

# A big year in the books, a big year ahead

**D**ear Street Roots readers, 2019 was a monumental year at Street Roots. We marked 20 years of our organization, took stock of our past and clarified our vision for the years ahead.

We've grown a great deal over the past two decades – from a handful of vendors to more than 800 last year, from a monthly paper to a weekly paper, from the Rose City Resource as four pages in our paper to 215,000 guides we print and hand out all over the city. All of this other work informs our advocacy, which over the years has meant that we've led efforts to both demand more resources for the poor while also calling out the criminalization of poverty. In 2019, this advocacy coalesced into a focused campaign for the Portland Street Response, a plan for a new first-responder system for street crises that emerged from the pages of our newspaper and moved very quickly to the policy of City Hall.

We continued our ongoing collaboration with Multnomah County to count the number of people who die on the streets. This year, sadly, we reported the largest number of reported deaths on the streets since we began this report in 2013 – at least 92 people died at an average age of 47.

We hosted the Domicile Unknown press conference in our small Street Roots headquarters, so that our vendors could more easily be present. Likewise, we hosted a second press conference this fall decrying the Trump administration's focus on policing the poor.

Committed to the idea that a vibrant democracy means full participation of the poor, we hosted listening sessions for our vendors to say what was on their mind to elected officials – Mayor Ted Wheeler and U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley at Street Roots, and then in collaboration with Sisters of the Road, a listening session with Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty.

At our core, we work so that everyone has access to an income. All of you made sure that every week at least \$10,000 reached around 170 people selling Street Roots. In addition,

we know that legal barriers prevent people from accessing housing and employment. Through a Portland Housing Bureau pilot, we held a legal clinic for our vendors last spring: playfully dubbed “expungement-palooza,” we brought in pizza and a host of attorneys from the Metropolitan Public Defenders office to help vendors remove fines and fees from their records. When possible, the attorneys began the process to wipe old arrests, misdemeanors and felonies from people's record, a process that can be otherwise very costly.

Partnerships are key to our ability to support our vendors. This happens daily through our work with social services to connect vendors to shelters and housing. It also happens in other ways, from the library that Street Books set up in our office to the ceramic work Gather: Make: Shelter does with vendors, some of whom who are now supported by a Gather: Make: Shelter apprenticeship program. Our transportation partners, Uber, Biketown and Trimet through Ride Connection, ferry our vendors to and from their sales posts.

For the third year, Business for Better Portland provided quality holiday gifts for every vendor. Kamp Grizzly has begun creating new branded gear, including the black hoodies you might see vendors donning at their sales posts. Laughing Planet feeds our vendors monthly and in honor of our 20th Anniversary, launched a special beverage and provided food for everyone at our summer anniversary celebration. Like in years past, La Luna Cafe, ChefStable Catering and Grand Central Bakery provided a delicious spread for our vendors at our annual holiday party, while Por Que No taqueria fed vendors at our annual summer taco party. Toro Bravo and Pizzicato fortified our fund drives. Marigold Coffee continues to roast and sell

Street Roast coffee, an additional income source for our organization.

The Leadership Portland program at Portland Business Alliance helped us research our need for expanded space by hosting listening sessions, analyzing finances and creating plans.

We also worked with Tusk Consultants to lead an equity assessment, building those recommendations into our strategic plan (which we will release next month) so we can double-down on anti-racist, anti-oppression work as an organization.

Yes, it was a big year, and we commemorated how far we have come by hosting a 20th anniversary event every season. Last winter, Mikki Jordan performed “From These Streets I Rise,” a cabaret performance based on interviews with Street Roots vendors. In the spring, Portland State University public history students staged an exhibition, “Get It On Paper,” in the central branch of Multnomah County library. This summer, we danced in

the streets, hosting the Street Roots Street Party with live music and food to bring unhoused and housed people together. This was so successful that we are hosting another party in July. This fall, we hosted a special anniversary annual breakfast, where we honored Desmond Hardison, our very first fundraiser, for his dedication to Street Roots.

Thank you, all of you, for your part in making 2019 such a significant year for Street Roots vendors. It takes all of us, so we look forward to moving into our third decade together, stronger than ever.

Onward we go!

