



LOVE

PROFOUNDLY ABOUT LOVE FOR FORTY YEARS

SISTERS OF THE ROAD
40th Anniversary Sisters Voice • Fall 2019

PROFOUNDLY ABOUT



FOR FORTY YEARS

SISTERS OF THE ROAD IS TURNING 40!

Celebrate our 40th Anniversary Community Reunion with us!

Saturday, December 7, 10am-2pm, plus evening celebration at 5pm at **Sisters of the Road Cafe.**

We will be celebrating all day in our Cafe with free meals and goodies, and conclude with an evening reunion party meant for old and new Sisters supporters and community members to come together to share stories, cut cake and build greater camaraderie.

(for more information on details and how folks can help, see [page 22](#))



40 YEARS OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE, NONVIOLENCE, DINING WITH DIGNITY, GENTLE PERSONALISM AND ANTI-OPPRESSION

Since 1979, Sisters of the Road has worked to address the needs of the communities of Portland's Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood—particularly members of the community who are currently unhoused. We built relationships and listened to understand peoples' needs and in response opened a nonprofit cafe with the founding goals of:

- ▶ Providing a safe, welcoming place for everyone—especially women and children.
- ▶ Offering nourishing meals at little cost and/or in exchange for labor.
- ▶ Offering job training and employment experience.

For forty years, these goals have shaped our work and continue to anchor our pursuit to fulfill our mission—one relationship at a time.

STAFF:

Allysa Gonzalez
Angelina Crane
Benjamin Donlon
Carmen Duran-Ramirez
Danielle Klock
Deborah Sturm
Fenix Kibodeaux
Jessica Feinman
Karen Katigbak
Keegan Murray
Leanne Falzon
Lucas Grzybowski
Melissa Lang
Migyoung Won

Pepe Espinoza
Sammy Lawrence
Shannon Blanchard
Shorty Dado
Travis Smith

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Art Rios Sr.
Bekah Watkins
Jess Heman
Julia Nielsen
Kacy McKinney
Linda Senn
Scarlet Vildibill

DONATE TO SISTERS

← Your donation to Sisters of the Road today makes a difference in our community.

SISTERS OF THE ROAD

40th Anniversary Sisters Voice • Fall 2019

MISSION: Sisters of the Road exists to build authentic relationships and alleviate the hunger of isolation in an atmosphere of nonviolence and gentle personalism that nurtures the whole individual, while seeking systemic solutions that reach the roots of homelessness and poverty to end them forever.

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Unless noted, photo credit for photography and cover by Migyoung Won

SISTERS OF THE ROAD CAFE

[133 NW Sixth Ave.](#) Tuesday-Saturday
[Portland, OR 97209](#) 10:00am-2:30pm

SISTERS ADMIN OFFICE

[618 NW Davis St.](#) Tuesday-Saturday
[Portland, OR 97209](#) 9:00am-5:00pm

sistersoftheroad.org



WHO WE ARE

Sisters of the Road is a nonprofit cafe in Portland's Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood working to create systemic change that will end poverty and homelessness by providing nourishing meals in a safe, dignified space.

We work to build community one relationship at a time, with nonviolence and gentle personalism, believing everyone has a piece of the truth and that we are all more than the sum of our current situation or past experiences.

We interrupt violence and oppression in all forms and our Cafe is a Safer Space where everyone is welcome.

At Sisters we believe that care and dignity are at the heart of food justice. Therefore, we offer many ways for folks to gain access to hot, fresh meals:

Barter Work Program allows folks to earn four full meals & beverages for every hour long shift in the Cafe. By bartering work, our community members are treated with dignity, meanwhile gaining applicable skills in the food industry that they can take elsewhere.

For Purchase: We also accept cash and SNAP benefits/EBT cards. All meals are served to order and in a welcoming environment for only \$1.50, the same price Sisters has offered since 1979!

For Free: First time guests, families, and customers who for medical reasons are unable to do Cafe work receive a hot and nutritious meal at no charge.

Blue Meal Coupons: These coupons are designed to allow supporters like you to gift meals to our community members. For the price of \$2.00, coupons are redeemable for a full meal. We believe our coupons are an innovative way to share a meal and start a conversation while responding to a need in our community.

If you'd like to purchase meal cards please visit our website: sistersoftheroad.org or call us at: (503) 222-5694



SISTERS HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROFOUNDLY ABOUT THE PEOPLE

By *Melissa Lang, Development Manager*

It's a common phrase to hear around the cafe and in staff meetings, "Now that I work/come to Sisters, I have more friends than I have ever had."

During a recent hiring process, we asked a candidate if they had any questions for us. Their astute reply went something like, "With all the difficulties that come along with this job, what keeps you coming back every day?" Each of us on the team looked across to one another, hoping we could answer while keeping our cool. Our responses boiled down to us each having a personal commitment to the cause. We agreed that the very occurrences that prompts a day to go downhill here at Sisters are what bring us back the very next day. But most profoundly, our answers all came down to the people.

It might sound obvious that people, our community, is what makes up Sisters of the Road. But there it is. How does the rhyme go? "Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people?" And as we have been looking back upon these past four decades this year, it's been overwhelming to think about how we can recognize everyone who has made a difference here by the simple act of being our friend. I have only worked at Sisters since January, but I could fill up this entire newsletter with stories of my new friends.

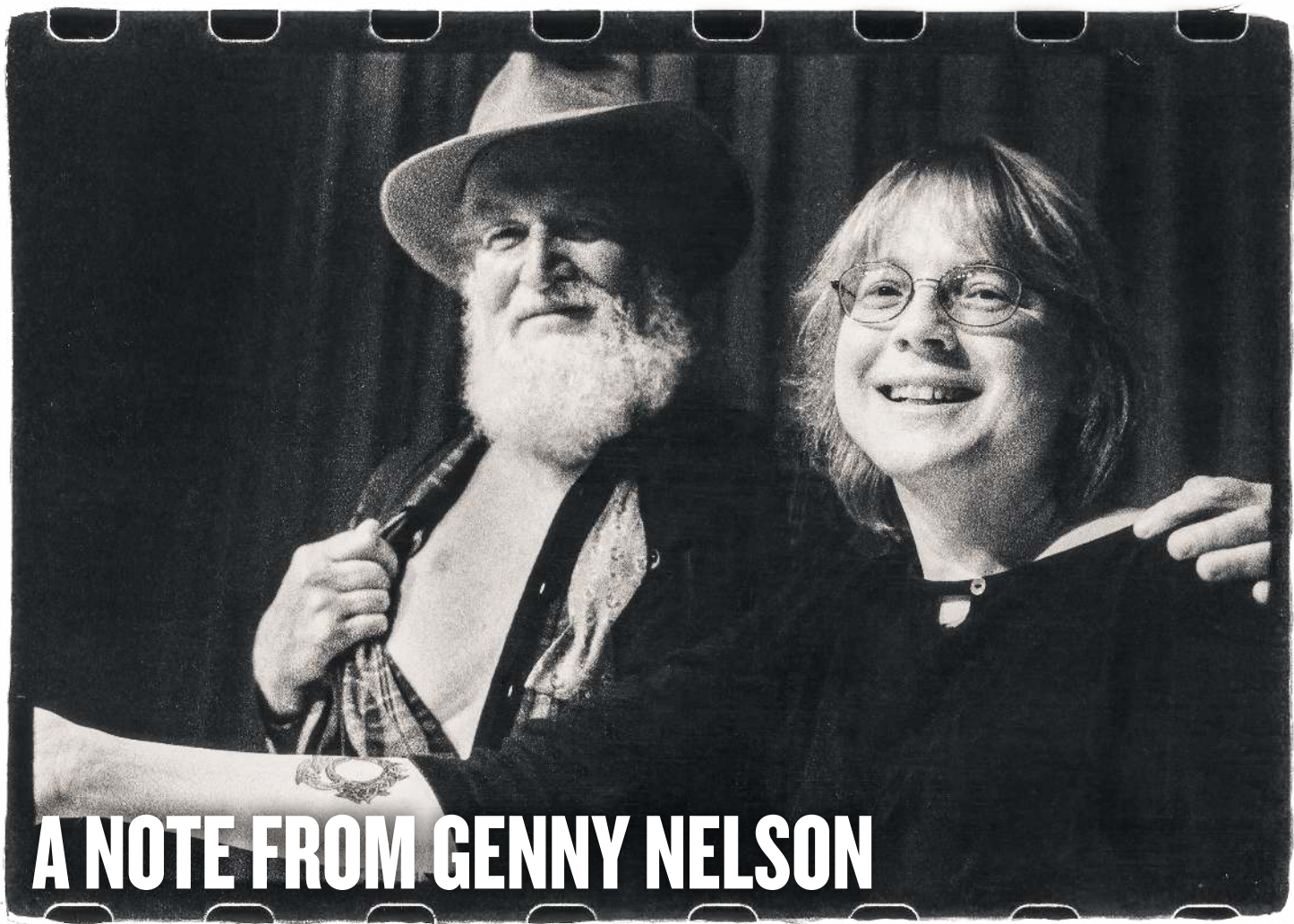
There is Kat, who feels safest pitched up outside our office. She doesn't like riding in ambulances alone and now that Portland medic responders do not allow ride-alongs, it's caused her to neglect her needs. There is Cowboy, he lives half time on the coast and can be trusted to watch folks' gear and look after Sisters while we all sleep. There is Billy, who when he returned after leaving with no notice, we all felt a little lighter learning he was safe and healthy. And, Ben, an activist from Denver whose passion for justice and sticking up for

