

For housing, we must stand together, act regionally

Imagine a high school sophomore who moves from a friend's couch to an aunt's spare bedroom to a car. Her family is split apart so they can all sleep under some roof, just not the same roof. It is always a scramble. She can't hold onto much, but



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Kaia Sand

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she does keep her homework planner close, neatly color coded for each class. If she just stays organized she can get through, she figures, but sometimes something slips

through the cracks – a textbook left at the last place she slept – and she doesn't explain why she's not prepared to the teacher, because she tries to appear as though everything is OK.

Let's wish for her to have an apartment where all her family can stay together, with a drawer to store her planner and a desk to write out her homework and an address that doesn't change. Let's wish that for the thousands of kids who are unstably housed in this region – stability so they can dream.

Or imagine the man who's working around the clock to keep it all together, but travels out to Tualatin to double-up with a roommate in order to cover the rent, but still paying more than either can afford. He spends more than half his paycheck to keep a roof over head, playing the roulette of which bill to pay when, and how to keep the bill collectors at bay.

Imagine the woman caring for pre-school children – a job she enjoys, but at minimum wage, she'd need to work 80 hours a week to afford an average-priced apartment in this region. She's 50 years old. She's moved in with her stepmother, but it's tense, and she doesn't know how long it can last.

Imagine a man who is in his 60s, but the storms have marked him for older. His safety is at risk each day he beds down on a stoop. Most of what he owns gets stolen eventually, but he keeps a notebook of sketches in his coat pocket, drawing his memories before he loses them too. He'd take a single room as a shelter, he says, a locked door to keep him safe while he sleeps and a place for him to store his possessions while he looks for work.

Imagine a woman who makes herself up in the shelter mirror, striving each day to pass as housed, so that she can dodge the

ire and the judgment. She wears a neat cap and straight lipstick, but her mind is strained with stress, and the lipstick slides a bit more askew and shaky the more days she fights just to survive. She needs the security of stable housing so she can calm her mind.

Or imagine a couple who always worked but never saved. There never really was much to save, and they mostly thought they could always work hard – until they couldn't. He didn't expect the cancer. Now they are living in an RV, moving it from rest stop to street corner, fearful of the day the transmission breaks and they risk getting towed.

Plenty of fairy tales give us three wishes, but let's grab 12,000 wishes this election. Let's wish for a region that can provide safe, stable housing for that many more people, because by passing the regional housing Measure 26-199 and statewide Measure 102, that's what we can do. This housing must be permanently affordable, so many more people will eventually be housed.

Measure 26-199 is scaled right – regionally. The need for housing doesn't

end at county lines. And because there are more people in three counties than in one, the taxes are spread out, too. The average homeowner will pay \$5 per month.

Let's stand together and act regionally. From Troutdale to Tualatin, Forest Grove to Fairview, Milwaukie to Hillsboro, Beaverton to Portland, people deserve a safe, stable place to call home.

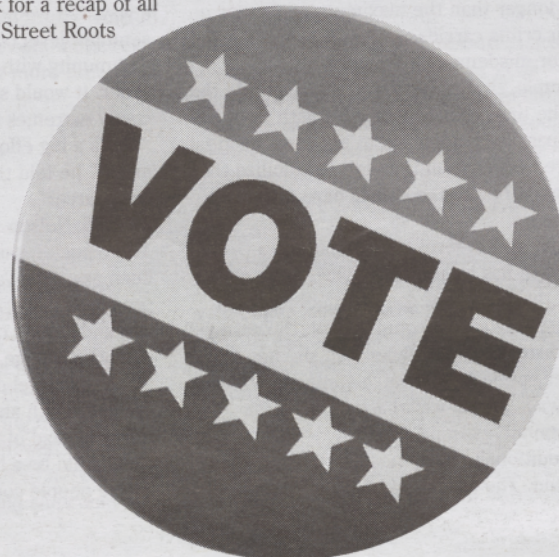
Last week, Multnomah County elections officials came into the Street Roots

office to register Street Roots vendors to vote. You can bet that the vendors will be watching the mail for when their ballots arrive at the office, making sure that their vote counts. Please make sure that yours does, too.

The deadline to register to vote is Oct. 16, and ballots will be mailed soon after. Watch your mail, and get your pen ready to vote for Measures 26-199 and 102.

And in the next issue of Street Roots, look for a recap of all our Street Roots

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Submissions

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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