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Word on the Street: Examining What Characteristics of a Street Paper and its Host City Best Contribute to Success

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2015

Honors Capstone Project in Newspaper and Online Journalism

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Abstract

By creating opportunities for microentrepreneurship, street papers have been tackling homelessness and poverty in U.S. cities since the late 1980s. Homeless or low-income vendors purchase these social justice-oriented publications for a fraction of the cover price, and then resell them on street corners for profit. By 2015 the self-help model had spread to 35 U.S. cities, according to the International Network of Street Papers. These cities range significantly in characteristics such as population size, climate, geographic location and political atmosphere.

Drawing on interviews with more than 20 editors, staff and vendors at North American street papers, I have identified five factors that tend to contribute to a paper's success in any given city. These factors address both qualities of the host city, such as significant pedestrian traffic, and qualities of the paper itself, such as the support of a pre-existing nonprofit organization. I next considered these factors in the context of one case study: *Groundcover News* in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This case study in turn provided insight into the final aspect of the capstone: determining whether Syracuse, New York, could support a successful street paper. Based on analysis of census data, interviews with representatives from Syracuse-based social service organizations and the application of previously gathered information, I concluded that a street paper in Syracuse would face no insurmountable obstacles.

Executive Summary

Since the late 1980s, street papers have been gaining traction in U.S. cities as a self-help model to address homelessness and poverty. These newspapers and magazines enable homeless or low-income vendors to act as microentrepreneurs, purchasing publications for a fraction of their cover price and reselling them on street corners to generate a profit. Because most vendors do not rely on paper sales as their sole form of income, these profits often supplement fixed incomes such as Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) with amounts that vary greatly depending on how often and how efficiently a vendor works. In Ann Arbor, Michigan, for example, two consistent *Groundcover News* vendors report making between \$260 and \$900 in one month. Through content highlighting issues related to poverty and social justice, U.S. street papers fulfill a secondary function of bringing attention to voices and issues that rarely receive comprehensive coverage in mainstream media. As of 2015, the International Network of Street Papers counted among its members 114 street papers in the world and 35 street papers in cities throughout the U.S.

By identifying five factors that contribute to street papers' success in the U.S. and by analyzing these in the context of Syracuse, New York, this capstone provides the groundwork for a startup street paper in New York's fifth largest city. Although no person or organization has ever attempted to launch a street paper in Syracuse, research suggests that the city presents no insurmountable obstacles to this end. This capstone particularly elaborates on the factors that suggest Syracuse would not be an ideal host city: primarily a relative lack of pedestrian traffic and an existing antagonistic attitude toward panhandling. Any startup street paper in the city should take these into consideration before launching. By also addressing the experiences of the poor and homeless in Syracuse, where 28.2 percent of families were living below the poverty

line between 2009 and 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey”), this capstone additionally suggests that Syracuse hosts a low-income community that a street paper could effectively serve.

These conclusions and recommendations stem from more than 20 interviews with street papers organizers and vendors across North America; observations and conversations during a two-day visit to Ann Arbor’s *Groundcover News*; analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Syracuse and Onondaga County (HHC); and interviews with several representatives of social service organizations in Syracuse. The information is then structured in three parts: first, an explanation of the five factors that experts repeatedly attribute to successful street papers; second, a *Groundcover News* case study that demonstrates how these factors interact; and third, an analysis of these factors in the context of Syracuse.

Because street papers exist and thrive in U.S. cities that vary greatly in terms of size, climate, region and other factors, the five factors of success identified in this capstone are relatively broad. They address both aspects of the street paper itself and of its host city, suggesting that both are important considerations when launching a street paper. The five factors are:

1. **The Support of a Sponsoring Nonprofit Organization:** A startup street paper should establish itself under the umbrella of an existing social service organization.
2. **A Positive Connection to the Host Community:** Maintaining a good reputation with city officials and residents is critical for daily operations and fundraising.

3. **A Host City with Areas High in Pedestrian Traffic:** Vendors need a sufficient customer base.
4. **An Enforced Code of Conduct for Vendors:** Enforcing basic policies ensures that a street paper can maintain its positive reputation.
5. **A High Quality Journalistic Publication:** Quality content distinguishes vendors from panhandlers and creates an independently desirable product.

While the diversity of existing street papers proves that not all street papers operate in the same way, editors and organizers repeatedly identified these points as influential in an organization's success.

A two-day visit to Ann Arbor, which provided content for a *Groundcover News* case study, demonstrated these factors in action. *Groundcover* was thriving with a monthly circulation of nearly 10,000 papers when I visited in May 2014. Its success as well as its host city's similarity to Syracuse made it an ideal choice for a case study. Ann Arbor's population of 117,000 people compares to Syracuse's population of 144,000, for example, and the University of Michigan's relationship to Ann Arbor is similar to that of Syracuse University and Syracuse (U.S. Census Bureau, "Ann Arbor"; "Syracuse"). This visit additionally enabled in-depth interviews with vendors, who explained a variety of motivations for selling *Groundcover*.

These insights from Ann Arbor, as well as information about street papers gleaned from previous interviews, proved critical in analyzing conditions in Syracuse in respect to a potential street paper. While in some ways Syracuse is particularly well suited for a street paper — the Revised General Ordinances of the City of Syracuse would permit a vendor to sell papers without paying for a peddling license, for example, and the city hosts a strong network of

existing social service organizations that could support a startup street paper — interviews and data analysis reveal two major obstacles. Namely, a street paper would have to overcome an existing negative perception of panhandling and a relative lack of pedestrian traffic. To address these points, I suggest a street paper limit its number of vendors to 10 at most and consciously differentiate itself from panhandling. The latter could be done through a public awareness campaign and through fostering relationships with city and business officials.

In this way, this capstone draws on an analysis of street papers in general to identify and address the key points that organizers of a startup paper in Syracuse should consider before launching. If these are kept in mind throughout the planning period for such a paper, then it is reasonable to think that a street paper could thrive in Central New York.

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5. *Denver Voice* (Denver)
6. *The Exchange* (New Orleans)
7. *Groundcover News* (Ann Arbor)
8. *Megaphone* (Vancouver)
9. *Real Change* (Seattle)
10. *Spare Change News* (Boston)
11. *Street Sense* (Washington, D.C.)
12. *Street Sheet* (San Francisco)
13. *StreetWise* (Chicago)
14. *Toledo Streets* (Toledo)
15. Catholic Charities of Onondaga County (Syracuse)
16. City of Syracuse
17. The Downtown YMCA (Syracuse)
18. Rescue Mission (Syracuse)
19. The Samaritan Center (Syracuse)

Chapter 1

Characteristics of Successful Street Papers

On a single night in January 2013, more than 600,000 homeless people were living in the U.S. Nearly 400,000 of them slept in emergency shelters or transitional housing. More than 200,000 spent their night with no roof overhead (Henry 1). This same year, 14.5 percent of Americans — that’s approximately 45 million people — were living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, “Poverty”).

Since the country’s early days, countless social service organizations across the country have attempted to address the immediate needs and long-term interests of the poor and homeless. Since the late 1980s, a particularly intriguing model has joined the ranks of soup kitchens and job training programs in pursuing this end: street papers. By hiring low-income vendors who profit from selling a paper that in turn educates its readers on poverty and related issues, these newspapers and magazines offer a self-help model. Since the first modern street papers were established in San Francisco and New York in 1989, the street model has spread to a current 35 papers in the U.S., as counted through membership in the International Network of Street Newspapers (“Our members”).