the little guy causes as much grace as it does grief.

Migyoung has been working at Sisters for seven years in almost every capacity. She's the first one we go to when we don't know who to ask—and she always smiles with her eyes first. There is Kacy, our Board Secretary, who literally just walked into our Development Loft asking if we happen to have tennis balls laying around. Huh? Jessica, who you can always rely on for a Peter Pan smile and curbside huddle. Robert, who lives around the corner and has been coming to Sisters for a long time. His health hasn't been well lately so we all look a little more carefully down 6th Avenue to see if he will be around the Cafe today. And Shorty, whose number I always keep on me in case I ever need to get out of a jam or need company in the hospital. And then there is Travis, who is like a Sisters whisperer, always guiding us to center our mission and help us newcomers catch up with what we don't know about our community (like letting me know the tennis balls are for Kat's walker).

We wish we could highlight you all. But this issue of our 40th Anniversary newsletter will highlight the history of our space, what Genny Nelson and Sandy Gooch created in the fall of 1979, and some of the folks who make up all of our parts. Whether it's the Cafe, Roadies Community Team, or our supporters, we hope you can learn a little more about where we have been and who we are today.

Forty years ago, Sisters opened with \$10 and a mission—to let our unhoused neighbors dictate their own future. While that mission has become more concrete over time, it never really has changed. Essentially, it's to be here for our friends. Yes, we serve nourishing meals in a space of dignity, we have fully stocked accessible bathrooms, and we address the root causes of homelessness so that one day we can simply be a cafe. But really, we all come back to our little corner on NW 6th and Davis to make sure our doors are open for our friends. "Here is the Cafe. It's our steeple. Open the doors, and see all the people."



A NOTE FROM GENNY NELSON

Utah Phillips and Genny Nelson (Photo by Jeff Bizzell)

By Genny Nelson, Co-founder

The end of this December will represent 10 years of my not being a staff member at Sisters of the Road. The last decade has been physically and emotionally challenging for me, yet spiritually rewarding.

I am daily humbled by Sisters' staff's continued commitment to building authentic relationships with our beloved community: our customers, our Board of Directors, our donors, our volunteers, and each other.

I am heartened by their ongoing practice of nonviolence and gentle personalism. This has never meant an absence of conflict but rather a willingness to confront that conflict personally and organizationally. It is often uncomfortable, messy, trying and tiring. But it is profoundly about love, a minute by minute commitment to never humiliate the "other" and a constant reminder that no one has a monopoly on the truth.

Through the years, 40 now, we have made every

mistake imaginable! The times when we have neglected our donors, forgot to not do for others what they can do for themselves, not taken leadership and direction from the women, men, teens, and children with experience of houselessness, and the times we have neglected caring for, loving and forgiving ourselves—which is where transformation begins.

Profoundly about love is also about what we got right: creating a community gathering space that is a constant in people's daily lives, providing an alternative place to dine with dignity, and being a daily experiment in nonviolence and gentle personalism committed to standing up for each others' rights and freedom.

I am eternally grateful for, and honor everyone who helped create and continues to create Sisters of the Road.

Love and Respect!



Photo by Danielle Klock

THE CAFE IS THE HEART OF IT ALL

...where folks come to eat meals that nourish them for the day ahead, find respite from the streets, meet up with friends old and new, and come to be treated with love and dignity. A living room of sorts, the Cafe is a place that our unhoused neighbors and friends surviving extreme poverty can count on. Day after day, for 40 years. But you don't have to take our word for it...



**Gary, Community Member
Volunteer/Barter Worker**

"I like the idea that I can volunteer, that I can contribute, that I can help. You know? It gives me something to do, something positive. So I can not just take but also give back. I

like to give back. I just like that people come here to get a decent meal when they are barely getting by."



Michael, Barter Worker

"I have been coming to Sisters since the spring or summer of 1980. I was more of an introvert back then, I never trusted anyone and then this one lady sees me, looking in the window.

I was feeling kind of hungry, and I asked her if she knew anyone I could ask for a meal and she replied, "Me!" Later I found out that that was Genny Nelson, a co-founder of Sisters. That day forward I started

working. I keep coming back because of small things like showing that yes, Sisters does care for a person like me and makes somebody feel like they are needed and wanted and desired. Not only did Sisters gave me a place to eat but also gave me a place to rest from the outside world."



Robert, Barter Worker

"Bartering at Sisters gives me a sense of satisfaction, and makes me feel that I can do good in the community. I fought in Kuwait and Afghanistan and I like to serve my community. Helping

the homeless gives me a sense of pride, makes me feel good about myself. In my room I am just bored to tears, but here I can stay occupied and hang out with my friends. Everyone says, "Hi Robert!" when I come in. If Sisters closed, I would cry. This is like a home to me. I have worked here so long it's become a part of me. Sisters is important because people feel they belong here. The staff and customers are all my friends. They are more than friends; they are

my family. If I have problems I can come here and talk to people. You all became my family.”



Robert “Troublemaker” and Canine Companion Almond Joy

“I pretty much come everyday. I come because of the staff and the people who come in. Folks come in to

Sisters if they don’t have money to go places to eat, and I come in for the shiny faces. What I like about the staff because I can give them a bad time, and they know when I am having a good day and when I am not and half of the time they say, “Are you okay, Robert?” and I say, “Not really, but I am here, I am working.” But when I am in an excellent mood I love to tease everyone. I love everybody here. I turn 60 in February and I am gonna retire when I turn 60, but I will still come and visit.”



