Thank you for a tremendous year

Welcome to the Street Roots 2009 Annual Report.

There’s no question, it’s been a hard year. Like many small grassroots organizations and small businesses, the economy has effected the organization and its ability to maintain an aggressive growth strategy. Saying that, we’re more determined than ever about how we grow and our planning for the future.

For nearly three years, Street Roots has maintained a humble budget of $200,000 and selling the newspaper, the Rose City Resource Guide, and providing a morning drop-in center and running the vendor program. When times get tough, like they are now, the margin of error for a small organization that is trying to grow is narrow. One wrong move, and it could be detrimental.

Thanks to the community at large, Street Roots was able to navigate through some rough seas in 2009, while still staying on course. By no means in Street Roots (nor the community) out of the woods yet, but with smart planning we believe we will continue to raise the bar for grassroots media, while providing immediate income for those in need in the Portland region.

What we accomplished in 2009

At the forefront of Street Roots is the vendor program. More than 300 unduplicated people accessed the vendor program in 2009, with an average of 50-70 vendors selling the newspaper at any one time.

Street Roots helped stabilize scores of individuals prevent or get out of homelessness through sales of the newspaper. The organization saw and dealt with more people in trauma from becoming homeless this past year more than any other time in our 11-year existence. Tensions ran high and continue to do so, with a mix of individuals who have been in and out of homelessness for years and many who experienced the unfortunate circumstance of losing everything and faced sleeping outdoors for the first time in their lives. Our doors remained open 365 days of the year — maintaining a morning drop-in center and access to the newspaper to empower people through gaining income and building relationships on street corners throughout the region.

We published more than 200 pieces of poetry, artwork and opinions directly from those living outdoors and in low-income housing, created a vendor advisory panel that works to create better conditions for vendors, and voted vendor and columnist Leo Rhodes the vendor liaison on the organization’s board of directors.

The organization also worked with vendors, neighborhood groups, foundations, police, social justice organizations and other non-profit partners to plan the opening of an East Portland vendor office, that opened this week on Northeast 81st Avenue and Halsey Street.

The new office will allow vendors sleeping on the streets or in East Portland or Gresham to access the vendor program and gain a viable voice through the newspaper and by selling the newspaper. Even through the recession, we were able to maintain the foundation to create access to the newspaper for people experiencing homelessness and poverty in a rapidly changing socioeconomic environment in Portland, specifically in East Portland and Gresham, where we’ve seen poverty moving toward for years. We did this in partnership and support of Visions Into Action, the Call to Action for Human Development, The United Way of Columbia/Willamette and our nonprofit partner JOIN.

The newspaper itself has become a critical media outlet for a range of issues concerning not only poverty and homelessness, but also social justice issues in our community and beyond.

In 2009, mixing investigative reporting, commentary and advocacy, we were able to help 300 families in Northwest Oregon avoid becoming homeless, helped City Hall gain traction for maintaining housing and homeless dollars in the city budget and have been pivotal in pushing Portland and Multnomah County to move on a housing levy that most likely will land on the ballot in 2010 or 2011.

The newspaper has incorporated the voices of new Portlanders from around the world, highlighted the civil rights of poor people in the region and has become a trusted watchdog of local government when dealing with poverty. (See the letter from the managing editor on page 9.)

The Rose City Resource Guide reached nearly 100,000 individuals and Street Roots partnered with the cities of Portland and Gresham, and private businesses to develop the Rose City Resource website at www.rosecityresource.org. The print guide was delivered or distributed to more than 300 organizations, including hospitals, law enforcement agencies, schools, private businesses, neighborhood groups, and non-profits working with people in poverty. (See more on Page 8)

Lastly, it’s both readers and monetary supporters that helped Street Roots grow in 2009. Street Roots increased it’s individual donor base by 15 percent, while partnering with a range of foundations to support the mission of the organizations. (See page 10.)

