



Sisters' Voice

***Sisters of the Road
Winter 2023***

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Cover photo:

Draft blueprint of our future space drafted by Skylab Architecture.

Back photo:

Sisters banner hangs over the new building. Photo by Gabriel Granillo.

To Build Tomorrow, We Must Start Today

By Elle Appleton, Fundraising Coordinator

Before we dive into the deep end, I want to say thank you for your continued support of Sisters. We wouldn't be celebrating our 44th anniversary this year without our community behind us. We appreciate you!

That being said, I need you to hear a crucial message, especially those of you who are worried or unhappy about our extended closure.

We are in a pivotal time in Sisters history. Our cafe is temporarily closed as we work to renovate and reopen in the new building, which puts a strain on everyone. We are unable to meet with our community daily, and our customers are missing Sisters' safe space to enjoy a meal and discuss the hurdles of day-to-day survival. This is a huge sacrifice for everyone, but we believe with our whole hearts that it will be worth it when we reopen.

The other grave consequence is that we are receiving fewer donations during our fundraisers. Some people even think we have closed for good. **The deep end reality is the devastating possibility that we won't receive the funding we need to get through this period. All of us can agree that we prefer Sisters' cafe to be open. We want that too, and we need your help to get there.**

Successfully running Sisters of the Road over the next year and a half means supporting the staff who are still working diligently behind the scenes. General operations funding is notoriously less compelling for many supporters. People love to see heartwarming pictures and to hear stories about what their money is going towards. Most people are not enthralled by administrative action items, however, **supporting general operations is crucial for non-profits.**

Furthermore, remember that we are working

to our capacity to stay connected to our community while the cafe is closed. We continuously take action to address the issues of the moment; we are developing know your rights training in response to the camping ban, we are working with PSU and our unhoused neighbors to discover barriers to affordable housing and collaborate to find realistic solutions, rallying support for strategies that work, such as the Portland Street Response, and advocating against wasteful and harmful practices such as gunshot surveillance technology.

Your support is going towards important strategies to improve the lives of those facing the violence of poverty, and it will be the bridge that will get us from Sisters' legacy to its next chapter. In order to open a bigger and better Sisters, we are going to have to increase the number of staff, and therefore, the funds that support the employment of that staff over the next 2 years. We can't wait until we are open to hire a cafe director.

We also need to pay our employees, current and future, wages that will keep them housed. What kind of hypocrites would we be if we paid our employees a wage that rendered them homeless or unable to feed themselves nourishing meals?

If you have the capacity to support us right now, please do. We need you. We are challenging our donors to increase their donation if they can. Another great way to support, especially if you are someone who cannot donate a large amount, is to give a recurring donation. For example, you could donate the same amount you would spend on eating out once a month.

If you don't support us now, there will be no cafe to reopen.

We have not lost our drive to reopen Sisters to the public; don't you lose it either.

Kat's Corner: Groundbreaking Recap

By Kat Mahoney, Executive Director

On September 9, Sisters of the Road broke ground at 331 NW Davis. The was unlike a typical groundbreaking event. Typically, there are a number of speeches and a ribbon cutting ceremony. Sisters is fundamentally an experiment in radical community building and so, it made sense to throw a party and engage our friends, former customers, and donors.

Poison Waters emceed the event, DJ Leo played the perfect mix of old classics and new hits, and BinKye Bellflower, Pluto, Cruz Daniels, and contortionist, Jeremy Grice performed. Meals on Us provided food and local community partners like Milk Crate Kitchen, Rose Haven, and Ground Score tabled and provided snacks, drinks, and supplies. Pearl Legal Group and Beneficial State Bank sponsored the event.

I delivered some welcoming remarks after a breathtaking opening performance by Poison Waters.