Syracuse, New York, is not among them. After hearing about the street paper model from a friend in 2011 and later contributing articles to my hometown’s *Cleveland Street Chronicle* beginning in 2013, the absence of such a paper in Central New York repeatedly brought me back to one question: Why not? Simply, no one has ever tried. Could Syracuse support a successful street newspaper? This is the question I’ve chosen to address through my honors capstone.

Through conversations with editors and organizers at street papers throughout the U.S. and Canada, I have identified the characteristics of a host city and of a street paper organization that tend to contribute to success. I applied them in the context of one case study, *Groundcover News* in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which demonstrated how the street paper model functions. Finally, I applied these findings to Syracuse to determine whether the city has the right characteristics to support a street paper. While several factors such as size and its existing attitude toward panhandling suggest Syracuse might not be an ideal host city for a street paper, no obstacle seems insurmountable.

The Street Paper Model

While individual street newspapers vary significantly, including a notable ideological divide between North American and European publications, the International Network of Street Newspapers (INSP) offers a general definition:

Street papers are independent newspapers and magazines that operate on a social enterprise and self-help model to provide an innovative solution to urban homelessness and unemployment (“About”).

Through street papers, homeless or low-income vendors become microentrepreneurs, purchasing newspapers or magazines for a fraction of the publication’s cover price — in some cases even obtaining them for free — and pocketing the profit after selling the papers on the street. While the idea behind street papers is for vendors to use this money to support themselves, representatives from North American street newspapers recognize that vendors use their paper-produced income for a variety of purposes. While some fulltime vendors follow the loosely intended model by earmarking their profit for low-income housing, others supplement an existing income such as Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Further, street

papers generally do not require proof that a vendor is homeless or financially struggling. Jamie Rye, former editor-in-chief of *Toledo Streets* in Toledo, Ohio, echoed the view of several involved in the street paper movement by noting that there is no way — and no real incentive — to regulate how the largely transient vendor population uses its income. He explained that a street paper serves its intended purpose simply by enabling vendors to become microentrepreneurs; their freedom to manage personal finances as they see fit is part of the deal. “We’re giving them the opportunity to close the gap of employment,” Rye said. “But it’s really up to them.”

The amount that a vendor can make through street paper sales varies widely depending on how often and how effectively the vendor works. A *Street Sense* vendor in Washington, D.C., said the approximately \$65 that she made in the hour or so that she sold papers before going to another job was fairly standard for her (Williams, Sasha). *Street Sense* has profit margin of \$1.50, with vendors purchasing papers for \$.50 and reselling them for a suggested \$2 donation. Rye put the average profit for a committed *Toledo Streets* vendor at approximately \$35 an hour, based on a \$.75 profit margin for each paper sold to the public at \$1. And a *Groundcover News* vendor in Ann Arbor puts \$600 in her pocket monthly when she sells all 800 papers that she regularly buys; her profit margin is \$.75 for each \$1 paper (Donham). Estimates of profits are generally loose, reflecting that the vendors set their own schedules and that some customers donate more than the paper’s cover price. Further, vendors who buy more papers than they can sell in a given sales period may see their total profits decrease at the end of that period.

A complementary aim of street papers is advocacy for issues related to poverty and homelessness. This role is particularly characteristic of the North American street paper movement, and is generally achieved through editorial content. While it is again important to note that each individual street paper in North America is distinct, North American publications

in general tend to focus their content around progressive issues related to poverty or social justice. North American street paper staffs tend to pride themselves on publishing stories and angles that do not attract coverage in mainstream media. Andy Freeze, who served as executive director of the now dissolved North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA) between 2009 and 2010, identified two paths that street papers tend to follow toward this end. They can be traditionally journalistic, featuring newsworthy content produced by volunteer journalists or members of the editorial staff, or street papers can literally give voice to the poor and homeless population by filling pages with columns, poems, artwork and other pieces produced by the vendors themselves. Based on his experience with NASNA and previous involvement with the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless' *Streetvibes*, Freeze said he thought journalistic publications draw readers' attention more effectively long term. It is important to note, however, that both formats, as well as hybrid-style papers that incorporate aspects of both, are active and successful in North America.

Because they represent poor and homeless communities in a way that differs from the way these communities are covered in mainstream media, street papers aim to positively shape the greater dialogue around homelessness and poverty. Barbara Schneider, who has researched media representations of homelessness as a faculty member at Canada's University of Calgary, writes in a 2011 article that mainstream news outlets tend to relegate the homeless to narrow roles. By including homeless individuals in articles through personal, experiential and often emotional content — and rarely, if ever, as “expert” sources on homelessness or related topics — Schneider argues that mainstream newspapers cast the homeless as a distinct group whose living situations result from individual and therefore preventable circumstances (75-80). In this way, she writes, mainstream coverage of the homeless contributes to their continued marginalization.

Street newspapers, in contrast, challenge this type of mainstream coverage by publishing content that directly channels homeless voices or covers related issues more comprehensively. “We try to really make sure that the script is flipped so that people who have experienced homelessness themselves have a clear and an uncensored voice,” said Jennifer Friedenbach, executive director of San Francisco’s Coalition on Homelessness, which produces *Street Sheet*. Of *Street Sheet*’s aim to change a negative perception around homelessness through such content, she added: “There’s a lot of demonization, a lot of hatred and a lot of violence as a result of that hatred ... It’s harder to fight for solutions if you’re fighting for solutions for a hated and demonized population.”

While this capstone will primarily focus on North American street newspapers, it is relevant to recognize that street newspapers exist around the world. In 2015, INSP identified 114 street newspapers in 35 countries on six continents. An estimated 14,000 homeless or poor vendors across the world sell these to an estimated six million global readers (“About”). These international papers are connected through INSP, as well as through access to translated editorial content through the INSP News Service, which operates as a wire service similar to the Associated Press. Although all street papers aim to generate an income for vendors, North American and European papers traditionally take different approaches beyond this. Sean Condon, executive director of *Megaphone* in Vancouver, Canada, and former vice president and co-chair of NASNA, explained the difference this way: While North American publications traditionally emphasize the editorial responsibility of giving voice to the homeless population, European papers tend to produce high quality, easily marketable publications that differ little from the mainstream magazines. The latter is done with the belief that such publications more effectively generate an income for vendors. However, Condon said, the North American-

European divide is changing, with North American papers increasingly recognizing the European value of producing a high quality publication. “I think we’re seeing a bit of a change in North America,” he said, adding that for *Megaphone*, in particular, the intention is to incorporate a higher production quality without shifting away from social justice coverage. “We are trying to get a hybrid of the two,” he said.

