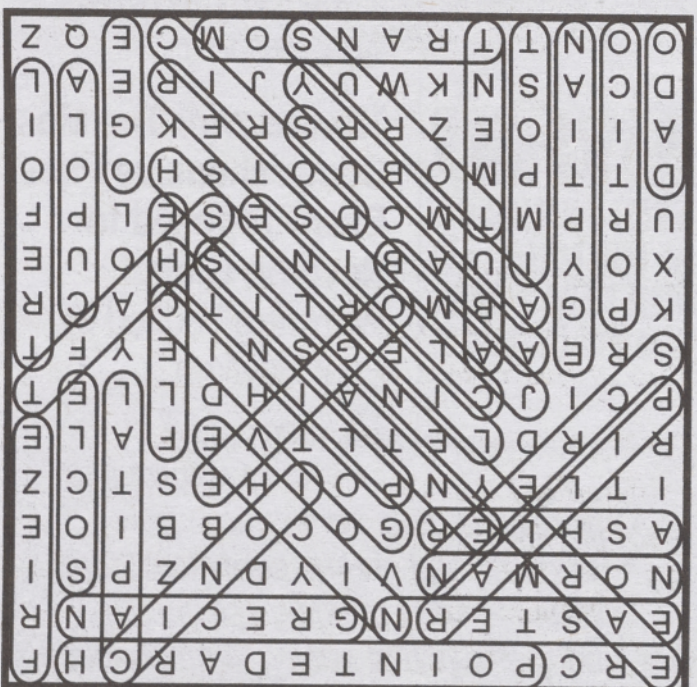
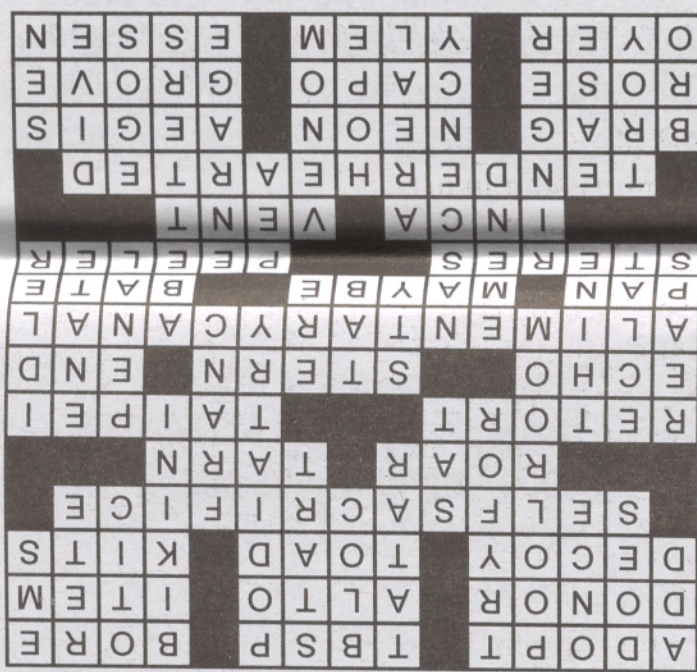


PHOTO BY ALAN BORRUD

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



2	7	1	3	8	5	6	9	4
9	6	5	1	7	4	3	8	2
8	4	3	2	6	9	7	5	1
4	2	6	9	5	7	1	3	8
7	1	9	8	4	3	2	6	5
5	3	8	6	1	2	9	4	7
1	9	2	5	3	8	4	7	6
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6	5	4	7	9	1	8	2	3

Sheeptoast

by Elizabeth Considine

