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## VENDOR PROFILE

### Rahsaan

BY LEONORA KO  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

This past Memorial weekend, Rahsaan and his two kids went camping at their secret spot near Mount Hood. "It's really hard to find, it's really cool and it's really sacred," Rahsaan said. "That's why we call it 'The Sanctuary.'"

"My daughter's 9, my son's 11. They can build a fire in the middle of the night, even if it's raining, no problem," Rahsaan said proudly. "They know how to set a camp up, get firewood, chop wood. Everything about how to survive. We were up there for New Year's Eve. All year-round camping – the more you know, the less you need."

"My kids are privileged because I want them to have a good life. I want them filled with good memories at a young age like I did in life."

Rahsaan grew up in Minnesota and Texas where his father led a distinguished career in the military and his mother was a professional with Honeywell. He said his mother and father taught him about unconditional love and spending time with your kids. Rahsaan was especially close to his father and ran in junior marathons with him.

"I lost my dad when he was 42," Rahsaan said. "I'm 40. So that's why I try to live my life the best. I love my kids. Life's hard. But it can be easy. It can be great. That's why I like getting out in the woods."

Rahsaan has had diverse jobs from modeling for Nieman Marcus at 6 years old to painting houses at 18 and teaching rock climbing to kids as a young adult. Even after he lost three fingers in an accident, he continued to model, paint, and he even ran his own moving company for a couple

of years in Oregon. "I came up here (to Portland) and started working right away," Rahsaan said. "I just want to keep working. That's how I've always been."

He said, "You have to have faith in yourself ... People say, 'You've been lucky.' Nah. I have faith and I do believe in God. But more importantly I believe in myself. I believe in what I'm able to do and what I'm capable of doing."

"Faith is the hardest thing in the world. You can't see it. You have to trust it and believe it."

In Portland, Rahsaan met someone and they had two kids. The relationship didn't work out, but he gained custody of both children in 2013.

Rahsaan said, "My children witness their father succeed in life with nothing. It's important. They see me out there selling papers. They saw me wash cars for money. They've seen me move homes and earn money. After that we go to the lake and go rent a boat! After that we go to Newberg and watch a drive-in movie!"

In between painting jobs, Rahsaan sells Street Roots at Whole Foods in the Hollywood District at Northeast 43rd Avenue and Sandy Boulevard.

"I was a little embarrassed at first, to be honest, standing on the

corner," he said. "But a lady came up to me and said, 'It's so admirable what you're doing, sir.' And it made me feel so good ... Everyone should be proud of themselves if they're doing the right thing. I'm not out there begging for anything. I'm trying to work hard, I'm trying to do something."

Rahsaan said his Street Roots customers know his story.

"I'm in between houses right now. I call it houseless, not homeless," he said.

They left their last place because he felt their roommate was a danger to his kids. He wasn't able to find another place for them and ran out of money staying in motels. He now sleeps in his car and the kids are temporarily staying with their mom.

He said when there was a question about the kids camping during the school year, the judge ruled in his favor: "We were living out in a campsite. Nothing wrong with that. That's not against the law. They can't take kids because you're homeless. People lose their homes. It happens a lot. You still want to be able to provide for your kids."

Rahsaan said the judge gave him custody of his kids because he is a good father and moving forward with solutions.