Leanne, Cafe Program Manager

“It’s so essential that Sisters exists for people who have nowhere else where they can be. Sisters is the only place that accepts folks as they are. I want to see this place thrive; that Sisters never goes

away; that we can keep the doors open, and make it safe and dignified for people. It’s so important. It’s my home; it’s my people. There is so much beauty here to be found; so many small little joys.”



James and Alana, Community Members

Alana: “I had heard about Sisters through the homeless community. People would say, ‘Hey, are you hungry?’ I said, ‘Yeah, of course I am hungry.’ They

said, ‘There is a place called Sisters; they feed you.’ People are so friendly. You can make friends. I felt safe and warm.”

James: “Sisters has become my family. It draws me here; it’s part of me.”

Alana: “Part of our everyday life. Without Sisters my life would feel kinda empty.”

James: “It’s like a home away from home.”

Alana: “Because not many other places are supportive to your needs like Sisters is. They actually

try and sit down and communicate and find out if you guys can help in any way. The other part is I met the love of my life, James, here.”

James: “In the PC room, the day we first met. I think we knew from that day that we would end up together, we just didn’t know when. When she was in trouble, she knew where I was. I was always at Sisters. She would ask me If I have a minute and we would go outside, smoke a cigarette, tell me what’s going on. I would listen. She would feel better.”



Jessica, Business Manager

“The Cafe is full of love. Everytime I come in I am greeted by name, and the food is amazing. And it makes me believe that change is possible.”



Chris, Barter Worker

“I’ve been coming to Sisters for about 30 years, back when Genny Nelson used to work here. She would try to help people. If you needed something like a shirt or a bus ticket, she

would try her hardest to get it for you. I come back all the time because of the friendship. I know a lot of the staff and pick on them and joke around. I do the reservation desk because I can. I lost a part of my leg three years ago, so this is a barter job I can do. I hope that Sisters becomes more wheelchair accessible. Sisters is safe place, has good food, it’s friendly, and everybody is welcome. We don’t discriminate against anybody. No one pushes you out like other places. I miss the Christmas parties too. I used to be Santa Claus!”



Carmen, Cafe Scheduling Coordinator

“I learn everyday in the Cafe about people and their needs. I used to be more judgmental and now I understand folks better, who they are, and at Sisters

they teach me a lot. It’s all in the humanity you see here. A lot of folks don’t have nothing but they have Sisters. It’s a secure place to come for folks, where they can get a warm meal and some respect. Here at Sisters they don’t judge you, everyone is welcome, they don’t ask about your past and they want to be your friend. It’s so beautiful here. You can be you. There aren’t many places like that.”



BOXCAR BERTHA COOKIES

Named for 1930's labor organizer and sister of the road Bertha Thompson, Boxcar Bertha's Coffee House was developed to ultimately provide a revenue stream for Sisters Of The Road Cafe's other programs by offering warm meals with soul to the general community at a market price. While Boxcar Bertha's was only open for two years, until December 2001, it served as a first level of employment for Sisters' Workforce Development Program graduates, offered livable wages and benefits to all staff, and provided a second venue for the community to participate in Sisters' philosophies of nonviolence and gentle personalism.

Makes approximately 3 1/2 dozen

CREAM TOGETHER:

- ▶ 3/4 lb. unsalted butter, softened
- ▶ 1 1/4 cup brown sugar
- ▶ 1 cup granulated sugar
- ▶ 1 1/2 cup creamy or crunchy peanut butter

MIX IN 2 EGGS

MIX IN THE FOLLOWING DRY INGREDIENTS:

- ▶ 2 1/2 cups cake flour
- ▶ 1 tsp. baking soda

- ▶ 1 tsp. salt
- ▶ 1 tsp. cinnamon

BAKING INSTRUCTIONS:

- ▶ Roll into balls the size of large walnuts
- ▶ Flatten with a glass dipped in cold water
- ▶ Press 3 "X" stamps into the flattened dough
- ▶ Bake at 350 degrees on a greased cookie sheet (or use parchment) for 12-15 minutes



IT'S A CARING PLACE

Interview with Sammy and Migyoung

Kitchen Opener Sammy and Personnel Manager and Photographer Migyoung are both longtime staff and pillars of our family here at Sisters of the Road. While both are rigorous workers, above all they make Sisters' community feel seen and loved, and remind us that when things get tough, to keep our calm and recenter through love. Here are edited excerpts of a conversation between them, where they discuss how they came to Sisters and what our little corner means to them.

Sammy: When I came to Portland, I walked on 6th Street and said, "Aww, these trees are lovely, I am going to stay here. But I want something to do." Because that is how I be, you know? Next day asked folks, "my name is Sammy and I want something to do." Then one gentleman next to me said, "Hey, come, I will take you to a place," and he took me to Sisters. He introduced me to Dustin. He said, "Dustin, this is Sammy and he wants something to do." Dustin tried to serve me a meal, and I said, "Where I come from we gotta work before we eat." So he said, "Come, I will show you how to wash some dishes for us," and boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, I washed the dishes. Then they said, "You can come back whenever you want to." So I did. Migyoung? Yeahhh, she's a pretty cool lady, that's why I call her "Stay Young" not Migyoung. She works hard, that's number one. I just love her. (Laughter)

Migyoung: Awwwwwww. Sammy is not really into having his photo taken, but I feel that he trusts me. You know, Sammy, you're a good model! (Laughter) For years Sammy was a volunteer, working 7 to 8 hours a day. He'd say, "No, I don't need the money; I just want to come here and do this thing."

Sammy: Travis, he asked me three times [to work]. I said, "No, no, no." Then I thought I go see Barcelona and take a look, and they asked, "Sammy are you going to come back?!" I said, "Yes, I will always come back." Travis came again and said, "Sammy I'm putting you on staff," and I couldn't say no.

Migyoung: Sammy, why am I "Stay Young?"

Sammy: Hmmm, why are you "Stay Young?" (Laughter) I just like that she should be here, you know, take care of herself, if she is happy then she gives me encouragement and makes me happy. But sometimes she should get some rest, she works too hard.

Migyoung: Sammy, when we are all stressed and overwhelmed, you say, "Heyyy, it's okay, nobody died. It's okayyy!" (Laughter) What's the secret?

Sammy: Listen, you have one head, you breath in it. You can't afford to lose it. When you worry, you bring it down. You have water; you have fire. These are supposed to be of service to you, but if you let them become your master, then *poof!* they are going to destroy you.

Migyoung: You really help us stay calm when we feel overwhelmed, so when you're absent I try to mimic you: "Heyyy, it's okay, nobody died. It's okayyy!" (Laughter)

Sammy: I like to see people happy, right? But when people worry a lot it ain't good. You can't sleep; you can't think straight, and it makes you look older than how you lookin'.

Migyoung: We have been here a long time and seen people come and go. Those folks miss Sammy the most. I say that, Sammy, so you know that you are so loved, right? One day Sammy told me, "I cannot afford to lose you! Don't go anywhere!" I thought that was really sweet. Just hearing that from you assured me that I am loved by you.

Sammy: You make me happy. Don't just say love, you know, show it! Sisters is a caring place, and no matter what, you come and make friends. You are not no stranger here. I love it, that's why I stay.

Migyoung: To me Sisters is like school, everyday you learn something, especially about Sisters' philosophies. It's so profound. Whether I learn something from a community member, or my coworkers. I learn to be a better person from the conflict and joy that we share. I have learned to love myself, and to love others more. That kind of relationship building and trust changes society.

Sammy: Just be love.



THE KITCHEN: WHERE EVERYTHING WORKS

By *Melissa Lang and Genny Nelson*

Sisters' kitchen is like a character of its own. While tiny, it's productive, made of steel but full of love. While it's been ever-adapted over the past 40 years, it has always been the machine behind the grind, where everything works.