Ultimately, though, it comes down to the relationships on street corners between the people selling the newspaper and everyday Portlanders who support their local neighborhood vendor and the newspaper week in and week out. It’s your support that makes us strong and we thank you. It means the world to not only us, but also to a city and region trying to find its way and do the right thing for Portlanders living in poverty.

Sincerely,

Israel Bayer
Executive Director
Street Roots

Working to improve our community

Street Roots has always been a leader for social justice in the Portland region. Through our unique blend of journalism, editorial and Act Now! campaigns, the organization has become not only a key voice, but one that also takes the lead on important issues facing people experiencing homelessness and poverty.

In 2009, Street Roots led successful campaigns for:

- 300 families who were scheduled to be kicked-out of Section 8 housing due to bureaucratic errors at their housing authority and with the federal government.
- In a series of investigative reports, Street Roots helped save housing for those individuals.

Street Roots led a campaign to maintain the current level of funding from the City of Portland for affordable housing and homeless services.

Street Roots’ reporting and advocacy efforts have also kept the focus on important issues such as stable, the camping ordinance and other criminalization efforts targeting people based upon their housing status.

In 2010, Street Roots will be continuing its work on the advocacy front. In January, Street Roots covered and took part in an historic action in San Francisco where more than 800 individuals experienced homelessness gathered from cities along the West Coast. Street Roots will be working with our partner allies throughout the year to create a report titled “Without Rights,” focusing on the criminalization of the homeless. And we will be helping organize another regional rally asking the federal government to properly fund housing locally and around the country.

Other priorities in 2010 will be making sure a housing levy is on the ballot this year, or 2011 in Multnomah County. We will also be launching a campaign to force the coroner’s office to begin to count people experiencing homelessness who have died on our streets. Our analysis and reporting in the coming months will show that it’s not only the right thing to do, but it could leverage millions of dollars for targeted services, including housing. We will also be intentionally not setting any more campaigns goals in 2010, while still building the capacity to Act Now!, knowing that we will need to be flexible and fluid in responding to issues that may arise in the coming year.

If you took action in 2009, we thank you. And we look forward to many more of you joining the fight for equal rights and justice on the homelessness and housing fronts in 2010.

ACT NOW

What you can do to make a difference

Street Roots 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

ACT NOW

What you can do to make a difference

The letter

I am not invisible

I am not invisible

The letter

I am not invisible

The letter

I am not invisible

The letter

I am not invisible

The letter

I am not invisible
Rain or shine – vendors stand tall

O ur vendors, those men and women just selling the paper, rain or shine, are the core of Street Roots’ mission. The relationships built between the broader community and more than 70 active vendors who sell Street Roots in the Portland metropolitan area and Vancouver are at the heart of the program. Over the course of 2009, more than 300 individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty sold Street Roots. Last year, more than two dozen individuals gained housing while with the organization. Through them, approximately 14,000 to 20,000 copies of Street Roots are sold or distributed every month.

Vendors purchase papers for 25 cents each and sell them for $1. The 75 cents that a vendor nets from each paper sold helps him or her meet basic housing, food, clothing and hygiene needs. Many vendors support themselves primarily through the sales of the paper. The 25 cents from each paper that remains with Street Roots is used to cover printing costs of the paper itself.

Vendor applicants must attend a one-hour training orientation to earn a badge certifying them as a Street Roots vendor. The orientation outlines the rules and regulations of Street Roots, while offering vendors sales techniques and empowerment tools through a sales training video for getting involved in the organization. We are a low-barrier organization, giving new vendors the opportunity to start from scratch and develop their own sales schedule. New vendors receive 10 free papers to kick start sales. Street Roots offers a vendor drop-in location at its downtown offices from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m., 365 days a year. The organization also provides vendors with new boots and footwear, socks, fresh water and coffee, snacks, hand warmers, and sun screen throughout the course of the year. During the summer, Street Roots has monthly vendor and volunteer barbecues in parks throughout the city to build community and offer vendors the opportunity to kick back and relax.