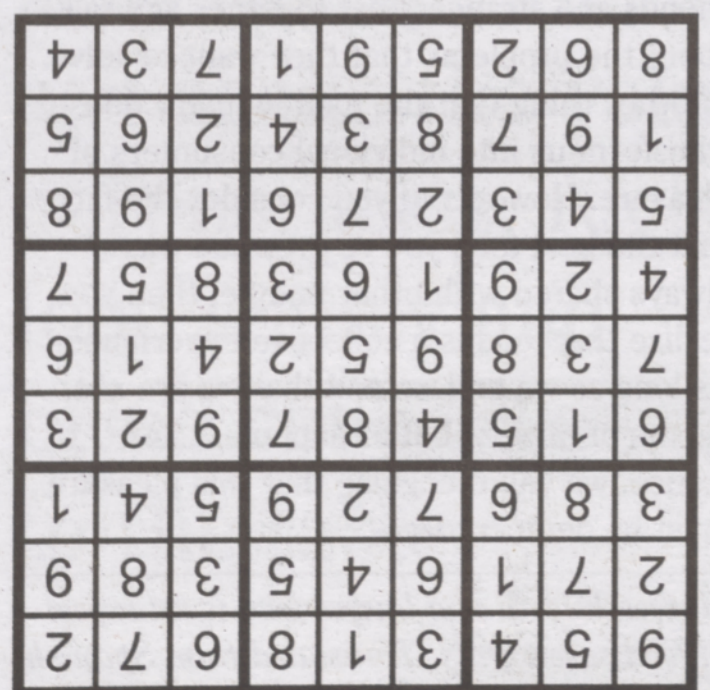
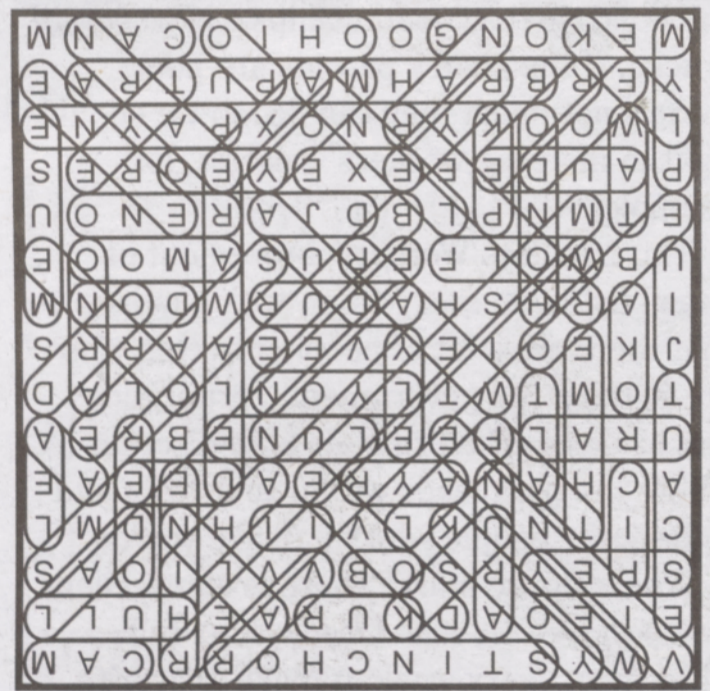
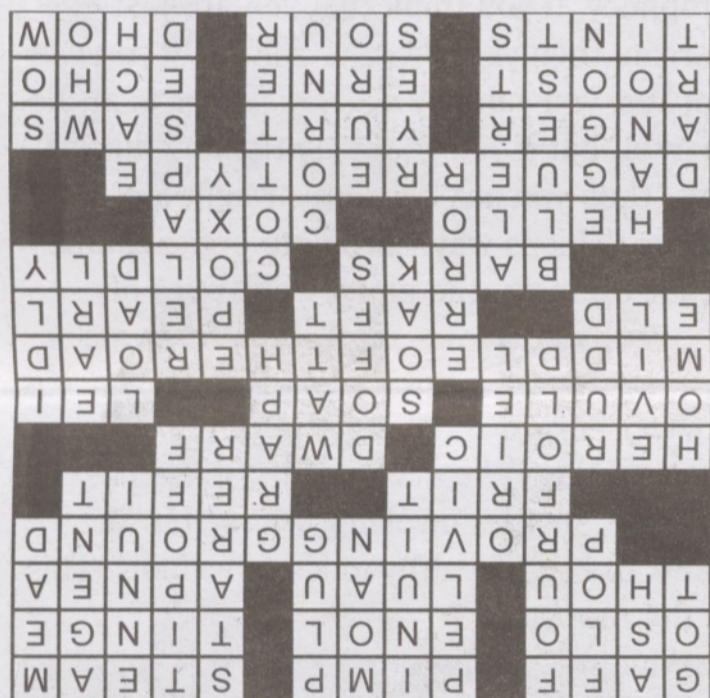
Inspired by their camping experiences, Rahsaan has a long-term dream to start a nonprofit to introduce inner city kids to the woods. But in the short term, Rahsaan is saving money to become licensed and bonded as a painter so he can get more painting jobs. He recently finished an entire house for a Street Roots customer.

Rahsaan said everything he knows about being a father came from his dad.

"I make sure that I'm healthy and able to provide for my children. And I always put them first and make sure they're taken care of – health-wise, clothes-wise. I don't really need much in life. I always keep the same pair of clothes, wash them and keep on going."



### Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



### Sheeptoast

by Elizabeth Considine

