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Prior to that, Hayes worked at Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare for 16 years fulfilling a variety of roles, from residential aid and case manager to a drug and alcohol counselor. With no formal education in counseling or behavioral sciences, he found “a good opportunity to learn in the field.”

In this capacity, he was spurred to more closely examine homelessness on the North Coast and the systemic issues that contribute to its pervasive nature. A couple years ago, he began interviewing social service providers and members of the homeless population on the streets of Astoria, Seaside, Warrenton and Cannon Beach for a series called City Wide.

Growing, connecting

“To me, it was just a natural exten-

sion,” Hayes said, adding he already had established relationships with members of that community. He originally intended to develop a film, his “love song to Astoria” that would document a moment of time for the rapidly changing city, but the scope of the project expanded, he said. Eventually, he accumulated more than 100 individual interviews, driven in part by his innate belief that it could produce change.

Some of his footage is incorporated on the website of Friends of the Unsheltered, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide valuable research and resources to bridge the gap between local government and the homeless population in Clatsop County. It also can be found on his YouTube channel, Loop Based Zero. His interviews lend multiple faces and voices to the occasionally ambiguous concepts of helping the homeless and addressing the myriad

circumstances contributing to the problem with tangible solutions.

Hayes doesn’t consider the project complete, but there came a point where he needed to step away. Anytime people interact with others in a raw, vulnerable way, he said, “There’s a lot of transference, you engage in their lives emotionally.”

“To stay sane, you have to be able to turn things off, there’s just too much stimulus,” he said.

Throughout the project, as Hayes was able to successfully integrate himself with transient citizens, he recognized many community members want to do something, but they don’t know what. His solution is to talk directly with people affected by homelessness to discover what they need.

As with any relationship, he added, “you’ve got to ask questions — you can’t just assume things.”



Art by Roger Hayes, ‘Flavel Tree’ oil painting.



Art by Roger Hayes, ‘Roots’ acrylic.



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