*Keia M*



*“Street Roots means the world to me. Having Street Roots gives me an opportunity to get up in the morning and do the right thing.”*

**Nettie Johnson**  
Street Roots vendor

## ADVOCACY

**P**ortland Street Response was borne out of 20 years of Street Roots challenging the criminalization of homelessness, but this year, Street Roots tapped into a groundswell of public awareness and political will. In our March 15 issue, reporter Emily Green presented the Portland Street Response blueprint, a first responder system for non-criminal street crises. We then launched a campaign, gathering endorsers, writing letters and testifying at budget forums. By June, the city allotted \$500,000 to launch a pilot, and we shifted into a new campaign phase – advocating that unhoused people inform pilot development. Street Roots staff



worked through a community outreach work group to host listening sessions with unhoused Portlanders. In July, Street Roots vendors led teams to survey 184 unhoused people on what they wanted in the Portland

Street Response. This effort was in collaboration with Portland State University Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative, Mapping Action Collective, Right 2 Survive, Yellow Brick Road, Sisters

of the Road and Street Books. The results were compiled in a report “Believe Our Stories & Listen,” released in a September press conference. In November, City Council approved a pilot design for Portland Fire and Rescue to dispatch one EMT and one crisis worker in Lents. Bureau of Emergency Communications will code 911 calls for the new system. Street Roots vendors will next survey unhoused people in Lents with PSU, learning from the pilot while preparing for the next phase of our campaign. This is a big opportunity to update the first responder system, and we will demand that it be large enough to meet the need, and nimble enough to be effective.

EDITORIAL

Honoring the voices from the streets

Recently, Street Roots published an editorial reflecting on our organization's tagline: For those who can't afford free speech. It's a part of the periodic check-ins on our work: Are we living up to our own aspirations?

With each edition of the paper, we work to do just that, but we understand that there is always a horizon to our work. It will always be aspirational.

We are regularly reminded of how much you love the poetry in our paper, and it's great to be able to tell vendors how much their work and perspectives are appreciated. Their words, along with the weekly vendor profile and our own editorials, celebrate the people at the center of our mission.

We consider it our responsibility to provide readers with news that's off the beaten path, on issues less covered in local media, amplifying voices not commonly heard in the public square.

This past year we launched a powerful new series by Helen Hill titled Life on the Streets, drawing almost exclusively from the experiences of the people you meet selling the newspaper. They share their thoughts and experiences with such issues as parasites, stress, getting older, faith and family – common matters we all share, but experience so differently.

We started the year with a series on our own neighborhood, Old Town, where people made of grit and determination carved out room for people in need, the working poor,

for immigrants and populations unwanted in the rest of the city.

Criminal justice remains a regular topic for our pages, including original essays from people currently in prison and shedding light on the problematic grievance process in sexual assault complaints.

Foster youth also hold a special place in our pages. The Oregon foster care system is in shambles and the trauma it creates in the lives of children will always be a concern to our editorial team.

Likewise, the environment remains one of our pillars of coverage. Environmental justice impacts all of us and all generations, and we will continue to report in-depth on issues impacting our natural resources.

In March, we unveiled one of our most ambitious packages to date – a look at the need for a better response to the crises on the streets. What emerged was a proposal for the Portland Street Response, a new way to help people in crisis without a gun and with an emphasis on providing meaningful care.

In April, we joined OPB, The Oregonian, KGW, Pamplin Media and other media outlets for a series of reports on suicide, all coordinated with Lines of Life. All of us who participated hope the coverage and the information provided with our reports helped people see that suicide isn't the answer and that help is available for anyone in despair or crisis.

This year we've put an emphasis on

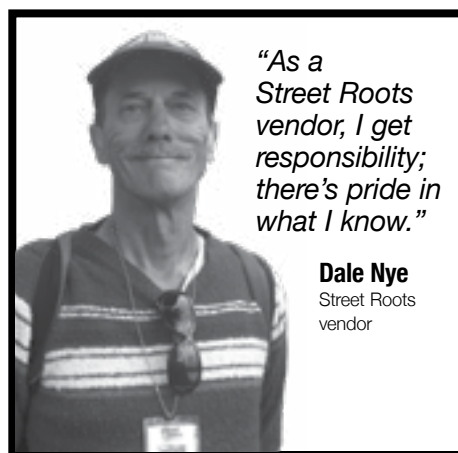
Native American perspectives, including our own reporting on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement and work by writers with the Grand Ronde newspaper Smoke Signals. We've also been honored to partner with Pollen Nation Magazine founder and author Jacqueline Keeler, Diné/Ihanktonwan Dakota, who shared her work with Street Roots on Native issues. It's a relationship we intend to continue as members of the Native American Journalism Association. That relationship is a foundation for future reporting on the complexities of the sovereign nations within Oregon's borders.

More immediately ahead is our new series, The Next Generation. It's a two-year project reporting on today's vulnerable youth and what we as a society are doing to prevent yet another generation falling to the streets. We hope to foster a dialogue about the root causes of homelessness, and highlight the success stories and innovators who are making a difference.