To help our vendors, we work to provide an engaging newspaper every two weeks. Vendors are a key part of the process, offering suggestions and support for the continued improvement of the newspaper’s presentation, as well as the operation of the vendor program itself.

The popularity of our vendors has created many new friendships within and beyond our community. Many have made connections that have led to employment, housing and new opportunities. And on a day-to-day basis, they are changing the paralyzing stereotypes directed at the homeless.

So the next time you see a vendor, say hello and buy a paper — and stop and chat if you have the time. You can find vendors selling the paper every day, in all kinds of weather, waiting for you to come along.

Rose City Resource an indespensable connection

T he Rose City Resource is a publication of Street Roots and is Portland’s most comprehensive, updated list of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. The 104-page booklet serves people who may not otherwise have access to a computer or social-service agency, and allows individuals the opportunity to be independent in their search for services that fit specific needs. The resource is free to individuals and organizations working with people experiencing poverty.

In 2009, Street Roots published 90,000 guides. The guides were distributed by more than 300 organizations, including non-profits, hospitals, law-enforcement, government agencies, private businesses and SR vendors.

In 2010, the print guide will go from a quarterly to a bimonthly publication and be published two times a year, once in January and once in July. The pocket-size resource is made possible in cooperation with the cities of Portland and Gresham, United Way of Columbia/Wilmette, 211 Info, Central City Concern, Housing Authority of Portland, Janus Youth Programs, JOIN, Multnomah County, Oregon Food Bank, Oregon Opportunity Network, Outside In, Portland Rescue Mission, Portland Trail Blazers, Sisters Of The Road, Transition Projects Inc, and Street Roots.

For more information on the resources, contact us at the homepage at www.rosecityresource.org or call 503-228-5657.
Roots taking hold in our community

Street Roots editorial goals in 2009 were the same as they are every year: to produce an outstanding newspaper, provide comprehensive coverage on the important issues, and deliver the voices of our community. All of this is done with the aim of ensuring that vendors not only have a paper they’re proud to sell, but also one that Portlanders want to read.

In 2009, we brought you breakthrough coverage on the deaths occurring on our streets and the high likelihood of morbidity among Portland’s homeless. We reported on the rising numbers of veterans falling into homelessness, and the hidden homeless residing in hotels, off the grid, as they work toward an opportunity for stable housing.

Indeed, the past year was filled with hard times, but we have a responsibility to bring you the positives as well; including the story of a small group of people coming together to help one of our vendors get the leg up he needed to secure his own apartment, and our return visit to Dignity Village, the homeless “camp” that has weathered political, social and economic obstacles to become a truly unique success story for Portland and the nation. The story of Melissa and Sean Walsh, told through the remarkable photography of Leah Nash, brought home for many readers the struggles of living with disabilities and poverty, offset only by the love and resilience this young couple share.

Our coverage has broadened to include the city’s diverse and growing cultures, including a story on the experience of African immigrants in their effort to adapt to their new home, and the healing process engaging generations of Cambodian-Americans still scarred from the Khmer Rouge regime.

And on April 1, we broke the unbelievable story that former president George W. Bush would be moving to Portland, prompting a wave of calls from readers — not to mention the Associated Press — asking for the source. Thank you for including in our April Roots — the nature did us some good and gave us a new way to talk about the issues.

Of course, behind every edition of the paper is a volunteer team — housed and homeless — that meets throughout the year to help develop stories and support the production and mission of Street Roots. Our editorial team comes together on their own time and energy to make Street Roots an inspiring collaborative. In these days of newspapers cutting back on news and staff, Street Roots is blessed with a team of talent who are in it for the right reasons — for all the reasons outlined at the beginning of this letter.

We’ve added new writers in our commentary section, lending a fresh voice to topics of our environment, mental health and housing. And brought the best of poetry, essays and artwork the streets produce. We are unlike any other paper in the city in our diversity of expression.