Other speakers included: Gus Kroll, Board President of Sisters of the Road, Justice Hager, Communications and Fundraising Director, Nita Posada, Principal at Skylab Architecture, Greg Capen, Principal at B&G Builders, Mark Guzman, President and Co-founder of Meals on Us, Barbie Weber, Roadie at Sisters of the Road and Founder of Ground Score Association

The groundbreaking was a success for many reasons. It was, first and foremost, fun! There were also a few heartfelt moments.



Photos by Sean Bascom



I spoke with three people who all cried tears of joy. One person told me she was afraid we would never reopen and was so happy to hear we bought a building. Another person told me he was excited for us and can't wait to eat at the cafe again and make new friends.

The third person affected me deeply, a woman who came to the cafe before it closed. She told me it was the only place she felt comfortable, unlike other spaces where she felt judged, stupid, and looked down upon by other people. She told me Sisters welcomed her and treated her like a whole person, not a second or third-class citizen. I promised her that we will always treat each other with dignity and respect.

Dignity and authentic relationships are the cornerstone of Sisters' philosophies. Everyone is worthy of connection and being seen as a whole individual.

Reconnecting with our friends, former customers, and donors reminded us all to ensure that renovating 331 NW Davis happens as quickly as possible. This is where you come in, your donations support our efforts and continued renovations. No gift is too big or too small.

Thank you for your continued support and being part of our community.

“Dignity and authentic relationships are the cornerstone of Sisters' philosophies.”

Sisters of the Road and Trauma-Informed Design

By Skylab Architecture

It's an honor for Skylab to partner with Sisters of the Road to bring them home to the House of Louie. We are grateful to work with a wide range of clients and project types and are deeply inspired by all of them. Yet it is a rare, humbling event when a project brings together an inspiring program, a client with deeply held values and mission, a site with a rich history, users with a wide range of essential and complex needs, the opportunity for our team to strengthen our design process by exploring new fields of learning, and witnessing the growth that comes from facing our own positions of privilege.

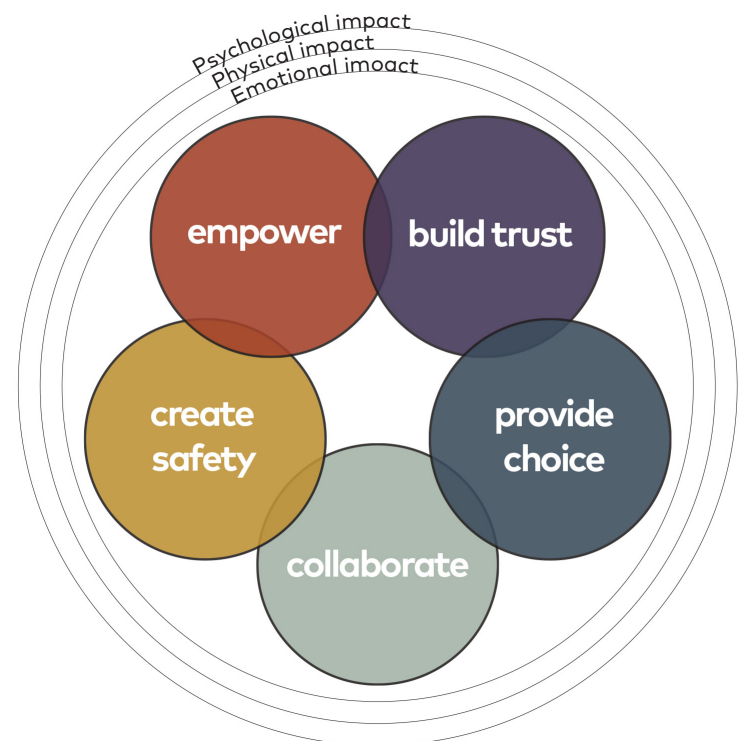
Trauma can alter the brain, shape the trajectory of people's lives, impact family dynamics, and affect communities and neighborhoods. Trauma impacts how people interact with others and the spaces they occupy. After PTSD became a diagnosis in the DSM-III in the early 80s' trauma-informed care practices were implemented in patient-caregiver settings. The basic framework around trauma-informed care acknowledges the effects of trauma, works to recognize its symptoms, integrates this knowledge into policies and procedures, and actively works to avoid re-traumatization. Core principles revolve around physical and psychological safety, creating trust and transparency, providing peer support, and a culture of shared responsibility, empowerment, and validation.