And throughout the year, we try to bring you high-profile interviews on the issues around us. It underscores that we're more alike than we often think, to all ends of the spectrums.

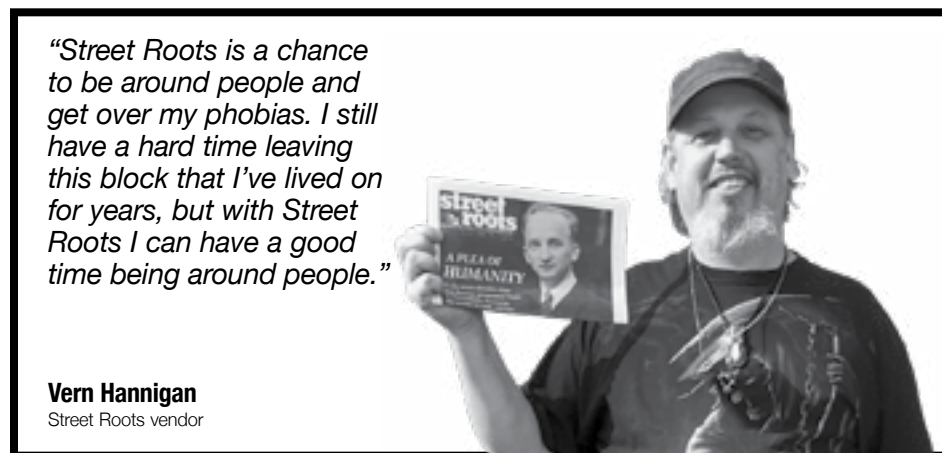
As always, thank you for buying – and reading – Street Roots.

*Jaymie Zittel*



"As a Street Roots vendor, I get responsibility; there's pride in what I know."

Dale Nye  
Street Roots vendor



"Street Roots is a chance to be around people and get over my phobias. I still have a hard time leaving this block that I've lived on for years, but with Street Roots I can have a good time being around people."

Vern Hannigan  
Street Roots vendor

VENDORS

In 2019, Street Roots worked with 822 vendors that collectively earned more than \$500,000. Our office is open 7 days a week, 365 days a year, for vendors to come buy papers, grab a cup of coffee, catch up with friends, use a computer, stock up on essential supplies or use the restroom.

Each week, an average of 170 vendors sell at more than 100 sales posts all over the metro region.

We continued to host monthly health and wellness events, and these included: afternoon at the movies at the Hollywood Theatre, drag queen bingo, PRIDE parade, zoo trip, summer BBQ with the Portland Pearl Rotary Club and the annual holiday

party.

Other highlights:

- Biketown, Uber and Ride Connection helped get our vendors to and from their sales posts and all around town.
- We published our annual holiday zine, highlighting vendor poets, writers and artists, and generating thousands more in income for our vendors. We provide stipends for vendors who served on the zine editorial board or were published in the zine.
- Vendors surveyed unhoused individuals to get their feedback on the Portland Street Response Program and received a stipend for their work.

- We maintained our vendor health fund which supports vendors through medical, housing or other life emergencies
- We began our Lift Up Every Vendor initiative to help each vendor maximize their ability to earn an income selling the newspaper.
- The vendor team hosted the Vendor Marketplace and a holiday bazaar, providing artistic vendors with additional outlets to sell their creative goods and earn more income.
- Vendors participated in our 2020-2025 strategic planning process, providing important feedback about the future direction of Street Roots.