When Sisters' doors opened with a \$10 donation and a barter agreement, The Society of St. Vincent DePaul rented the space from the Schnitzer family and allowed those first workers to move in for barter. According to co-

founder, Genny Nelson, "For the first eight or nine months we bartered our rent by preparing and delivering for Meals on Wheels, or in our case, meals on heels." In the beginning the cooking equipment fit against a single wall, opposite the counter; the Cafe had table space for only 10; and the kitchen had no heat source. The staff depended on the stove and body heat for warmth. There was a constant hustle to stock the kitchen: "Every three to four months we traveled the old highway to Salem in

our volunteers' trucks to pick up USDA commodity foods. These staples provided the ingredients for meals and sides still on the menu today." Now, Sisters has a full kitchen and serves around 240 meals a day and has space for up to 40 people at a time to find respite.

When the Cafe opened, the signature meal was rice, beans, and cornbread with an option of USDA cheese, a complete protein meal originally from Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet*. Sisters got the cornbread recipe from the Holy Names Sisters. Sister Mary Bertolli was a long time volunteer and supporter throughout the years, whose artwork still hangs in the Cafe. Genny Nelson tells us, "In the first year of operation we offered two dollar complete meals with a protein entree like meatloaf or chicken, a carbohydrate entree like rice or potatoes, and a vegetable entree like green beans or carrots. We tried to offer dessert like homemade Boston cream pie, carrot cake, whole wheat muffins with bran and USDA raisins, or cookies made with USDA peanut butter and Sisters' three Xs logo imprinted on top."

Today, we continue to serve rice, beans, and cornbread, all for \$1.25, but now we also serve a variety of recipes developed by the kitchen, along with a side salad with every meal. According to Two Bears, a Cafe customer from 1979 and former Board member, when healthier options were added to the menu, "People's mood, mannerisms, and physical looks improved; it was great to see the people have increased energy and be able to deal with crowds and other people more. Folks were kinder to each other and it was all the nutritional thing."

Today, fresh produce accounts for nearly half of the ingredients on each plate. In the summer on Saturdays we offer take-away dishes like organic pesto couscous, roasted fennel, and cherry tomato salad at our Cafe Farm Stand; all made directly from Zenger Farm's produce.

Looking to the Future

While the kitchen is bigger and we have plenty of AC and heat, we know we create a lot out of a small budget and an extra dose of love. **This leaves us wondering what we could do with much more.**

We went straight to the source and asked our kitchen staff and regular barter workers how they would improve the kitchen if money were no issue. And, of course, we wanted to know, **“What’s your favorite dish at Sisters?”**



“More room. A bigger kitchen would allow more kitchen staff and more meals for everyone. Oh, and a deep fryer would be great. My favorite meal? I love the salmon chowder, I mean it’s my recipe, but what can I say?

It’s a hit!” —**Shorty, Kitchen Coordinator**



“Give Shorty a raise. And a giant wok instead of a flat top would be great. My favorite meal has to be the Super Bowl.” —**Benjamin, Cafe Staff, Community Organizer**



“They need to hire me as their personal security and bouncer. And being closed every Sunday and Monday drives me nuts. In fact, if I were to win the lottery, I would donate to Sisters and I would buy some of these old

buildings and instead of building big money apartments that no one can afford, I would remodel them and open them up for the homeless and get ‘em off the streets...Oh and the BLTs they used to serve was my favorite.” —**Cowboy, Barter Worker (30 years coming to Sisters)**



“If money were no issue, I’d expand the square footage of the kitchen. We do an amazing job with our little shoe box of a commercial kitchen, but imagine what we could do with more space? And the Super Bowl with peanut sauce is my favorite dish.” **Keegan, Kitchen Staff**



“I love working in the kitchen with the morning crew, it’s a small group of folks, the music is up high and it feels like we are all making food for our friends to come over. That feeling, that energy lasts with you all day. If

money were no issue I would recommend...I’m not sure. I love it so much. I guess it would be so great to have the capacity to make food to order like a traditional cafe, but that would cost so much. Grilled cheese and tomato soup is probably my favorite. It was the first dish I made [as] Sisters’ staff years ago before I came on the Development team. It’s so simple and good. I also love that volunteering in the cafe gives folks an opportunity to pour love into the food you make.” **Travis, Development Administrator**



“A slightly larger kitchen; we got a lot of hips in there. I would love a larger rice cooker so we only need to prep that once instead of throughout the day, which would allow us to make more food altogether. I would

love it if we had more spices and sauces to offer. Choice is a really big part of what we do and spices like asafoetida help digest some of our staple dishes like beans. My favorite meal is the stirfry because it was the first meal I had when I first came to Sisters.” —**Fenix, Kitchen Coordinator**



“I love helping out in the kitchen in the morning chopping fresh vegetables because it’s very relaxing and I know that the work I’m doing directly adds to the meals that feed people.

Since I mostly work in my office, I enjoy getting to be with my coworkers in the kitchen! Also, it just feels good to be part of getting the Cafe ready for the day! If money were no issue, I would listen to whatever the kitchen staff wants and make that happen! My favorite meal at Sisters is rice and beans with our house-made salsa. It’s humble, nourishing, and so delicious!” —**Danielle, Executive Director**



“More staff, more support. My favorite Sisters meal? The caesar chicken wrap is my favorite.” —**Allysa, Cafe Staff and Portland State University Student**



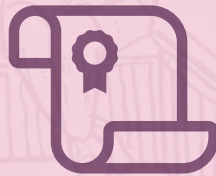
THE JOURNEY AND JOYS OF 40 YEARS

Profoundly about love for 40 years and going strong. For Sisters, we intend to be here until the day that we are no longer needed, and we work alongside our community to that end.

> 1981



We receive our **501(c)3** non-profit status from the IRS.



> 1985

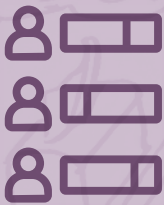
Executive Director Kurt Liska and Genny Nelson go to Washington D.C. to appeal to Congress and the USDA to **allow nonprofit cafes to accept food stamps for prepared meals**. In 1987 the new law passes!

> 1985



The Cafe expands into the space next door and grows from 22 seats to 51.

> 2001



Sisters launches the **Community Organizing Project**, which produced 600 interviews with houseless folks, and the development of a self-led community advocacy group.



> 2004

Sisters works with the University of Washington at Tacoma School of Urban Studies to **analyze the information** from the 600 interviews from the **Community Organizing Project**.

> 2004



Sisters becomes a founding member of the **Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP)**, a regional coalition of social justice organizations. Out of this work came the Right to Rest Act, and later the Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign. (For more, see page 13.)

> 2013



Sisters transitions to a **Staff Collective**.



> 2014

Sisters starts the **Fresh Change program**, where folks can trade in their barter cards earned in the Cafe for equal credit at Portland Farmers Markets, affirming the dignity of all our community by promoting healthy living for all.

> 2015



Sisters in-house **Farm Stand** debuts, serving dishes made from Zenger Farm produce using recipes that unhoused folks can prepare without a kitchen as part of our food justice work.

> 1979



After hundreds of conversations with community members, **Genevieve Nelson and Sandy Gooch, social workers, open the cafe** with \$10.00 and a barter agreement with St. Vincent DePaul.



Portland City Council passes an **anti-camping ordinance** making it illegal to sleep under bridges. Sisters of the Road and the Burnside Community Council file a suit against the City and eventually a judge overturns the ordinance.

> 1981



The Meal Coupon Program begins as a means to build community with people asking for money in public spaces.