The History of Street Papers

While the current street paper movement has roots in the 1980s, street papers in general date to the nineteenth century. Norma Fay Green, a journalism professor at Columbia College Chicago, identifies the Salvation Army’s *War Cry* as the first street newspaper to establish itself in North America in the late 1800s. A religiously sponsored publication, *War Cry* explained to its readers how best to help the needy and was peddled by Salvationists on street corners and in saloons. Subsequent papers followed in the religiously based model, including the *Hobo News*, which originated in 1915 with the Social Gospel Movement. The *Hobo News* notably established the role of the paper in financially bettering the vendor, which is reflected in the mission statements of current street newspapers. According to Green, a 1916 issue of *Hobo News* read:

The public will more generously respond to our invitation for help when you offer them something of real merit like the ‘News,’ than for a straight handout. For this very purpose the News was ushered into the journalistic field. It offers you all the profits if you are willing to prove your willingness to help yourself by offering it for sale.

While religiously based publications dominated the early street newspaper movement, Green writes, no real record of papers between the 1940s and 1960s has been found. It was not until the 1980s that the modern, secular street newspaper movement emerged. As the economy boomed and economic gaps widened, Green writes, poverty and homelessness became increasingly visible. Street publications offered a platform to inspire consciousness of these issues.

The first secular street newspapers in the U.S. are commonly cited as New York City's *Street News* and San Francisco's *Street Sheet*. Friedenbach, of the *Street Sheet*, said the two developed independently and more or less simultaneously in 1989. *Street Sheet*, she said, developed "organically" after San Francisco's Coalition on Homelessness published a surplus of newsletters for a Phil Collins benefit concert. Several men within the coalition later took these extra newsletters and sold them on street corners, paving the way for the modern *Street Sheet*. While Friedenbach, who did not work for the coalition when *Street Sheet* was founded, said she thought San Francisco organizers knew a similar paper was developing in New York City around the same time, there was essentially no communication between the two. She credited *Street Sheet* and *Street News* — the latter perhaps to an even greater extent given its greater visibility in a larger city — as the inspiration for the street papers that cropped up in other North American cities throughout the 1990s.

Communication among street newspapers and support for startup papers became more formalized in 1996, when NASNA was founded as an organizational and communication hub for North American street newspapers. Hosting several member conferences in its early years and coordinating monthly conference phone calls among members, NASNA served as a central resource, drawing on the experiences of its approximately 30 members for idea-trading among existing papers and for support for startup papers (French Lemley). In this way, NASNA was especially valuable for contributing to "collective knowledge," explained Tasha French Lemley, executive director of Nashville's *Contributor* and former co-chair of NASNA.

NASNA continued to connect street papers through the 1990s and 2000s, and the organization saw a particular increase in circulation around 2009 and 2010. Condon, who became involved in NASNA around this time, said he saw the model take off in these years

through startup street papers in U.S. cities such as Philadelphia; Toledo, Ohio; and Ann Arbor, Michigan. These years also saw the beginning of street paper growth in southern U.S. states, he added. Today, this is evidenced through papers in Memphis, Tennessee; Dallas, Texas; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, among others (“Our Members”). Condon and several representatives from North American street papers particularly cited Nashville’s *Contributor* as a standout example of relatively recent growth in the South. *The Contributor*, established in 2007, was supporting the largest per capita circulation in the world by 2012 (Wills, Mar. 24).

For French Lemley, who serves as a contact for those interested in starting street papers through Nashville’s *Contributor*, the relatively recent interest in part reflects a rising interest in social enterprise models. The London-based organization ClearySo, which works with social enterprises globally, describes this model as “a business that has both social and commercial goals,” naming a coffee shop that employs adults with disabilities as another example (“What is a social enterprise?”). Condon additionally attributed the 2009-2010 uptick to improved quality among street papers in general and the economic recession that began in 2007. The latter, he said, did more than simply widen the pool of potential vendors; it in some ways created a more stable vendor base by pushing the unemployed toward street papers in addition to the homeless and transient.

In December 2012, in a move not reflective of the state of individual street papers in North America, the NASNA board voted to dissolve the organization. In an email sent to members and posted on its website, board members explained that maintaining a legal status as a business entity had become expensive, cumbersome and at odds with the underlying function of the organization. Board members wrote:

The NASNA board moved to formally acknowledge that the association is best structured as a volunteer endeavor rather than a formal business entity. The association's history shows this decision to be an accurate representation of how NASNA has actually functioned for the majority of its existence (The NASNA Board).

Freeze had been NASNA's first and only full-time staff member between 2009 and 2010, with a position that was made possible through an Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation grant. When this grant was not renewed, NASNA returned to a fully volunteer staff composed of representatives from various North American papers (Freeze). Board members said in their email that such an arrangement could and would largely continue without the name and structure of NASNA as a formal business entity, making the cost of maintaining the organization's legal status unnecessary.

While the long-term effects of the dissolution remain to be seen, developments in the year following NASNA's dissolution suggest that INSP will effectively step into its communication-facilitating role. Condon noted that the Internet — largely developed after both organizations formed independently in the 1990s — effectively bridges geographic gaps among street papers, making the regional boundaries that had defined NASNA somewhat irrelevant. Demonstrating this, he said street papers around the world have shared ideas and support through a closed INSP Facebook page since at least 2014. In addition, INSP seems to be recognizing its increased prominence in North America through its decision to hold its 2015 conference in Seattle, Washington. The June conference will be the first INSP conference ever held in the U.S., and the first street paper conference in the country at all since NASNA's final conference in 2011 (Condon, 2015). In this sense, the dissolution of NASNA in some ways has widened the street paper network as INSP steps into the organizational role that NASNA once held regionally.

Factors of Success

INSP identifies 39 North American publications, with 35 located in the U.S. and four located in Canada. Host cities for these papers vary significantly in terms of size and geographic location, although the papers still tend to have greater representation in northern U.S. states despite recent growth in the South (“Our members”). While the parameters of success are variable, representatives of several North American street newspapers repeatedly identified five factors that tend to contribute to a successful street paper. These are:

1. The Support of a Sponsoring Nonprofit Organization
2. A Positive Connection to the Host Community
3. A Host City with Areas High in Pedestrian Traffic
4. An Enforced Code of Conduct for Vendors
5. A High Quality Journalistic Publication

Support of a Sponsoring Nonprofit Organization

A sponsoring organization, or a related organization under whose tax-exempt nonprofit status a street paper can operate, was identified by several representatives from North American street papers as particularly important for startup papers. “It’s very cumbersome to set up your own nonprofit organization,” pointed out Michael Stoops, who helped form NASNA in 1996 and is currently director of community organizing at the National Coalition for the Homeless. This leads many street papers to initially operate under the 501(c)(3) status of existing groups, such as homeless coalitions or homeless shelters. In addition to legal nonprofit status, these umbrella organizations can additionally provide resources or office space. But eventually, Stoops said,

most street newspapers become independent in order to have more control of organizational and editorial decisions. During his time as NASNA's executive director, Freeze said he worked both with people interested in starting independent papers and with people interested in incorporating papers under existing organizations. While he saw both established successfully, he said umbrella organizations ultimately saved startup street papers time and effort when marketing new publications because the umbrella organization offered existing name recognition and clientele. He added that in his experience, papers that align themselves with existing organizations tend to produce more vendor-created content and less traditionally journalistic content.