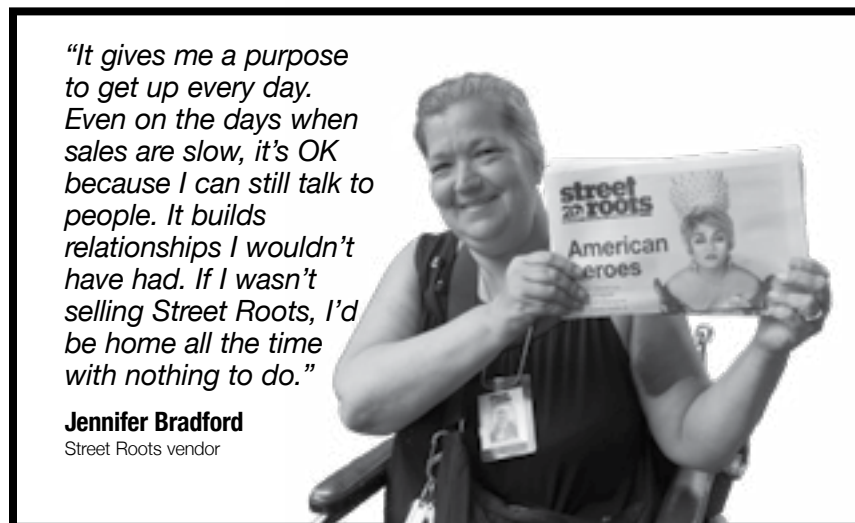
ROSE CITY RESOURCE

Street Roots published 215,000 copies of the Rose City Resource in 2019, and those were distributed by more than 500 partner agencies and organizations throughout the Metro region. The Rose City Resource is the most comprehensive list of services available to low-income and homeless individuals in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties, and it is printed twice-annually. In 2019, we began partnering with the Mapping Action Collective to produce an open-source data online version of the guide.

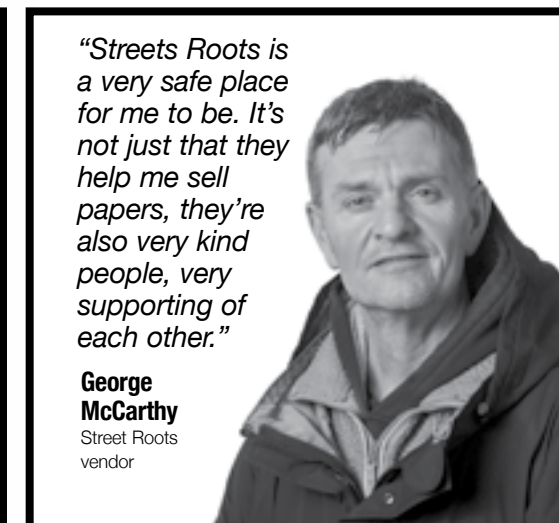


SPONSORS

- Multnomah County/City of Portland Joint Office of Homeless Services
- Clackamas County Metro
- CareOregon
- NW Natural
- 211 Info
- Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare
- City of Hillsboro
- Home Forward
- Oregon Food Bank
- Travel Portland
- Beaverton Foursquare Church
- Central City Concern
- Downtown Clean and Safe
- Home Advisor
- Human Solutions
- Janus Youth Programs
- JOIN
- Planned Parenthood
- Columbia-Willamette
- Port of Portland
- Portland Art Museum
- Portland Business Alliance
- REACH Community Development
- Salvation Army
- Sisters of the Road
- Transition Projects, Inc.
- Western Bike Works
- William Temple House
- NW Pilot Project