Agriculture officials visit cafe in Portland

> 1996



USDA Commodity Foods Program ends, allowing Sisters to access USDA foods locally at the Oregon Food Bank instead of traveling to Salem and storing food for several months.

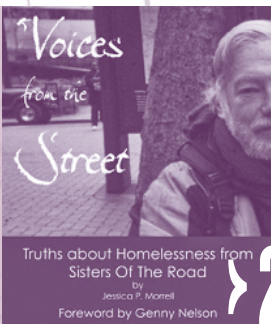


BOXCAR BERTHA'S COFFEE HOUSE

Sisters opens **Boxcar Bertha's Coffee House!** (For more, see page 7.)

> 1989

> 1999



The book, **Voices From the Street: Truths About Homelessness, from Sisters of the Road** is published.

> 2007

The **Personalist Center** opens adjacent to Sisters Cafe, expanding our barter program, moving our line indoors, improving phone and mail service, providing hygiene supplies, and creating new meeting and office space for community organizing and other work.



The Cafe begins to use a **time-slot reservation system** to serve customers, which allows folks to use time typically spent in line, often exposed to harsh weather, to take care of other personal business.

> 2007

> 2009



> 2015

Food for Thought Forum begins. Food For Thought is a monthly community-led conversation that provides a way for Sisters to address our unhoused neighbors' concerns.

> 2017



Roadies Community Team is formed. Roadies are community members who are unhoused, or facing extreme poverty. Mobilized and trained to advocate for themselves and to educate others to eliminate systemic oppression.



> 2018

Sisters ends Collectivity and hires **new Executive Director, Danielle Klock.**

> 2019



GOING TO THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

By *Monica Beemer, Director (2001 - 2013)*

My first visit to Sisters of the Road was in 1991. Like most first-timers, I immediately knew this place was different. Yes, there was the model—created by people who were experiencing homelessness—where you can pay \$1.50 for a full meal, or do 15 minutes of barter work. But there was also a feeling in the Cafe. A sense of dignity carved out by how folks treated one another. There were choices, something our community members rarely experience. There was no intake process, and the space was full of laughter, and a sense of care for one another.

These factors were something I hadn't seen before all in one space. They were also an extension of Sisters' founding philosophies of gentle personalism and nonviolence. These philosophies are rooted in the belief that if we authentically know each other then we will stand up for one another's rights and freedoms.

I was drawn to Sisters' commitment to creating not just profound moments, but deep and lasting change.

As I came to know Sisters more, I learned about how creating change was part of everything they did: from serving a warm meal to addressing national food policies, or decriminalization of the poor. Sisters was devoted to change. Not just for the individuals in our Cafe, but in systems. A resolve to change expectations, norms, laws, and policies that harmed people and our community.

One of the most common questions I have been asked throughout the years is, "Will Sisters open another Cafe like the one on 6th and Davis?" Or, "Is Sisters going to open the Cafe seven days a week?" While I wish there was a Sisters Cafe on every corner, and open 24/7, I see a greater need for focus on the root causes of homelessness and poverty before building more cafes. This is why I am thankful for the partnership Sisters has built with regional organizations like WRAP and the way Sisters centers the voices of their community members in their organizing work.

**"When we opened Sisters' door on November 7, 1979 we identified ourselves as a 'radical' organization, one that would go to the root of the problem."
—Genny Nelson**

I am also very thankful for Sisters' Systemic Change team, then and now working to address the root causes of why so many people are hungry and living outside. They take action against laws and attitudes that harm and criminalize unhoused neighbors, and organize for affordable housing, accessible bathrooms,

and economic and racial justice. Yes, I admire the daily work of the Cafe, and wish there were more Sisters, but I look forward to a day when systemic homelessness has ended and Sisters is just a cafe that serves the best damn cup of coffee in town.

Thank you, Sisters, for your commitment to systemic change, to our mission, and to centering the work on the voices of our neighbors surviving outside.

Systemic Change Today!

Today, Sisters is still active in organizing for the Right to Rest Act and the Homeless Bill of Rights Campaign as WRAP members. In 2017, Sisters' Roadies Community Team was formed to center our community members' representation in regional and local organizing. Roadies are community members who are currently or formerly unhoused. They attend trainings, organize, and mobilize to advocate for themselves to directly impact decisions that affect them to eliminate systemic oppression against the poor.



"I came to Sisters before I was a customer to volunteer. I know a lot of people here, and this is my community, my work family. This is where I connect with people and do positive stuff for the community. Now I am doing

facilitations for staff and Roadies regarding Trans awareness and rights. I saw a need for the trainings, so we and a staff member started planning it. I know I am not the only one going to go through transition here at Sisters and I want their experience to be easier."

—**Phoenix, Facilitator for trainings to Roadies and staff**



"Roadies are a strong group of people with lived experience of houselessness who follow the Sisters philosophies to fight against the oppression felt by the unhoused community in Portland. Roadies are about

coming together to brainstorm ideas to help gain access to hygiene and support Sisters as a whole. Community driven, heartfelt, and love for everyone. I am a Roadie because I believe that with my voice and experience I can bring great ideas to those in need."

—**Bekah, Roadie and Board Member**



"I am looking forward to collaborating more with environmental groups. I was born with an innate ability to adapt and want to use my gifts to help all living beings excel. A wiser being than I once said,

'We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.' We stand at the precipice of annihilation. Only by uniting as living beings will we endure." —**Throne Searphim Indignato, or Prometheus, or Juan, Roadies participant**



"I believe in the work that the Systemic Change team and the Roadies are doing. I believe that we can make a difference in making this community safe for all. That means hygiene access, safe sleep, and no more

sweeps. Roadies gives me the chance to work with an amazing group of people to try to make this world a better place." —**Mona, Systemic Change Intern, Administrative Coordinator at HygieneForAll**



"By serving healthy food here, in offering an alternative to money, Sisters' barter program is systemic change. Therefore by organizing here we are connecting the dots with systemic oppression. That's not

something I have seen while organizing at other places. By existing outside, that makes you a criminal and it's important to let our unhoused neighbors know they can organize against that. Right now Roadies are working on a campaign to end the sweeps, and are working with the City on where to install six bathrooms." —**Pepe, Roadies Coordinator**



"As a Roadie, I do a lot of work advocating to the City about hygiene access for all and the Homeless Bill of Rights. We are an active group who cares about the work because it directly affects us all. Roadies

meetings are a space that allows the unhoused to advocate for themselves. Only together and with great effort can we hope to change things in this city. With all our voices combined we can end homelessness."

—**Vince, Roadie and Street Roots vendor, Coordinator at HygieneForAll**



"Most of the community here are family, and I encourage them to realize they have a voice. I start with Sisters, because as a Roadie we are involved in everything in this city. There is a representative

going to Right2Survive meetings, I am on the Coordinating Committee for the Poor People's Campaign, and also organize for HygieneForAll. Roadies have lots of skills and at Sisters they learn they can use their skills to contribute." —**Barbie, Roadie and Poor People's Campaign Coordinating Committee member**



Tony—Cafe Volunteer/ Sustaining Donor

“Sisters helps give me a sense of purpose. Sisters lets you find whatever meaning or needs you want, as long as you allow other people to have their process as well. Going into a place with so much trauma, but also so much compassion, really helps you learn your reactions and connect to these real-world issues that many of us don’t see in a practical, external way. We’re not just here to be distant while we “help,” we are a part of the community and the process. I don’t feel guarded here, I feel emotionally safe and available to others, and that goes both ways because of the level of support Sisters offers all of us.”