Tim Harris followed the model of connecting with an existing organization when he founded Seattle's *Real Change* in 1994 under the umbrella of a separate human services organization. The paper became its own independent nonprofit three years later in 1997. Harris said this model worked well for *Real Change*, because it enabled organizers to initially focus on their publication rather than more bureaucratic aspects such as forming a board and maintaining a legal status with the International Revenue Service (IRS). *Real Change* was the first street paper to begin publishing weekly in 2005, and by spring 2015 boasted a circulation of 11,000 to 12,000 papers per week (Harris).

Although it's possible to start a newspaper without an umbrella organization — Nashville's *Contributor* stands out as a particularly successful example of this — it's advisable to begin under an existing organization and later move toward independence.

A Positive Connection to the Host Community

Community support, referring specifically to a paper's relationship to its host city's residents and city officials, also repeatedly came up as key to success. Jamie Rye, of *Toledo Streets*, partially attributed *Toledo Streets*' "explosive" growth between spring 2013 and fall 2013 to strong support within the local community. The paper maintains good relationships with Toledo's homeless shelters — *Toledo Streets* operated under the umbrella of homeless advocacy organization 1Matters until December 2014 — and its positive perception in the community is demonstrated by a letter of support from Toledo Mayor Michael Collins (Rye). By October 2013, Rye said, the paper had generated approximately \$58,000 for its approximately 30 active vendors within a seven-month period.

But this relationship between city and paper can be a challenge, said Brian Davis, executive director of the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless, which produces the *Cleveland Street Chronicle*. He said that in a city such as Cleveland, where panhandling is a recognized problem, a startup paper has to work to differentiate itself and make clear to potential buyers that the street paper is not a scam or charity donation. "It can take a long time to establish that relationship," Davis said. Cleveland's paper started in 1993 under a different name. The general lack of community support over the years has persisted, and the paper currently contracts only 15 to 20 vendors who make \$.90 for each paper they sell (Davis).

Similarly, French Lemley used her experience at Nashville's *Contributor* to emphasize that a lack of community support tends to hinder a paper. She said that like Cleveland's paper, which once participated in a Supreme Court lawsuit involving peddling licenses (Davis), *Contributor* vendors have faced legal citations for selling on sidewalks. Even though the First Amendment generally protects street papers, local governments retain the power to restrict how papers can be

sold to some extent. This makes a positive relationship with a host community critical to ensure physical access to a city. “Community support is what makes newspapers sink or swim,” French Lemley said.

A corollary quality to community support is the idea that street papers should reflect their unique host communities. Condon, of Vancouver’s *Megaphone*, described this quality as the reflection of a city’s “vibe” in a paper’s content. Likewise, Stoops, who served on NASNA’s board for approximately 10 years between 1996 and 2007, cited the example of Washington, D.C.’s first street paper. *StreetWise D.C.* was founded in 1998 when organizers from Chicago expanded their model to Washington D.C., but Stoops said the paper closed its doors in less than eight months. “The reason that it went under, even though we had \$70,000,” he said, “was that *StreetWise D.C.* did not turn their paper into a local paper.” The Chicago management struggled when they tried to replicate *StreetWise Chicago*’s model in Washington, D.C., he explained, attributing this to the *StreetWise* management’s negative stereotypes about Washington D.C.’s homeless population and general failure to connect with the local community.

In 2003, a new paper, *Street Sense*, developed in Washington, D.C., under the leadership and organization of two local residents, Ted Henson and Laura Thompson Osuri. As a more localized paper, Stoops said, *Street Sense* had essentially no trouble recruiting and retaining vendors. By summer 2014, *Street Sense* was supporting a biweekly circulation of 16,000 papers and contracting approximately 100 active vendors (Otto).

A final aspect of a paper’s connection to its community is the importance of strong connections between vendors and readers. “We figured out a long time ago that the heart and

soul of the street paper is the relationships between vendors and readers, and that you need to build the whole project around that,” Harris said, attributing this connection to the success *Real Change* has enjoyed in Seattle. On a practical level, these connections are the basis of the grassroots fundraising that Harris said street papers are uniquely positioned to leverage. *Real Change*, he said by way of example, has a \$1.1 million organizational budget that is primarily aggregated from grassroots fundraising and individual donations. About 1,600 people donated to *Real Change* as an organization in 2013, with a median donation of \$100. This complements the only 10 percent of the budget that comes from foundations and 35 percent that comes from the sale of papers to the independently contracted vendors (Harris). The budget for Washington, D.C.’s *Street Sense*, too, largely relies on individual donations, explained Rachael Buck, *Street Sense*’s coordinator of new initiatives and volunteers. There, the \$.50 that vendors pay for each paper covers only printing costs, she said, leaving all organizational overhead costs and salaries for six paid employees dependent on grants and donations. Because donations are influenced by positive experiences with vendors, Harris emphasized, the relationship between vendors and buyers is crucial.

These cross-class relationships between vendors and readers additionally help street papers’ greater mission of advocacy, several North American street paper representatives added. “A large part of what we do is create opportunities for social contact,” said Skip Anderson, editor at Nashville’s *Contributor*, crediting street papers with facilitating conversations between people of different socioeconomic classes. Jerry Skoch, who said he had been buying street papers in Cleveland for 10 years, explained his motivation for purchasing: “I really don’t care what’s in the paper as much as I do about having a conversation with the vendor,” he said. “That’s what’s really important to me.” In his time as executive director of Cleveland’s West Side Catholic

Center, Skoch said he often heard the poor and homeless complain that they felt invisible. A street paper, Skoch reasoned, opens a small window of opportunity. His motivation for purchasing street papers is reflected in broader data collected in a *Megaphone* reader survey. This showed that readers' top reason for purchasing street papers is to support the vendor, Condon said. "That will always be the number one reason, no matter what the content is," he said. In this way, personal connections between vendors and buyers benefit street papers on both a financial level and more general advocacy level.

A street paper's relationship with its host cities is multifaceted and critically important. A positive relationship should be established for three primary reasons: to avoid vendor limitations in terms of access to city streets; to develop a print product that appeals to the unique community; and to establish personal connections between vendors and buyers. Failure to establish a positive relationship with a city in any of these three aspects could ultimately shutter a street paper, while a positive relationship could lead to long-term success.

A Host City with Areas High in Pedestrian Traffic

Urban areas that are high in foot traffic are also commonly cited as an important factor to a paper's sustainability. While French Lemley of Nashville's *Contributor* said that a city's size has relatively little effect on a paper's success — and Condon, of Vancouver's *Megaphone*, said a smaller city could even be advantageous for offering greater visibility and less organizational demand — several street paper representatives noted that an ideal host city should have a well-traveled urban area where vendors can sell the paper. In Washington, D.C., for example, the metro system creates natural hubs of pedestrian traffic around metro stops, where vendors often

sell *Street Sense*. The pedestrian-friendly Ann Arbor, Michigan, offers an easily accessible downtown district even without public transportation hubs. “It definitely depends on your pedestrian traffic,” said Davis, of the *Cleveland Street Chronicle*. He added that Cleveland vendors tend to have the most successful sales at pedestrian hotspots such as the city’s West Side Market or the Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame.