Trauma-informed design looks through a trauma lens to design physical experiences, objects, and spaces. It builds on the work done to establish trauma informed care practices. This field is still evolving but a survey of existing literature and work in Oregon and beyond has helped us to define several key trauma-informed design principles to integrate into the design

process. These include promoting feelings of safety, power, self-worth, community, and connections to the natural world.

In practice, several design patterns emerge from these principles and often they touch several. First is providing a safe place that welcomes all. For example, we consider different aspects of the exterior – perhaps opening more views to activity within – and consider the design of the reception desk to clearly signal where to check in first without feeling institutional. Within the space we want to offer power of choice over the type of space to occupy and with whom. This may translate into providing various types of seating, in different groupings, and provide the ability to be alone or together while maintaining visibility across and between spaces.

Personal autonomy, self-worth, and feelings of power can be supported by allowing manipulation of the environment – through choice of furniture, adjustable personal lighting, or movable drapery. Offering multiple ways to circulate through the space provides personal choice and minimizes waiting in lines which may cause notions of powerlessness or trigger



feelings of institutionalization. It also provides safe alternatives to being near someone that incurs anxiety.

Establishing consistency of place and belonging is driven by the principle of community. The notion that one can leave something of value in a space and assume that it will be there, just as one left it, later today, tomorrow, or next week exists in a spatial timeline of privilege.

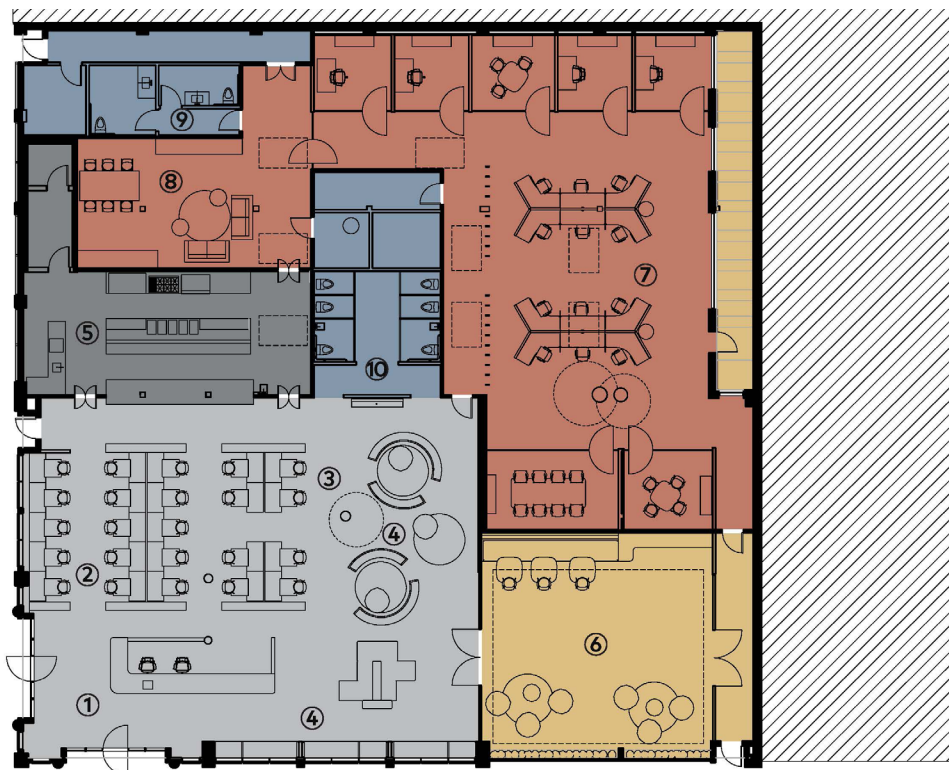
Understanding this privilege leads us to prioritize finding places for storing personal belongings and identifying consistent, temporal activities or experiences to provide: the chess game started yesterday can be resurrected today and the oversized stuffed bear might now be on the couch but is still around for a hug. Integration of nature recognizes that exposure to nature may bring contradictory feelings for those that are houseless - we work to integrate nature and natural materials while also allowing users to have control and power over their surroundings.