Caitlin and Shorty

Caitlin—Volunteer

“I like volunteering at Sisters because you actually get to be social! In other places, I don’t get to talk to anyone or really do anything useful. At Sisters I get to bus tables, serve food, and meet everyone. And people actually listen to me here, even though I’m young. I feel like I really get to know people, like I just learned that Shorty loves peppermint mochas! Usually people see my age and they don’t treat me like I have an opinion, but I feel like the people here are my friends. It’s like a place you actually want to be. I love working the steam table, it just clicked! And that feels really good. I like being busy and it never gets boring.”

WHY WE GIVE

SPOTLIGHT ON DONORS



Eliza—Donor and past Board President

“Sisters is an amazing nonprofit Cafe. People truly value humanity on an individual basis. We say at Sisters, “There are no strangers, just friends you haven’t met.” But I’ve seen people actually practice the seeing of another person, that wanting to recognize folks as an actual human being. That might seem small, but we live in a world where people are dehumanized and categorized in big and small ways all the time, and Sisters is a place where people who are the most vulnerable can have safety and dignity and love and respect.

One thing I really learned at Sisters is this attitude of hospitality. It’s a simple word, a simple way to think about it. But it’s a stance, sometimes a physical stance, an openness. Sometimes that’s all it takes, just having the stance to say, “You are welcome here, you belong.” Because hospitality is something that comes from the home.

I would encourage any donor to consider increasing their donation level. I mean that in all seriousness, because having served on the board and continuing to do trainings, I see that Sisters is so incredibly responsible with its money. To a donor, I would tell them that your money is going to be used for exactly what you would want it to be used for.”



Ed Cauduro in 1965. Photo courtesy of The Oregonian

TAKING CARE OF A FRIEND'S LAST WISHES

Interview with Dane Nelson about Ed Cauduro and the fund that supports Sisters of the Road

Since 2011, Dane Nelson has been overseeing his late best friend Ed Cauduro's last wishes through his trust at the Oregon Community Foundation. In September the Development team sat down with Dane to learn more about Ed. While many folks know of Ed as a nationally renowned art collector, at Sisters he was just a local guy who liked to help others.

Who was Ed Cauduro?

"Ed Cauduro was extremely passionate about those less fortunate. He knew he was very blessed in what he had and was always looking out for others. He was one of the first folks to move into the Pearl when it was still pretty empty. He advocated for the City to put bathrooms out there for those living outside. We would go on long walks in the neighborhood and he would wear this jacket he bought in the '70s when he lived in New York, but what you didn't know was that in his pockets he had stuffed toys in case he came across a homeless family with children. He would also carry little toys for dogs, or treats too. Or we would be walking in the park and he would take houseless folks out to the Burger King and get

them whatever they wanted. He would hand out Sisters of the Road coupons, too. Even who he was, he was not impressed by himself. My father died in '85, and I did not have a good relationship with him. Along came Ed, just this happy-go-lucky guy who liked to go to garage sales. I did too. I knew nothing about contemporary art, or who Ed was when we met. He was very humble. He didn't want people to know him by his art collection. Really he just wanted to help other people. That is who Ed was.



Carmen Duran-Ramirez, Dane Nelson and Cowboy

That all came from experience. Ed was born in 1927 and was Italian. Back then they didn't like Italians. He told me a story once, about when his dad put money down on a house in Irvington. One night the realtor came around to give his dad his money back. The realtor told them that the folks down in Irvington found out he was Italian and they refused to sell them the house. During the war they had to black out their windows. Their radios were taken away. They had to inform the government when they went anywhere, even though his brother was in the service. Ed never forgot how that felt. He could see how people, for

[Continued on following page](#)

TAKING CARE OF A FRIEND'S LAST WISHES

Continued from page 16

no reason of their own, for the color of their skin, were discriminated against and it really bothered him.

He was a lonely man too. One day I called him and I asked him what he was doing. He said he was really lonely, so I got off the phone and onto a plane. I got to his gate at his home and rang the doorbell, and he wouldn't answer it. So I called him and said, 'why don't you answer it?' He said, 'Aww no, I'm not in the mood.' Then I said to him, 'Maybe it's Fedex. I sent you a package. Just go answer the door.' And, finally, he opened up the gate and saw me and started crying. He said, 'Let's get in the car and go to some antique stores.' And that's what we did, and he was really happy. So that was Ed Cauduro, he was actually a lonely man at times, which was really sad because he was really interesting. But you know as you get older, there is a problem with ageism, and he felt it. He was just a really nice friendly guy who had a zest for life and was funnier than hell. So that's Ed, he was hilarious at times, he was charming, and to those people who really took the time to know him, he was a great friend."

What is something funny or charming that most people don't know about Ed?

"Ed had a great sense of humor. He told me once about how when he was younger, he worked in a clothing store here in Portland, and the manager was leaving for the weekend and so he told Ed, 'We are having a sale. Dress the mannequins. Everything is half off.' When the manager came back, he unveiled the windows on Monday morning and the mannequins were only half dressed. He got fired. I don't think he wants to be remembered for those types of jobs but mainly he just marched to his own drum, and he was genuinely a really a great guy."

What was Ed's relationship with Sisters like?

"Ed would bring me down here when we would walk his dog. He would show me the cafe and talk about it. He really really had a passion for this place. I know that when he set up this trust it was the first place he mentioned. He loved Sisters. When he got lung cancer, he knew he was dying, and was approached by varying institutions for his artwork, offering to have buildings named after him and all that. But Ed said no, he said, 'what about the homeless and animal abuse shelters. My name up on a building is not important.' I think that's very unusual."

What do you hope for Sisters of the Road 40 years from now?

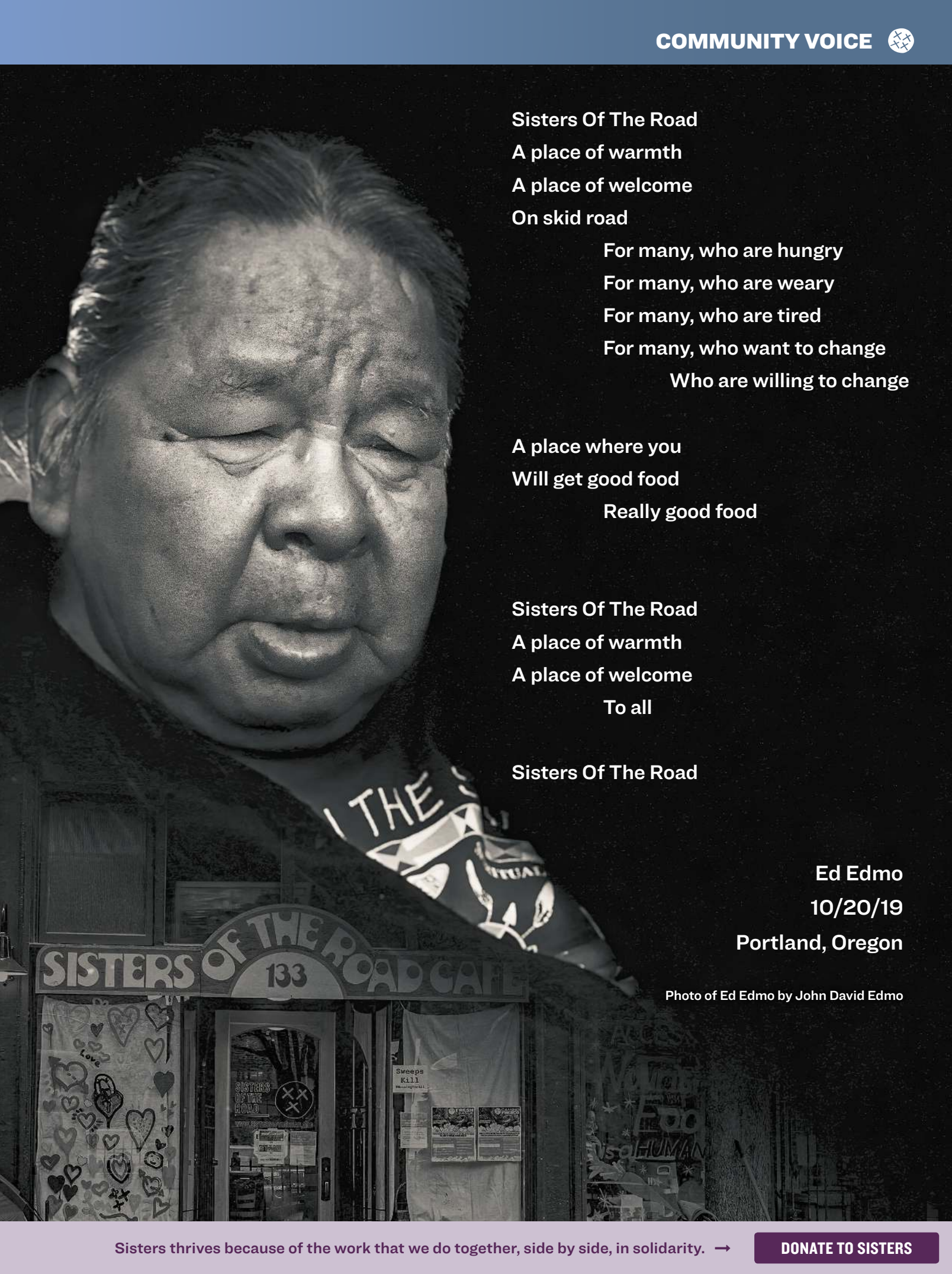
"First off, congratulations on 40 years! That's incredible. A lot of organizations get turned around, reconfigure, they become smaller or obsolete. Sisters of the Road is a really great place to look and see that, you know, it's not a fancy