Freeze, of the National Coalition for the Homeless, said the lack of pedestrian traffic tends to make residential and suburban neighborhoods poor host cities. In some cases, however, street papers that started in urban hubs have expanded into suburban areas as their circulation has grown. Examples include Nashville’s *Contributor*, established in 2007, and Ann Arbor’s *Groundcover News*, established in 2010. Anderson, of the *Contributor*, said the expansion is somewhat slow so far for the *Contributor*; local government regulations in suburbs around Nashville tend to hinder vendors outside the city, for example, and residents are less receptive than they are in cities. In Ann Arbor, however, former *Groundcover* operations manager Greg Hoffman said that suburbs are actually becoming attractive to vendors because some suburbs lack regulations against selling to people in cars.

In this sense, a street paper likely has its best chance at success by starting in an urban area with hubs of pedestrian traffic. Other factors, such as size, geographic location or climate, should be considered with less weight. Offering one example of this is Chicago’s *StreetWise*, which supervisor of magazine services Tony Taylor said maintains sales even through the city’s blustery winters. Staff and vendors have adapted to the fact that sales tend to dip during blizzards or extreme cold weather.

An Enforced Code of Conduct for Vendors

An enforced code of conduct for vendors is important in establishing a positive reputation for a paper, according to several street paper representatives. This reflects the idea that vendors act as the face of any street paper, often representing the only point of contact that a buyer has with a street paper organization as a whole. This, in turn, makes vendors critical to a paper's success, said Dionne Gilbert, former vendor and current vendor coordinator at the *Denver Voice*. By maintaining a consistent presence on a city's streets, she said, vendors shape the brand — ideally positive — that a street paper develops in a city.

Enforcing a code of conduct is one key way to ensure that vendors reflect positively on the street paper as an organization. While codes of conduct vary for each street paper, most prohibit vendors from selling while under the influence of drugs or alcohol and mandate that vendors must carry and display the badges that distinguish them from panhandlers (Appendix D). Also fairly common in codes of conduct are restrictions against selling outdated issues; against asking for more than the publication's cover price; and against loaning or giving papers to another vendor. City-specific restrictions tend to supplement these general points as well. In Ann Arbor, for example, *Groundcover* vendors are prohibited from selling on public buses.

Related — and sometimes included — in vendor codes of conduct are systems that coordinate shifts and locations. While not practiced by all street papers, these ensure that papers are consistently and evenly distributed throughout a city. *Real Change* vendors in Seattle, for example, can “reserve turf” in specific areas of the city if they sell a set amount of papers (Harris). Nashville's *Contributor* follows a similar policy, while Boston's *Spare Change News* and Chicago's *StreetWise* alternatively assign vendors a given location (Wills, May 28; Taylor; Flanagan). Offering a third model is the *Cleveland Street Chronicle*, whose vendors attend

biweekly meetings to divide weekend shifts at only high-demand, lucrative locations such as the West Side Market. Otherwise vendors are free to sell anywhere in Cleveland on a first-come, first-served basis (Davis).

To ensure that the code of conduct is effective, a street paper must have some policy regarding its enforcement. INSP recommends clarifying consequences for breaking this code of conduct with vendors at an initial training or orientation session in its guide to starting a street paper (Harris 13). As one example of this, Ann Arbor's *Groundcover News* issues verbal warnings to vendors who break the code. If the vendor continues to do so, this warning is followed by increasingly long suspensions (Beckett).

Because vendors represent the most visible aspect of any street paper organization, they play a critical role in marketing publications. An enforced code of conduct is critical in ensuring that the overall perception of the paper remains positive. Harris, of Seattle's *Real Change*, summarized the importance of a code of conduct as such:

You have to have a code of conduct for the vendors that you take seriously, or else you don't keep up the community reputation that you need for people to support what you're doing. You want people to differentiate between your vendors and panhandlers. You want to legitimize your vendors. It's the code of conduct and taking it seriously that does that.

A High Quality Journalistic Publication

A high quality journalistic publication also tends to lead to higher circulation and greater success, according to several street paper representatives. This is a somewhat contested point, given the diversity of content in successful North American street newspapers and the fact that some publications thrive on creative content. San Francisco's *Street Sheet*, for example, produces an annual poetry issue featuring vendors' writing that typically tops other editions in sales (Friedenbach). But while creative writing and personal accounts from vendors may effectively

draw in readers, said Freeze, NASNA's former executive director, news stories tend to prove more effective in this goal long term. In part, he said this is because vendors' personal stories about homelessness tend to be similar, and consequently may not appeal to repeat customers for more than a few issues. Similarly, Condon, of Vancouver's *Megaphone*, suggested that high quality journalism is what maintains readership even when a buyer's original motivation to purchase the paper is a charitable donation. "People have a lot of stereotypes about what a street paper is," Condon said. "They will assume that it will be low quality, that the content will be very depressing or that the content will be directed only at people on the street ... Those are stereotypes and misconceptions that we always have to try to overcome and try to dispel with the content."

Friedenbach, of San Francisco's *Street Sheet*, added that newsworthy journalistic content does not necessarily mean breaking news. Rather, she advised that street paper content should have enough "shelf life" to attract interest throughout the entire week or multiweek selling period. Catchy headlines and a visually appealing product become important in this sense, she said. Skoch, who has been purchasing the *Cleveland Street Chronicle* for years, similarly said he thought a visually appealing product helps to legitimize a street paper as an organization. He said he is often frustrated by the poor quality of the street papers he sees in Cleveland and other cities. "A paper that's poorly written with subpar photographs isn't going to get anyone excited on the streets," he said. High quality articles are also beneficial, he added, but these are less effective than an appealing visual product at drawing passers-by to a street paper.

A corollary to high journalistic content is an online presence. North American street papers vary in their use of organizational websites and social media to promote the paper and its specific

content, but most have some sort of online presence. Friedenbach is among those who tout an online presence as a positive attribute of a street paper. While she acknowledged that online content in some ways threatens the sale of physical copies, she said she felt this argument held more weight before the boom in social media. “Having a visibility and the stories out there creates more attractiveness as a source for news, (so) that when people do see vendors on the streets they’re going to be more inclined to buy it,” she said. Taylor, of Chicago’s *StreetWise*, said the Illinois publication balances the two interests by teasing stories online, posting just a headline and a few paragraphs of the cover stories. Other street newspapers, including Ann Arbor’s *Groundcover News*, post PDF copies of the physical papers on their websites after the print issue has been pulled from the streets for its selling period. This eliminates the concern that online content will decrease the desire for print copies (Hoffman).

In this sense, high quality journalistic content can benefit street papers long term by establishing publications as desirable products that offer customers more than a one-time opportunity for charitable giving. A website can help to establish a paper as a legitimate organization and likewise legitimate source of news, making some form of online presence desirable. Because charitable intentions generally motivate transactions, posting content online is unlikely to significantly undercut vendors’ print sales.

Conclusion

Although each street paper in the U.S. is distinct, reflecting a unique relationship with its host city as well as the broader goals of the street paper’s founders, most successful street papers share these five broad characteristics. It is worthwhile to emphasize that these characteristics

pertain to both the host city and to the street paper itself. This means that even an excellently organized paper could struggle in a city that is ill adapted for a street paper. Alternatively, a city that seems ideal for such a street paper could ultimately fail to support one if the paper is poorly managed. In this sense, a street paper and its host city must both contribute to the success of a paper.