The House of Louie is a poignant site for Sisters of the Road. Prior to 1942 this building was

at the heart of a small but vital Japantown - housing a confectioner, a tofu shop, a restaurant, barber, and newspaper. Executive Order 9066 in 1942 gave 48 hour notice for families of Japanese descent to report to relocation facilities and abandon, sell, or entrust their businesses to others. In a matter of days this building emptied and the community was displaced. This community, like Albina, and the ancestral tribal lands that exist around us, has a deep history of displacement. Narratives around who has the "right" to exist in this place continue to live on today.

One of the pillars of design at Skylab centers on regenerative thinking. Often this takes shape through the building's integration with landscape, context, and natural systems. This project has deepened our approach to include how the built environment can be a partner in acknowledging and combating the ongoing effects of trauma in people and communities.

We look forward to the homecoming of Sisters of the Road and are thankful to be a part of (re) building this place.



PROPOSED

- 01_ENTRY / CHECK IN
- 02_CAFE
- 03_FAMILY ZONE
- 04_PERSONALIZATION LOBBY
- 05_KITCHEN
- 06_COMMUNITY GARDEN ROOM
- 07_OPEN OFFICE
- 08_EMPLOYEE LOUNGE
- 09_EMPLOYEE BATHROOM
- 10_PUBLIC BATHROOM

Hostile Architecture: Behind the Buzzword

By Lauren Armony, Systemic Change Director

Anyone living in Portland for five or more years has witnessed stark changes in our urban landscape and climate. Heat islands, wildfires, drought, and lack of infrastructure for both heat and cold made this formerly temperate city a challenge to adapt to.

Many of the issues with our urban landscape are incidental. Past urban designers did not plan for the dramatic shifts in population or climate that we're experiencing today. However, there are now emboldened design efforts to intentionally marginalize and exclude 'certain' people from public view and life that further impact livability for all.

The dramatic rise in cost of living has only increased tensions around Portland's livability. With a 22% increase in rent, COVID-19-related unemployment, and inflation, unsheltered homelessness has exploded in the metro area. While we 'wait' for more affordable housing to be built, no expense has been spared in constructing exclusionary public architecture. The contemporary and popular term for this phenomenon is "Hostile Architecture."

Painfully slanted bus stop benches, oddly placed flower pots, boulders cemented to

the ground, and spikes have all been used to prevent forms of rest or settlement in Portland. This type of urban design specifically targets people who use public spaces more frequently, like poor, disabled, and unhoused people.

Prior to the zeitgeist of the term "Hostile Architecture" there was a long history of exclusionary and defensive design. Large walls and moats seem like odd historic hiccups, romanticized in media and history, but nevertheless served to keep certain people in and others out. Societies have since found far more subtle ways to tell people they are not welcome in a space.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a critical bridge in design theory for Hostile Architecture.

Cara Chellaw, a Doctoral Student in Urban Planning at McGill University, put it succinctly: *"This philosophy is based on the idea that the built environment can be designed in a way that prevents crime as well as the perception of crime... CPTED is built upon three strategies—natural access control, natural surveillance and territorial reinforcement."*

Hostile Architecture (def.): is an urban-design strategy that uses elements of the built environment to purposefully guide or restrict behavior.