building; there's no fancy artwork; there are holes in the walls...(Laughter). But you can see that the money going to Sisters of the Road is going to the people, and to help those that are less fortunate.

I have been here for lunch and was really impressed. There was fresh fruit and vegetables—a super decent meal. There was substance to it. To do that every day takes a lot of dedicated people who want to help someone out. One thing I know for sure is that there are always folks who will need Sisters' support. So, I think that people should give to Sisters. It is an organization that has proven itself. My hope is that it will be here for another 40—just doing what they are doing now.

I'm 63 now; I met Ed when I was 30. I met him when he was my age. I was the privileged white boy who thought he had everything—Ed brought me down to another level on many occasions. But he did it with kindness; he made me realize at 30 that, you know, that I am really lucky and there are a lot of people who just are not. I am happy to say that I am a better person for it. It's been nine years, and I truly loved Ed. He trusted me; I trusted him. We had a great friendship and I really miss him. I feel it's an incredible opportunity to fulfill Ed's wishes through the fund by giving to Sisters of the Road."





Sisters Of The Road

A place of warmth

A place of welcome

On skid road

For many, who are hungry

For many, who are weary

For many, who are tired

For many, who want to change

Who are willing to change

A place where you

Will get good food

Really good food

Sisters Of The Road

A place of warmth

A place of welcome

To all

Sisters Of The Road

Ed Edmo

10/20/19

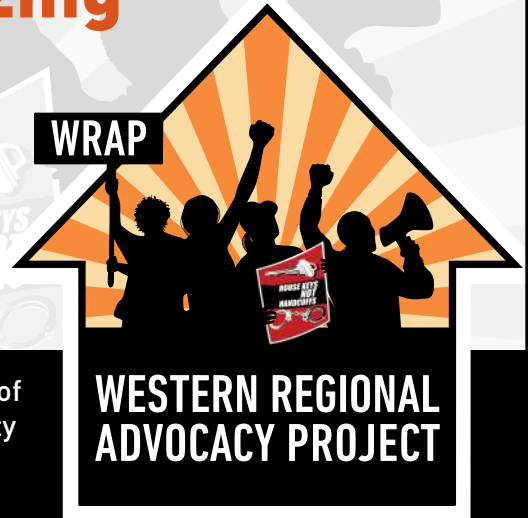
Portland, Oregon

Photo of Ed Edmo by John David Edmo



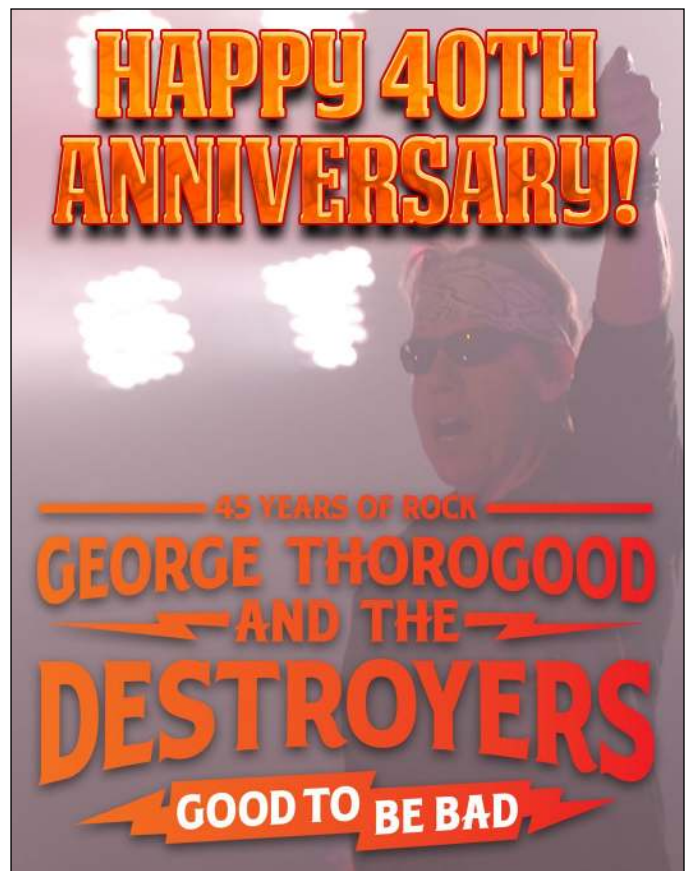
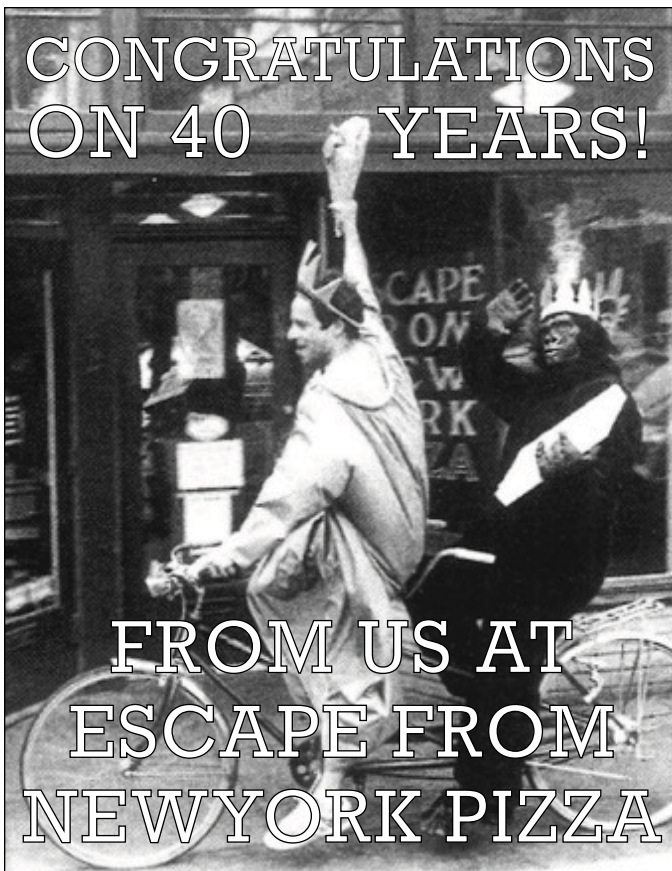
Congratulations to founding WRAP member Sisters of the Road on 40 years of radical hospitality and community organizing

