

Every day at Street Roots, strangers become kin

Six months have passed since I joined Street Roots as executive director, and I learn each and every day. I will keep sharing what I learn with you, and I am grateful when I hear your stories from street corners all around the city.

I suspect this work will always feel transformative, a bit phoenix-like here at Street Roots. Life is so difficult for some people, like it has been burnt to the ground. But from those ashes, hope sometimes takes flight.

People come into Street Roots vendor orientations on Tuesdays and Fridays trying to get something going in their lives. There's hope in that. And we all keep at this – the vendors, board, staff and volunteers, all of you who buy this newspaper – because we know that we can build something bigger than any of us individually.

Life can feel so big and raw on our corner of Old Town that some days feel like a week. ("Have a good weekend," I once said on a Tuesday.) Vendors come to the counter, counting out coins, buying papers for a quarter each before they dispatch to their sales posts. Sleep deprivation is commonplace. Some pause for a respite from the crush of poverty: an extra sugar in their coffee, a moment to rest their head on a table.

But there's something else I've come to learn. Street Roots vendors reach out to our office to share their good news too.

One man finally got an appointment with Veteran's Affairs, something he had been trying for a long time to achieve. He called the Street Roots office to tell us. He wanted to share his news with people who cared that good things happen in his life.

Another woman secured an apartment for herself and her family after months in shelters and on the streets. She dropped by to let us know. She wanted to share her news with people who, again, care that good things happen in her life.

Can you think of a person you have called to share your good news because you knew that for that person, your well-being matters? That's how Street Roots is for some vendors.

I've come to see this as strangers becoming

kin. We care about each other, and through this, we dismantle a bit of the isolation of poverty.

This is why it matters that not only are vendors earning income with dignity, selling a newspaper they can be proud of, but also, they interact with people all over the city for whom their fates matter.

This is important on a daily, individual level, but it also matters when each of us have to make decisions on how to organize, advocate and vote.

Take the term "livability." Livability for whom? People struggling with homelessness are cast as a problem; a homeless camp described as bringing down the livability of a neighborhood. In such a case the idea of livability is shining favor on people with more means, and ill-will on those with less. Livability policies must not harm the poor. Our city should be more livable for the poor.

When we vote to spend money on deeply affordable housing, we vote for good things to happen for people on the streets and in poverty. Think of the Street Roots vendor I described who came to the counter to share that she finally had housing, and multiply her by the thousands. That's the kind of imagination we need to pass a regional housing bond like the one Metro has proposed for \$652.8 million, which we will have the opportunity to vote for in November if Metro Council refers it on June 7.

We need to muster the political power of love.

Next year, Street Roots will celebrate our 20th anniversary, and we'll be telling some of the big stories from our journalism and our Street Roots vendors. But we won't just be looking back. As we strive to care deeply for our poorest neighbors, strangers becoming kin, we'll dream big for the future of Street Roots.

And finally, a note to thank all of you who contributed to Street Roots for our spring fund drive. As of press time, we brought in \$16,001 – our most successful spring fund drive to date. That's in addition to the \$10,000 matching donation for the drive. Thank you! If you still would like to send a check or make a donation at our website, we would be grateful. Individual donations are our lifeblood. Please mail checks to Street Roots, 211 NW Davis St, Portland, Oregon, 97209.



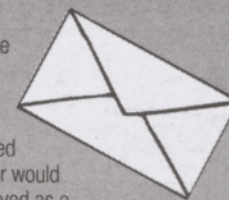
DIRECTOR'S DESK

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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Every day in Great Britain, strange things happen

By
W. H. W. RILEY
London, England

It is a common saying that the British are a peculiar people. This is true, but it is also true that the British are a very interesting people. In every day in Great Britain, strange things happen.

One of the most interesting things that happens in Great Britain is the fact that the British are a very tolerant people. They are tolerant of different religions, different races, and different customs. This is one of the reasons why Great Britain is a very interesting country to visit.



Another interesting thing that happens in Great Britain is the fact that the British are a very polite people. They are polite to each other, to strangers, and to foreigners. This is one of the reasons why Great Britain is a very interesting country to visit.

One of the most interesting things that happens in Great Britain is the fact that the British are a very curious people. They are curious about different cultures, different customs, and different ways of life. This is one of the reasons why Great Britain is a very interesting country to visit.



Every day in Great Britain, strange things happen. It is a country of many wonders and many surprises. If you are interested in the world, you should visit Great Britain. You will find a country that is full of life, full of interest, and full of surprises.