Chapter 2

Groundcover News as a Case Study

To see how these characteristics interact to support a street paper on a practical level, I visited the office of Groundcover News in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in late May 2014. There I spoke to staff and vendors in order to create a case study addressing how one specific street paper operates. I chose Groundcover for this purpose because Ann Arbor reflects Syracuse in several relevant aspects such as climate, population size and university influence. In addition, Groundcover was thriving with a monthly circulation of nearly 10,000 at the time of my visit.

An Idea Spreads

The story of Ann Arbor's street paper begins more than 2,000 miles away from the Michigan city. Specifically it begins in Washington, where street corner pitches for the Seattle-based *Real Change* caught the attention of Susan Beckett during a summertime visit to her daughter in 2009.

The first street paper in the U.S. to support weekly publication, *Real Change* had been circulating in Seattle for about 15 years by the time Beckett, then a substitute teacher, stopped to pick up a copy. Street newspapers in general had been active in U.S. cities since the late 1980s. But for the Michigan native, the afternoon purchase marked her first interaction with the street paper model.

She was intrigued.

“I’ve been interested in poverty issues for a long time,” Beckett explained. And the *Real Change* model of employing homeless and low-income people as newspaper vendors seemed ripe for transplant to the Great Lakes State, she added.

This idea has grown into *Groundcover News*, a monthly street paper that’s circulated year-round in Ann Arbor and surrounding suburbs. In four years of circulation with Beckett as its publisher, the nonprofit newspaper had offered more than 200 vendors a hand up, rather than a hand out, as one vendor preferred to describe it at a monthly sales meeting in May. By spring 2014, when I visited its office, *Groundcover* reported that its approximately 30 active vendors were sustaining a monthly circulation nearing 10,000 in a city of approximately 117,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, “Ann Arbor”). Vendors were pocketing \$.75 for each \$1 paper they sold.

Getting Started

Beckett’s first step in bringing a street newspaper to Ann Arbor was a call to the North American Street Newspaper Association (NASNA). Before its dissolution in December 2013, NASNA served as a central resource for startup street papers (French Lemley). In addition to sending Beckett a copy of its instructional manual, “Street papers: A guide to getting started,” which details major points to consider before launching a street newspaper, NASNA also put her in touch with staff at the nearby startup in Toledo, Ohio. With its first edition hitting the streets in 2009, *Toledo Streets* was itself relatively new and operating successfully under the umbrella of the social justice-oriented nonprofit 1Matters.

Toledo Streets was more than willing to lend a hand, Beckett said. Amanda Moore, who founded Toledo’s paper, met Beckett in Ann Arbor one day to discuss the early details of *Groundcover*. And through Moore’s connections, the Ann Arbor startup secured \$1,000 in

funding through the Toledo-based 1Matters, which has additionally provided initial funding to Detroit's street paper, *Thrive Detroit*.

The \$1,000 that 1Matters provided *Groundcover* covered just more than the printing costs for the first issue, Beckett said. This inaugural issue hit the streets in summer 2010.

Groundcover chose to register for 501(c)(3) status after about a year of operations, meaning the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) classifies it as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization. This stands in contrast to *Toledo Streets*, which remained under the nonprofit umbrella of 1Matters until December 2014 (Zuehlke). This short-track path toward independence casts *Groundcover* as somewhat unusual among U.S. street papers. Although several street papers currently operate with independent 501(c)(3) statuses, most started with the operational and financial support of a parent organization.

Budget (Appendix F)

In terms of funding for the paper, Beckett identified three major sources: paper sales, advertisements and grants and donations. These balance out two major expenses: printing and employees. All other miscellaneous costs are considered trivial in terms of the budget, which totals less than \$50,000 according to the Form 990-N that was filed with the IRS in 2013.

Paper sales account for the majority of *Groundcover*'s budget at approximately 60 percent, Beckett said. Paper sales refer to the \$.25 that *Groundcover* receives from vendors for each copy of the paper that vendors purchase. Vendors in turn sell the paper to the public for a \$1 donation, pocketing the \$.75 profit.

Revenue from paper sales depends on how many papers *Groundcover* prints in a given month, Beckett said. Printing more is a greater value, while printing fewer can mean the \$.25 that vendors pay *Groundcover* for papers doesn't even cover printing costs. For example, assuming vendors buy all the printed papers for \$.25, the difference between purchasing 9,000 papers from a printer at a cost of \$900 and purchasing 2,000 papers from a printer at a cost of \$575 is the difference between a \$1,350 profit and a \$75 deficit. Monthly circulation fluctuates throughout the year, Beckett said, as demonstrated by the jump between an approximately 10,000-paper circulation in spring 2014 and an approximately 5,000-paper circulation the following winter. This reflects both the weather and the academic schedule at the University of Michigan, she said, noting that fewer people tend to be in Ann Arbor in late summer.

Advertisements constitute approximately 35 percent of the income side of the budget, Beckett said. This makes *Groundcover* somewhat unusual among street papers. Seven out of 10 U.S. street papers that I surveyed reported publishing few or no advertisements, for example (Appendix C). Representatives of these seven papers said that the effort of securing ads — particularly when no staff member can dedicate time specifically to this task — outweighs the financial gains. But for *Groundcover*, Beckett said, advertisements prove worthwhile. The May 2014 issue includes 14 advertisements of varying size, including four quarter-page color advertisements (Appendix H). According to the advertising rates listed on the back page of each *Groundcover* issue, each of these runs \$215.95 per issue (Figure 1). Advertising rates in general range from \$49.95 for a black-and-white business card-sized advertisement to \$699.96 for a full-page color advertisement.

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES			
Size	Black and White	Color	Approx. Size
Business card	\$49.95	\$65.95	2 X 3.5
1/8	\$89.95	\$129.95	2.5 X 6.5 or 5 X 3.25
1/6	\$129.95	\$165.95	4.5 X 5.5
1/4	\$159.95	\$215.95	5 X 6.5
1/2	\$299.95	\$399.95	5 X 14 or 10 X 6.5
Full Page	\$495.95	\$669.95	10 X 14

Figure 1

As part of its advertising strategy, *Groundcover* notably includes coupons. Four of these appear in the May 2014 issue (Appendix H). Greg Hoffman, former operations manager for *Groundcover*, said that advertisements containing coupons to local stores help sell the paper. Vendors Rissa Haynes and Peggy Donham, who sell in front of the People's Food Co-op, said the paper essentially sells itself there because of the \$1 coupon that the Co-op publishes in the paper. Customers who intend to spend more than \$1 in the grocery store can purchase *Groundcover* from Haynes or Donham, and save exactly what they spend once they check out at a register. Given that Ann Arbor has many local restaurants and stores, Hoffman said, the coupon strategy suits the paper particularly well.

No one staff member or volunteer at *Groundcover* is responsible for securing advertisements. Beckett said about half of advertisements sales are arranged by staff and half are arranged by vendors. *Groundcover* hosts a professional development series for its vendors on the third Thursday of each month, and occasionally a workshop on selling advertisements is included. Vendors receive a 30 percent commission if they sell an advertisement, Beckett added, or a 15 percent commission if they refer an interested business to *Groundcover* staff.