“Using design as a technological solution to address social issues like substance use, mental illness and homelessness merely displaces the problem rather than confronting it.”

The idea is that we need to build our cities in a way that we can self-police each other to reduce crime and produce order. However, there are many critiques to using urban design for issues that can be more adequately addressed with root cause solutions.

Chellaw continues, "Using design as a technological solution to address social issues like substance use, mental illness and homelessness merely displaces the problem rather than confronting it."

Consulting the Experts

I had the distinct pleasure of speaking with local architectural designers and urban planners to discuss these important issues. We talked about their views on hostile architecture, limitations to architectural design, and visions of a landscape that better meets the needs of all. First, I asked each individual what architecture means to each of them.

Suenn Ho, Principal and Designer of RESOLVE Architecture + Planning, shared her sentiments, "In order to be a good designer, I need to know economics, anthropology, and political science to do a good job... from a design perspective, importance is focused on people, place, and their stories. Approaching it in this way makes every project a unique solution."

Dr. Marisa Zapata shared a similar philosophy, "Architecture is inherently about people, place, and nature to me." She is an Associate Professor of Land-Use Planning at Portland State University and Director of PSU's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative. "How we build expresses our values, and views about our relationships to one another, animals, plants..." When I brought up "Hostile Architecture," however, there was a divergence in thought.

While Marisa Zapata shared a common definition and clear examples of Hostile Architecture, Suenn Ho opts to not use the term at all. "...I feel that term is a buzzword; a style or trend...We need to bring it back to: is this place difficult to access? Does it respect people?"

Further describing style as, "...unfortunate. It reflects an impatience in understanding the uniqueness in every project...and is for people who want a shortcut."

This was the first time I've heard an ethical critique of the term Hostile Architecture, and it gave me pause. Can we all challenge ourselves to look beyond dominant cultural narratives to describe the nuance and individuality of a situation?

To round out this conversation, Forrest Perkins, local architectural designer, added, "Ultimately, hostile architecture is often influenced by a capitalist mindset of 'nothing is free,' this design seeks to avoid someone 'taking advantage' of the project in some way."

This led us to another point of convergence. Architecture is fundamentally limited by who is funding it.

Architects and designers are not immune to the pressures of the free market. Most professional architects are at the will of their clients, and thereby refrain from political action. Currently, there is a recession in the architectural field.



Suenn Ho of RESOLVE Architecture + Planning



Architects are being laid off or forced into part time work. The reason? Private investors are slowing down and stopping projects to wait until interest rates go down.

“We [have to] design and build privately funded projects that have the best profit margins and the smallest amount of investment risk.” Forrest Perkins shared, a reality echoed by Suenn Ho. “Design became an accounting job. When everything becomes formulaic and about money, design suffers.” After working for years in the corporate sector, Ho and her husband decided to open a private firm so they can fully embody their holistic design approach.

Though working at PSU limits Marisa Zapata’s ability to physically design spaces, she is frequently consulted on urban planning projects. And much like everyone else interviewed, she shared that you can give great advice, but projects are ultimately determined by funding and client motives.

Countering hostile architecture can feel hopeless, but at Sisters we’re interested in systemic solutions and imagining better futures. In this spirit, I asked each interviewee what they would like to see in Portland’s architectural landscape.

Forrest Perkins had many ideas, and here is one of note: “What if the City Housing Bureau just directly hired Architects to design housing on the plots of land and empty buildings they already own all over town?”

Marisa Zapata shared, “...I want to see benches that are comfortable for long periods of time... [and] I want to see ADA and trauma-informed design in building codes required in all development.” With additional comment, “... people [are] really not getting that housing is key to ending homelessness. It’s not housing only for some people, but it does need to be at least the real offer of housing.”

Suenn Ho adds, “There are no simple answers or solutions...we need to think outside of cultural individualism that keep us isolated... [and] make design a participatory process.”