All Love and Respect,
Paul, Jonathan, Monica, Coral,
Ian, and all of us at WRAP



WRAP was created to expose and eliminate the root causes of civil and human rights abuses of people experiencing poverty and homelessness in our communities.

wraphome.org



WHY WE SERVE

Members of Sisters' Board of Directors



Linda Senn—President

“Sisters is not like any other nonprofit. Our space seeks to nurture folks in a whole mind/body/love kind of a way. Love doesn’t need a building or all the stuff

that it takes to operate an organization. At the end of the day we have crafted more than the workings of a nonprofit. We have a community, a relationship with community members, that is lasting.”



Jules Nielsen—Vice President

“I’ve never experienced a nonprofit that so deeply adheres to its mission. The question, ‘Is this what we’re here for?’ is at the core of

every meeting, decision, and program. Sisters is literally saving and changing lives every day through nonviolence, systemic change, dining with dignity, and gentle personalism. If you want to feel useful, like you’re actually making a difference in people’s lives and in your own, Sisters is the place to be. It will gift you with real relationships. It will be a place for disentangling yourself from oppression. And the food and coffee can’t be beat.”



Art Rios, Sr.—Board Member

“Sisters has that family feel and it has the power to help the next person who walks through the doors. Open arms and all with the chance

to sit down and eat a meal and talk with someone new every day. Being on the Board, and in my work in the community, I have had the chance to make a difference, changing the minds of people

who have lived and still live with homelessness in Oregon. I help remind folks on the street that we are all still human beings and just need a hand up—not a handout. Being a part of Sisters is recognizing each other as a human being with nonjudgement. Let’s sit and enjoy a meal together and talk about the history of Sisters.”



Jess Heman – Treasurer

“I choose to serve at Sisters rather than another nonprofit because Sisters of the Road really walks their talk. I have been connected to other

nonprofits who, even with the best of intentions, have inadvertently silenced the community they work within. And Sisters will never prioritize funding over people. As a result, the work can sometimes be harder and messier. When I sit in a board or staff meeting and see people who have experienced homelessness and poverty sitting at the table with me, I know I have chosen the right place. Your life will be changed forever from this place. You will learn so much, and make friends... more than friends—*family*—for life!”



Kacy McKinney—Secretary

“Each time I arrive in the space of the Cafe the ground feels more stable under my feet. At Sisters, I feel welcome, accepted, and

valued. Through each conversation and task, I am learning about my community, and I am growing as a person. The skills I am learning and practicing are already coming in handy in other parts of my life. I am building relationships and friendships with people—staff, community members, other Board members, funders, volunteers—that make me feel at home here.”



WE'RE MAKING HISTORY NOW.

By Danielle Klock, Executive Director

Growing up, I can't remember the number of times my mother would look up from what she was doing—sewing curtains, crocheting a baby blanket, typing a poem—and proclaim, “Oh my, where did the time go?!” My perception was so different. For me, the days dragged on and on. What I didn't understand then, in the 1980s, was that every moment (remembered or not) would become part of me, and part of history. Every smile, no matter how insignificant at the time, has deepened into lines on my face.

When I first became the executive director at Sisters of the Road in April of 2018, I tried to learn everything I could about the organization. I read meeting minutes, policies, old newsletters. I met with former executive directors and staff members. I scoured the internet and the server to help me piece together the history of Sisters. But most of the history of Sisters, like our lives, is unrecorded, because it exists in our interactions with people and the world around us. We have some memories and stories, a few photos here and there, but we'll likely never know the impact of sharing a smile or a meal with someone. Likewise, we'll never know the difference we could have made when instead we did nothing.

This is a call to action. Part of Sisters' mission is to “reach the roots of homelessness and poverty to end them

forever.” We do this by coming together, listening to the people who are experiencing life on the streets, in shelters, or floating from sofa to sofa, and by working alongside unhoused folks to implement their solutions. We do it by showing up to neighborhood association meetings and testifying at City Council. We do as it as individuals by voting for candidates who have clear policies for shifting funds from policing and private security to permanent housing. We do it by acknowledging the humanity in every person while actively resisting and disrupting the systems of oppression that make places like Sisters necessary. And right now, we're doing it by celebrating the 40th anniversary of Sisters opening our doors to create something different than what our founders saw around them.

Celebration is necessary. It's a form of resistance in it's own right. It's a reminder of endurance in the face of continued oppression. Please join us on December 7 for our 40th Anniversary Community Reunion to revisit our collective history while sharing our individual stories. Let's be re-energized by the friendships we've made, by celebrating the good work we've done, by recommitting to justice one smile and conversation at a time, and by remembering that we're making history right now.

Love and Solidarity, Danielle



SUPPORTING SISTERS

Help Sisters THRIVE for years to come by becoming a part of our community or increasing your donations during our **40th Anniversary fundraising season!**

Donate to Together at the Table!

TAT is Sisters' annual year-end fundraising campaign where we raise nearly half of our annual budget, \$500,000 between November 1 and the end of the year. To mark our 40th Anniversary we are raising our goal to \$540,000! To help us reach this ambitious goal we have already pooled matches for the first \$25,000! To donate, please use this newsletter's remittance envelope or visit sistersoftheroad.org/donate




Join us for Sisters' 40th Anniversary Community Reunion on Saturday, Dec. 7



This is a great occasion to meet and mingle with fellow supporters, community members, staff, and past Sisters leadership. There will be lots of food for all, stellar music, including Duncan and Brendan Phillips (Utah Phillips' sons), and warm hearts! **For more details** see page 1 [or click here.](#)

 **Turn your care into action!** You can dedicate monthly donations from your checking account or credit card and your gift keeps working each month to support an organization you believe in. Please contact Travis at (503) 222-5694 x136 or travis@sistersoftheroad.org to join.

 **Ensure the sustainability of Sisters through Planned Giving.** Please contact Danielle to learn more, at (503) 222-5694, ext.115 or danielle@sistersoftheroad.org Our legal name is Sisters of the Road, and our tax ID number is 93-0748169.

 **Your donations of shares of stock are always valued!** Danielle would love to talk to you about your donation of stock! You can reach her at (503) 222-5694, ext.115 or danielle@sistersoftheroad.org



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DONATE TO SISTERS

Your donation to Sisters of the Road today makes a difference in our community. Sisters thrives because of the work that we do together, side by side, in solidarity.

PROFOUNDLY ABOUT
LOVE
FOR FORTY YEARS

Celebrate our 40th Anniversary Community Reunion with us!

Saturday, December 7, from 10am-2pm, plus evening celebration at 5pm at **Sisters of the Road Cafe**

We will be celebrating all day in our Cafe with free meals and goodies, and conclude with an evening reunion party meant for old and new Sisters supporters and community members to come together to share stories, cut cake and build greater camaraderie.

[sistersoftheroad.org](https://www.sistersoftheroad.org)  