Finally, Beckett said grants and individual donations make up about five percent of *Groundcover*'s budget. Again, no one staff member is responsible for soliciting donations. These can be made online or through check, according to the organization's website ("Ways to give"); the print issue contains no information requesting or explaining donations (Appendix H). This lack of emphasis on donations contrasts with budgets of other street papers, such as Seattle's *Real Change* or Washington, D.C.'s *Street Sense*. These each report that grants and individual donations are a critical budget source, encompassing up to 60 percent of the budget at *Real Change* (Harris).

Because *Groundcover* pays no rent for its office space through an arrangement with a local church, the organization has only two primary expenses: printing and pay for three formal employees. Employees are the greatest expense, Beckett said, because printing costs fluctuate. Three contracted, part-time employees collectively receive approximately \$650 monthly. Beckett herself works as publisher on a volunteer basis.

Staff

In May 2014, *Groundcover* employed a paid staff of three: a layout editor, an assistant editor and an operations manager. Although paid and volunteer staff collaborate on many job responsibilities, Hoffman said the layout and assistant editors primarily concern themselves with the visual and editorial aspect of the printed *Groundcover News* while the operations manager focuses on day-to-day operations. Hoffman left *Groundcover* as operations manager in early 2015, and the organization spent several months without anyone in this position. Beckett said she hoped to hire someone to fill his position by the spring.

A regular volunteer staff of about six people supports the paid staff in the *Groundcover* office, Hoffman said, dividing office shifts and covering a variety of day-to-day tasks. Marquise Williams, for example, is a currently active volunteer who became involved with *Groundcover* as a University of Michigan student even before the first issue of *Groundcover* was published. Williams, who has since graduated and now works for pay through an after-school program in the Ypsilanti Public School District, ran the vendor training on the Thursday that I visited. In his four years at *Groundcover*, he said, he had also helped edit content and write articles for the paper, among other tasks.

In addition to the volunteer staff at the office, *Groundcover* claims a significantly wider network of volunteers who write content for the paper or work to raise awareness and funds for the paper. “Volunteers are critical,” Beckett emphasized, adding that *Groundcover* constantly aims to increase this pool. She said she considered a volunteer coordinator, or someone to organize volunteers and ensure that they contribute efficiently, to be vital in any street paper. *Groundcover* — unfortunately, she said — did not have a volunteer coordinator as of May 2014.

Facility

Groundcover operates in a classroom-style space in the basement of the Bethlehem United Church of Christ, centrally located in Ann Arbor at 423 S. 4th Ave. Through this arrangement *Groundcover* has never had to factor facility costs into its budget. A few months into operation, Beckett said, *Groundcover* advertised in its own paper for a workspace. Bethlehem Church responded to the advertisement by offering the space for no rent.

Groundcover has maintained this rent-free relationship in its five years of operation, enjoying a positive relationship with the church, whose pastor is often a featured writer in the

paper. In late fall 2013, when *Groundcover* had secured a degree of financial stability, Beckett said the paper began voluntarily chipping in about \$50 a month for electricity.

The modest basement space is outfitted simply. Staff accesses a single computer in a corner that's framed by person-high stacks of newspapers, and vendors are permitted to access three other computers in the back of the room. A large, multipurpose table — used primarily for a vendor training during my Thursday afternoon visit — dominates the center of the space. Bulletin boards plastered with notes for vendors and poster-board charts that track monthly sales goals line the walls.

The church space is about a 10- to 15-minute walk from profitable selling sites that are heavy in pedestrian traffic, such as the intersection of Liberty and Main streets and the People's Food Co-op. Because vendors frequent the office in order to purchase papers to sell, a location easily accessible by foot or public transportation is especially valuable.

Content

Beckett described *Groundcover*'s content as “wide-ranging,” and a glance through the printed publication justifies the description. The May 2014 issue alone includes a story about a local health clinic; a vendor's call for year-round emergency shelters; a description about a rare butterfly migration; and a recipe for a rice and bean salad (Appendix H).

An eclectic mix of heavy and light content is Beckett's goal. Although she said *Groundcover* had experimented with themed issues — a model favored by *Toledo Streets* and several other street papers, which organizes all the content around a single issue such as “healthcare” — Beckett said she finds that single-topic issues overwhelm readers. An entire paper focused on a difficult or depressing topic such as teen homelessness, she said as an

example, is too intense for an average reader. Beckett instead emphasized the appeal of *Groundcover*'s light, easily digestible features such as cartoons, puzzles or games. Readers have responded favorably to these, she said, remembering one who described the paper as good reading material for a lunch break.

Although the paper includes content produced by both vendors and community members, volunteer writers recruited from the community carry more bylines. In the 12-page May 2014 issue that included 10 bylined articles, for example, a vendor penned just one. A second article profiling vendor Joe Woods — part of a series that profiles a different vendor each issue — represents Woods as a vendor without his direct byline (Appendix H). Although vendors are encouraged to write — and incentivized with 10 to 20 free papers for each submitted piece, depending on its length and quality — there's mixed interest among vendors in publishing content (Hoffman). Woods, for example, said he had no interest in getting published himself. Donham said she had published some artwork and appreciated the paper as a creative outlet.

In terms of *Groundcover*'s online content, staff upload PDFs of entire issues to *Groundcover*'s website after the selling period for the monthly paper ends. This timing eliminates a potential conflict with paper sales for the current issues (Hoffman). *Groundcover* also maintains a fairly consistent social media presence through Twitter and Facebook, although social media posts tend to focus on events related to *Groundcover* — benefit concerts, for example — rather than pushing written content.

Vendors

Vendors tend to be an eclectic group, Beckett said, ranging from elderly to teenage and spanning a variety of housing and socioeconomic situations. The majority of vendors are men,

she said, but female vendors tend to have a greater retention rate. While there is no way to definitively explain this tendency, Beckett speculated that women are less likely to become discouraged in their first days on the job, when vendors struggle to establish a connection with their customers. Tessa Swithinbank's analysis of London's *The Big Issue* suggests that the greater percentage of male vendors is a more general trend, which she attributed to greater rates of homelessness among men than women in London in the 1990s (47-48). Her argument is relevant in the U.S. today; the U.S.-based National Coalition for the Homeless stated in 2009 that men make up 76 percent of the total homeless population in the U.S. ("Who is homeless?").

Hoffman said that as of May 2014 about three of approximately 30 active vendors relied on *Groundcover* sales as their sole income — up to \$1,000 in one month, according to one of these vendors (Woods). Most vendors, however, use their profits to supplement other forms of income, often Social Security or disability benefits. This is the situation for vendor Rissa Haynes, who said her Social Security checks go entirely toward her apartment rent. Consequently, selling papers at the People's Food Co-op provides her only expendable income: between \$250 and \$300 each month when she returned to *Groundcover* in May 2014 after a medical sabbatical. Peggy Donham similarly supplements a primary income — for her, pension and insurance — through her *Groundcover* sales. But for the retired Donham, who has depression, the \$600 that she can make in a month is secondary to the connections she makes with customers and the sense of purpose she gets from her job. Joe Woods, meanwhile, represents a third situation as one of the few vendors who uses *Groundcover* sales as a sole form of income. The former door-to-door salesman said he is living with a cousin, and setting aside part of his paper sales for an apartment of his own (Appendix A).

As of May 2014, *Groundcover* had trained more than 200 vendors, and was consistently working with approximately 30 (Hoffman). Among these 30 or so were some of *Groundcover*'s earliest and most consistent vendors. The two vendors who wear numbers eight and nine on their badges, for example, earned commending catcalls at the vendor meeting in late May.