You read in our article with Skylab how Sisters is committed to an inclusive and trauma-informed design approach. We don’t want to just say we welcome everyone, we want to show it.

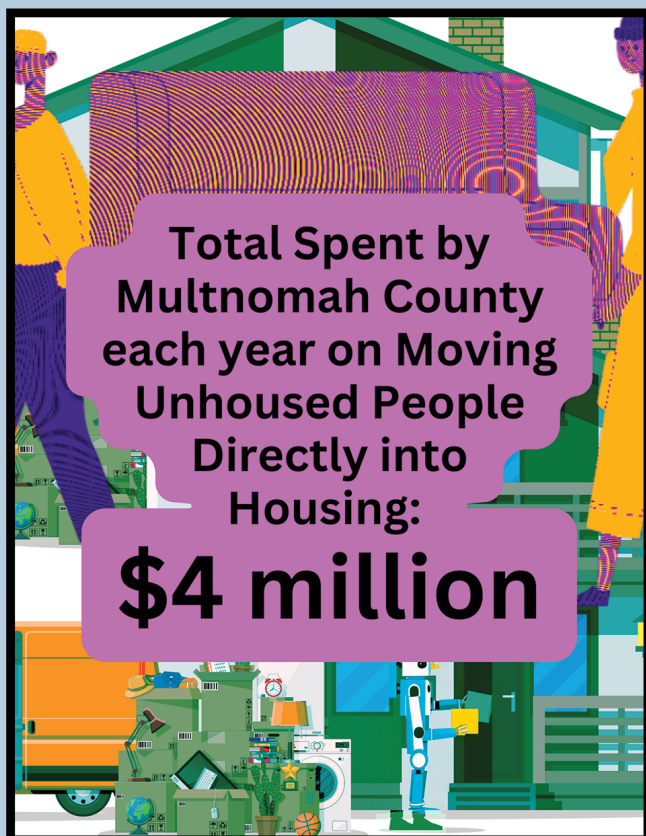
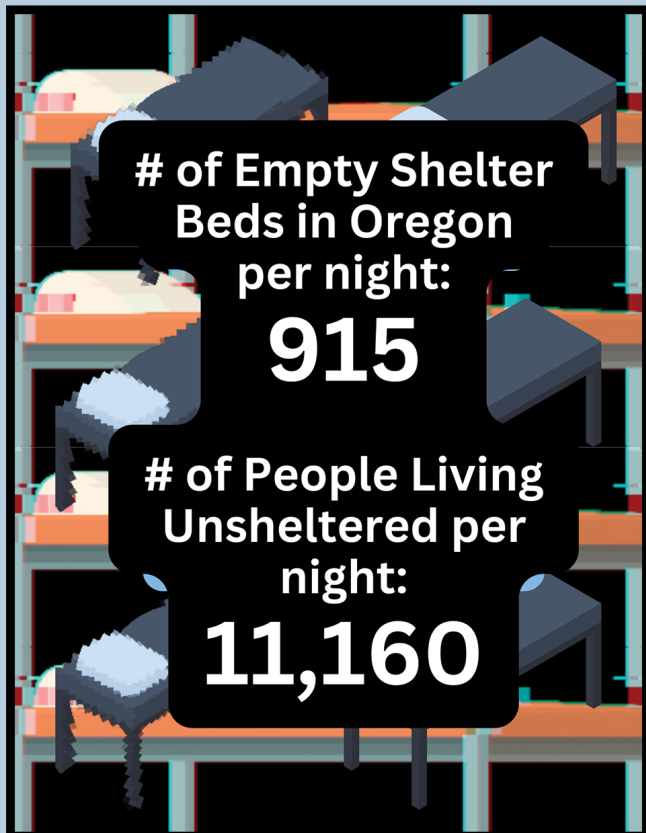
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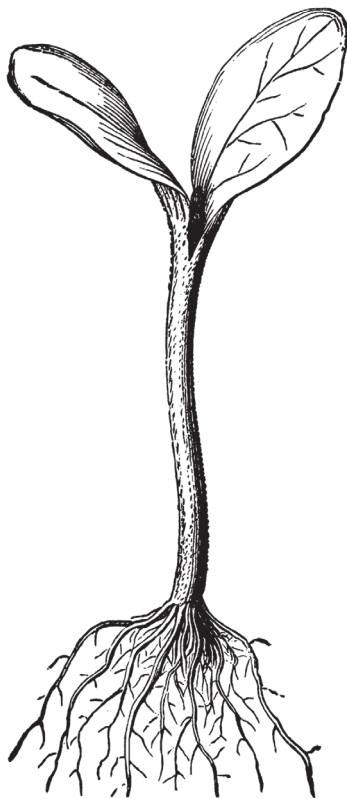
A Look at the Numbers