Jennifer Bradford  
Street Roots vendor

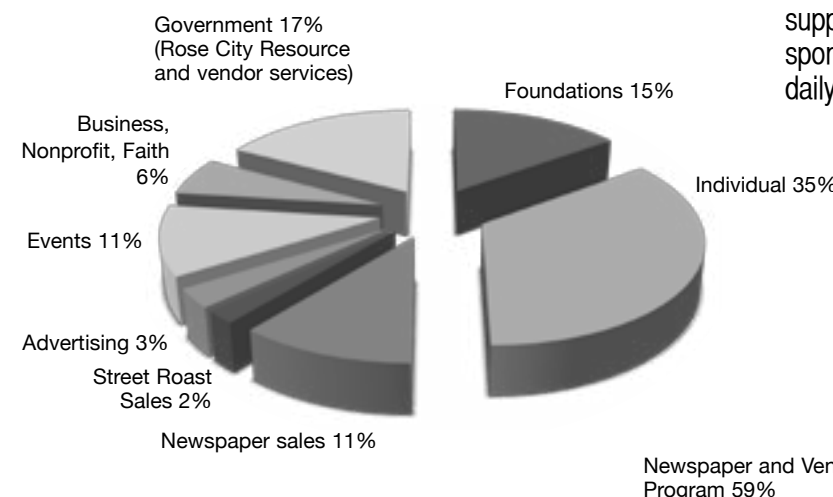


George McCarthy  
Street Roots vendor

FINANCIALS

For July-June fiscal year 2018-2019

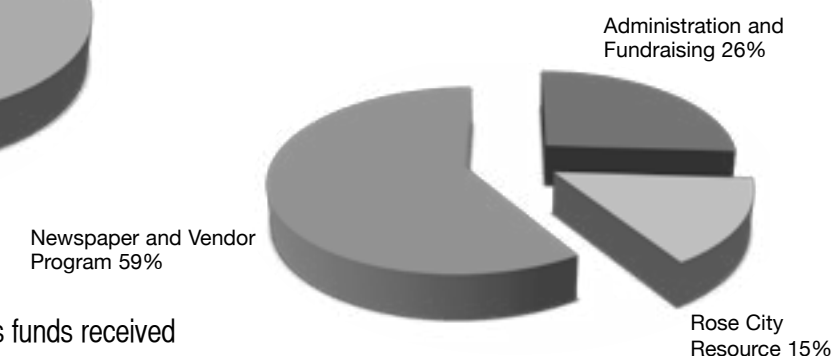
INCOME: \$811,263



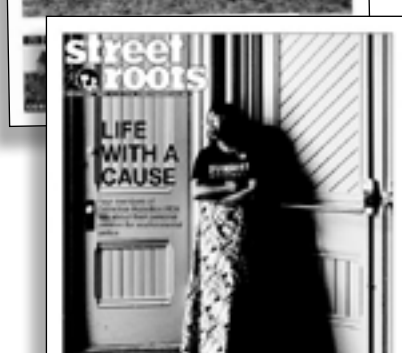
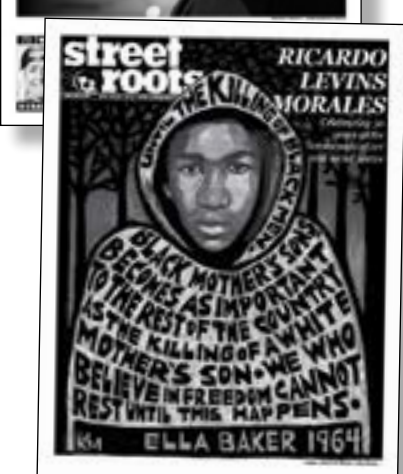
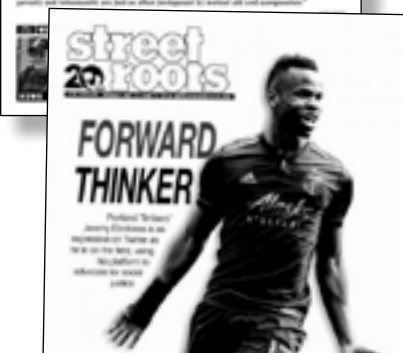
Street Roots is brought to you by readers like you! 1,496 individuals made a personal contribution to Street Roots in 2018-19.

Thank you to the dozens of local businesses that supported Street Roots with in-kind donations, sponsorships and other gifts to keep the office running daily and our vendors safe and healthy.

EXPENSES: \$856,096\*



\*The \$44,833 deficit in fiscal year 2018-19 represents funds received in the prior fiscal year for use in that fiscal year.



## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In 2019, 85 volunteers contributed 2,546 hours to Street Roots. From staffing the front desk to copy-editing the newspaper weekly to distributing the resource guide to supporting our events and pretty much everything in between, volunteers keep Street Roots running!



*"I am in my third year volunteering at the front desk for Street Roots because it is exciting and fills my heart to be there. In my time at Street Roots I've seen, over and over, the transformative power of sharing a supportive space and creating community with a host of wonderful people I wouldn't have had the honor of meeting otherwise. Our vendors have enriched my life far more than the other way around. I cherish the culture of Street Roots, it starts in the back office with the extraordinary people who make up the administrative and editorial staff and spreads easily out into the front office where non-judgmental, open-hearted support is in endless supply. Sure, there are hard times in the office; the avalanche of need is intense as people grow poorer and more marginalized in Portland and across America, but Street Roots is a haven I believe in."*

**Helen Hill**  
Street Roots volunteer

## FOUNDATIONS

Thank you to the following foundations for their support:

**Meyer Memorial Trust**  
**Harbourton Foundation**  
**The Collins Foundation**  
**The Coon Family Foundation**  
**Joseph E. Weston Public Foundation**  
**of The Oregon Community Foundation**  
**The Wyss Foundation**  
**Umpqua Bank Charitable Foundation**  
**Bland Family Foundation**  
**The Swinerton Foundation**  
**The Jackson Foundation**  
**Yazdani Foundation**  
**The Larson Legacy**

*Thank you!*

**To all of our wonderful supporters!**

**You support  
makes Street  
Roots possible!**

**Making a donation today is an investment in Street Roots and our vendors. To give a one-time gift or recurring donation, visit [streetroots.org/donate](http://streetroots.org/donate) or mail to:**

**Street Roots  
211 NW Davis St.  
Portland, OR 97209**

**[streetroots.org](http://streetroots.org)**

Street Roots is part of the International Network of Street Papers, a collection of about 100 street newspapers and magazines around the globe. We are proud to take an active role in working with other thriving street papers. Street Roots is also an active participant in the Street News Service, which consolidates news and features about social justice for the worldwide network.



**International  
Network of  
Street Papers**