



Street Roots vendors pose with their new 20th anniversary beanies before heading out to their sales posts.

PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

A new year and so many possibilities ahead!

Happy New Year! 2019 marks 20 years of Street Roots. Twenty years of championing free speech and exchanging independent news on public sidewalks. Twenty years of creating income opportunities for people struggling with homelessness and poverty. Twenty years of facing challenges as a strong community.

We are closing out 2018 with gusto. Vendors sold the past issue at a record rate – thank you Street Root customers!

The vendor-created zine sold quickly, too, and the vendors performed poetry and exhibited artwork at Portland Institute for Contemporary Art alongside artist Abigail DeVille's installation, "The American Future" (with a foundation built of old issues of Street Roots),

which runs until Jan. 12. Members of Business for a Better Portland gathered gifts for Street Roots vendors. Women Walk Wednesdays pitched in, too, as did many others. Gather: Make: Shelter brought in food and music on Christmas day. There's been great warmth shown toward Street Roots vendors this holiday season. Thank you!

Preparing for our 20th anniversary, we've organized our archives. Now shelves of boxes line our basement – Burnside Cadillac of the 1990s and then Street Roots from 1999 to our present issue – a trove of local history where marginalized voices are at the center. Watch for an exhibit this spring at the downtown branch of Multnomah County Library, thanks to the ongoing work of Portland State University Public History students. That's an apt location because many vendors frequent it as patrons, and librarians support Street Roots, collecting our issues, setting up a pop-up library in our office, and hosting vendor readings. Just as we champion the exchange of news on public sidewalks, the library creates a commons for readers, making it the perfect place to celebrate our history of deploying the written word in the work of justice.

This summer, watch for a Street Roots anniversary party – open to everyone – so we can celebrate not only our history, but a future full of possibility.

The ideas and leadership of Street Roots vendors are key to this visionary future. Every month I look forward to vendor listening sessions over bagels and coffee, a tradition began in March with Sandra Hahn, 2018 vendor of the year and board member. It's an open house where ideas fly. Helen Hill – the artist behind our legendary office chalkboard art – jots colorful notes on big paper for all of us to follow along. Vendors dream up

new marketing ideas – from creating a vendor-designed messenger bag that perfectly suits their needs and Portland weather (some day!), to staging a customer appreciation tea in our office (we launched our first one in October) to growing our social media following (they've begun thinking up an Instagram contest). It's important to vendors that we communicate what a quality newspaper we produce, and it's important, too, that the public understands that vendors buy the paper for a quarter and sell it for the dollar, working as micro-entrepreneurs.

Vendors give each other sales tips ("It takes a while to make a sales post your own, building relationships," some vendors counsel) and discuss how to interact with tourists less familiar with Street Roots (during the Rose Festival, one vendor carries a map, doubling as a tourism ambassador). They came up with the idea of a vendor-curated chalkboard in the office to thank small businesses for support so they could all know about that generosity.

And of course, vendors discuss policies and initiatives around housing and homelessness – from concerns about ideas that might warehouse the poor; to discussions of wealth inequality; to needs around accessing showers, laundry and storage.

People also talk about the struggles around – and affection for – our small office space, which presses in on people who have contended with too much trauma. Since we went weekly four years ago, our vendor team has more than doubled, while our office size has remained the same.

Ideas from Street Roots vendors underpin our big goals ahead, which includes expanding our office space so that our newsroom can grow and our vendors have more room to thrive, but still maintaining its warmth. We will pursue initiatives to support vendor sales, professional development and newspaper distribution.

Join us in building our future! The number one way we support our nonprofit is through individual donations, and the winter fund drive is the biggest portion of that. We are sustained by it all – from change that a small child saves up to a the \$10 donation, to \$1,000 and more. And we are buoyed by notes that people send with donations – praise for a vendor and kudos for our independent journalism.

Our goal for the winter fund drive is \$150,000, and we have \$30,000 left to raise by Dec. 31. Please help us get there. Donate online at giveguide.org/#streetroots (through Dec. 31) or mail a check to Street Roots, 211 NW Davis, Portland, OR 97209.

And thank you, thank you, thank you!



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Kaia Sand

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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 503-967-3982, joanne@streetroots.org. We ask that all submissions include the author's name and contact information, if available.

Advertising

Interested in advertising in Street Roots? Email Andrew Hogan at andrew@streetroots.org

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