When it comes to homelessness, everyone's got an opinion.

We wanted to look at some of the numbers when it comes to housing, rent stabilization, and especially to criminalization.





Sowing Solidarity

The narrative surrounding homelessness is shrouded in fear and misinformation. Sisters is profoundly about love, serving as a natural counterforce to fear. We're also about nurturing authentic relationships with one another.

It's time to unite in solidarity with both our sheltered and unsheltered neighbors. The process of ending oppression is a collective journey. We invite all of you to embark on this path alongside us. With your support, we aspire to grow into a more robust organization, offering living wages and meeting our community's growing needs. We will serve, once again, as a central hub for engagement and advocacy.

Join us in Sowing Solidarity as we work collectively to combat the violence of poverty.

Ways to Give

ONLINE

Go to sistersoftheroad.org/donate

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Does your employer match donations to 501(c)(3) non-profits? Many do, including employers like Intel, Nike, and even Starbucks. Contact your HR department and/or email us to see if you can double your donation and your impact!

PEER TO PEER FUNDRAISING

Do you know other people who also might love to support Sisters' mission? We have a toolkit that you can use to share why you love Sisters and help encourage your family and friends to support us as well! Reach out for more information if you'd like to help us grow our base of support.

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN

After a couple of years off, Sisters is once again participating in the Combined Federal Campaign (the workplace giving program for federal employees). Our CFC # is 14791. Pledge your support today!

STOCK DONATIONS

Do you want to make a donation and own some stock? You can avoid paying taxes on the sale of the stock by donating it directly to Sisters. Contact us, and we can put you in touch with the bank representative who handles these transactions for us.

FACEBOOK FUNDRAISERS

Did you know that you can host your own fundraiser for Sisters of the Road on Facebook? People often do these for their birthdays in lieu of gifts.

PLANNED GIVING

We hope you're going to be around for many years to come, but if you're thinking about your lasting legacy, consider adding Sisters of the Road as a beneficiary of your estate.

CONTACT US

Need help giving? Reach out anytime.
development@sistersoftheroad.org
 503-222-5694 x114

Community Partnerships



Neighbors for Clean Air (NCA) envisions an Oregon where every community has clean and healthy air to breathe.

www.neighborsforcleanair.org



Hygiene4All offers showers, clothing, hygiene & medical supplies, and a space for loving community.

www.h4apdx.org

street roots

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a weekly newspaper.

www.streetroots.org



Rose Haven is the only day shelter and community center in Portland that serves Women, children and those marginalized by their gender.

www.rosehaven.org



Milk Crate Kitchen is a community-based organization helping fight food insecurity in the greater Portland area.

www.milkcratekitchen.org



Kindness Farm is an immigrant, refugee & queer led regenerative farm in PDX, OR dedicated to fighting food insecurity.

www.thekindnessfarm.org

The Commons Law Center

The Commons Law Center provides sliding-scale legal services for underserved Oregonians.

www.thecommonslawcenter.org

FinAbility

We're building a future where everyone has the financial security to live free from abuse and thrive.

www.finabilityus.org



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