And for many of the writers who contribute their work, it is an empowering experience to have their views not only heard, but make an impact. In 2009, we were honored with three awards from the Society of Professional Journalists Oregon Chapter: Mara Grunbaum for her remarkable report on the forgotten graves of residents of the Hawthorne Asylum; Tye Dudy for his stirring diary “The Addicts Almanac;” and for the combined effort that produced our special edition on affordable housing, titled “In need of a new deal.”

This year, we will continue to expand our coverage, drawing in more voices and reaching new neighborhoods, issues and attitudes.

All this work may just mean a vendor talking with a customer about freedom of the press, or the violence against women on the streets, or the twists and turns of Section 8 loopholes and the people trapped in between. Indeed, maybe it just means that two people are gathered at a corner talking about things that are important to them and the community, in ways they’ve never considered before. And one of them happens to be homeless. Maybe it’s just shared opinions, common goals — a renewed and enjoined effort.

But it is a foundation of a profound relationship for the community at large. We owe that to you and the vendors, and we look forward to being a part of that community for years to come.

Sincerely,

Joanne Zuhl
Managing Editor
Street Roots

“The articles in Street Roots cover a broad range of issues and provide unique insights that help inform my decisions as a Multnomah County Commissioner. Reading Street Roots on a regular basis reinforces my commitment to do everything possible to help those in need.”

— Deborah Kafoury, Multnomah County Commissioner

Network Affiliations: Street Roots is a proud member of the following organizations

The North American Street Newspaper Association exists to support and build effective, self-sustaining street newspapers that promote power and autonomy for people living in poverty. NASNA offers technical assistance to new and growing street newspapers, and promotes and supports sharing with the Street News Service, and an annual conference featuring skills-building workshops and other topics of common interest. Learn more about NASNA at www.nasna.org

The International Network of Street Papers is a global organization set up to promote the concept of the street paper as a means to address homelessness, social exclusion and other root causes of poverty and social deprivation. INSP is a network of 80 street paper members situated across 27 countries. INSP’s head office is in Glasgow and it provides advice to individuals or projects seeking to establish a street paper. Learn more about the INSP at www.street-papers.org

The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) is a network of 90 organizations across the West Coast and exists to expose and eliminate the root causes of civil- and human-rights abuses of people experiencing poverty and homelessness. Street Roots and Sisters Of The Road are founding members of WRAP. The organization is dedicated to exposing the roots of the housing crisis, building pressure for more just federal priorities, and defending the human and civil rights of low-income people.

The Oregon Opportunity Network is made up of more than 90 organizations and members in Oregon dedicated to creating and preserving low-income housing throughout Oregon. Oregon ON works to support members’ efforts to build sustainable communities, develop affordable housing for working families, and provide economic opportunities for Oregonians who are struggling to meet their basic needs.

For as little as $5 a month, you can join the Street Roots team and become a monthly contributor. Go online at www.streetroots.org for more information on how.
Thank you to all of our individual donors, businesses that gave in-kind donations, sponsors, foundations and the Street Roots community for giving in 2009.

**For as little as $5 a month, you can join the Street Roots team and become a monthly contributor. Go online at www.streetrootsmail.com.**

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**Financial Summary**

**Total income:** $178,827

**Advertising, Subscriptions and sponsorships:** 14.3%

**Government support (Rose City Resources/eastside expansion):** 15.4%

**Individual donations:** 27.9%

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**Total Expense:** $193,126

**Administrative:** 9.2%

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**Board of Directors**

Officers:
- Bruce Anderson, chairman
- Heather Stoddard, treasurer
- Chelsea Clark-James, secretary
- Members:
  - Ruth Kovas

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**Advisory Panel**

- Adam Arms
- Monika Gorak
- Artis the Spoonman
- Jay Thiemeyer
- Genny Nelson
- Amy Dudley

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**Street Roots 2009 Annual Report**

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