New vendors tend to come to *Groundcover* from homeless shelters such as the Delonis Center — a major Ann Arbor homeless shelter where staff initially recruited vendors before *Groundcover*'s first issue — as well as local churches or aid organizations such as the Salvation Army. But the most effective form of attracting new vendors, Hoffman said, is word-of-mouth recommendations. This can mean prospective vendors who consistently see *Groundcover* on the streets and recognize it as an option for themselves; it can also mean active vendors who encourage friends to attend a *Groundcover* training. This second option particularly benefits the vendors, who receive 10 free papers when their recruits complete orientation and subsequently purchase 50 papers from *Groundcover*. The first vendor receives another 10 papers when the recruit buys 100 papers from *Groundcover*. This incentivizing method encourages vendors to act as mentors for recruits, Hoffman said, which ultimately encourages vendor retention.

Selling

Before vendors can pick a street corner and start, they sit for an approximately hour-long training covering the ABCs of selling papers. Following this orientation session, vendors receive 10 free papers and an ID badge: a handwritten card with their name and ID number tucked in a plastic pouch and worn around the neck. After scheduling a more personalized follow-up training in approximately two weeks — typically enough time for a new vendor to sell about 50 papers — the new vendors can start selling as soon as they leave the office (Williams, Marquise).

Through a bulk permit through the city of Ann Arbor, *Groundcover* vendors are permitted to sell anywhere within city limits on a first-come, first-served basis. Areas heavy in pedestrian traffic are the best locations, so locations such as the Farmer's Market, the Historic District and Main Street are particularly desirable. But *Groundcover* staff also emphasize the importance of consistency (Hoffman; Williams, Marquise). They recommend that new vendors find a corner and stick to it, so that potential customers can establish a relationship with the vendor. Woods, for example, regularly sells at the corner of Liberty and Main streets. Consequently, he said he's gotten to know several men who frequently walk past him on their way to and from their nearby office. The men often stop to chat and purchase a paper. In Woods' case, this is usually a \$10 special edition paper that features content from street papers across the country. "They know about the \$10 papers," Woods said. "So when they see me, they have \$10 for me."

Vendors who demonstrate a serious commitment to one location by purchasing 800 papers to sell there in one month can reserve this location through a "corner card." Worn in the same plastic pouch as a vendor ID, a corner card ensures that the card-holding vendor can sell in that particular location whenever he or she wants, asking another vendor to leave the area if necessary. When the card-holding vendor is not selling, the area is open for any vendor. Corner cards reserve locations through the end of the following month, and Hoffman said between five and ten vendors, including Donham, held them in May.

Areas where vendors are not permitted to sell are explained during orientation: on private property, including the sprawling University of Michigan campus; to captive audiences, including diners at any of Ann Arbor's many outdoor cafes or passengers on public transportation; or to cars in Ann Arbor. Neighboring suburbs such as Ypsilanti, Pittsfield or

Dexter do not have regulations against sales to drivers (Hoffman). This becomes relevant as *Groundcover* attempts to spread into these suburbs, in part reflecting vendors' and staff's observation that Ann Arbor seems like it has "a vendor on every corner." Hoffman said vendors can be particularly successful selling at the exit driveways of fast food restaurants in surrounding suburbs, because often drive-through customers have cash on-hand and the vendor is unlikely to be hassled for obstructing traffic.

A fairly new aspect of *Groundcover's* street sales is the use of smartphone credit card-readers, which enable vendors to offer an alternative to passers-by who wave vendors away with the excuse of not carrying cash. Protect Cell offered the paper 10 smartphones and a \$1,200 grant to cover the purchase of additional phones, which vendors in turn supplement with a monthly data plan ("Groundcover News vendors"). Four to five vendors regularly used card-readers by May, Hoffman said. At least one, Haynes, said during a vendor meeting that she's had a positive experience with it and noted that credit card sales sometimes encourage buyers to make more than a \$1 donation for each paper. Hoffman encouraged anyone with smartphones to "rent" a card-reader from the office for a day to try it out.

Finally, all vendors are expected to adhere to the *Groundcover News* Vendor Code of Conduct (Appendix E) when selling, which vendors discuss and sign during their initial orientation. This code of conduct includes restrictions such as:

1. Billing the paper as no more than \$1
2. Selling current issues only
3. Displaying a vendor badge at all times
4. Separating oneself from other vendors by at least one block

5. Not selling while under the influence of drugs and alcohol

Vendors are additionally advised to dress neatly and cleanly, but staff said they don't regulate dress beyond this. They recognize that vendors coming from homeless shelters have limited clothing and pointed out that a vendor's appearance doesn't significantly affect sales. Hoffman said, for example, that a leather-covered and metal-studded vendor gets consistent sales.

Major violations of the code of conduct are infrequent, Beckett said. Unless a code of conduct violation is severe — pulling a knife on someone, for example — the protocol for dealing with any violation that comes to the attention of the *Groundcover* staff is as follows: First, remind the vendor of the rules; next, issue a verbal warning; finally, suspend the vendor for increasingly long periods of time. Beckett added that if a suspended vendor takes steps to improve the situation — taking an anger management class, for example — then the suspension can be shortened. But code of conduct violations rarely escalate to this point at *Groundcover*, she continued. “We rarely get past the verbal warning,” she said. “But we frequently get to reminding them of the rules.”

Relationship to the City

Groundcover enjoys a fairly positive relationship with its host city, with no notable clashes with local law enforcement. Ann Arbor Mayor John Hieftje even showed support for the organization by joining a vendor on the streets for a February 2014 International Vendor Week activity (Hoffman).

The University of Michigan offers an additional benefit in Ann Arbor. For the first two years of *Groundcover*'s operations, Beckett said, the paper struggled to connect with the

university or tap its resources. Aside from volunteer Marquise Williams, who has been involved since he was a UM student at the paper's launch, the paper had no relationship to the university. As *Groundcover* has become more established, however, a connection between the paper and the university has grown. *Groundcover* occasionally accepts UM social work majors as interns at the office, for example. Additionally, a student group dedicated to *Groundcover* launched at UM in fall 2014, and currently comprises 15 to 20 students who edit and write articles, staff the office and run social media, among other miscellaneous tasks (Beckett). Because the UM campus is considered private property, however, vendors are not permitted to sell on campus.

Additional Services

Because *Groundcover's* target demographic for vendors is homeless or low-income people, the organization tends to dip its hand in social work-oriented areas in addition to its primary mission of providing a voice and income to vendors. But this can be a fine line to balance. "We have to make sure not to duplicate services," Hoffman said.

Generally speaking, *Groundcover* offers additional resources on a referral basis. So if staff members know that a vendor needs assistance in a particular area — for example, finding low-income housing — they would refer that vendor to the appropriate local organization. Internally, vendor resources include a monthly professional development series. For this, vendors come to the *Groundcover* office for an evening workshop on the third Thursday of each month. Hoffman said that topics have included computer literacy, job hunting, advertisement sales and anger management. Hoffman said the last is sometimes the biggest barrier to consistent employment for vendors. *Groundcover* has hosted professional development workshops for

approximately two years, he said, noting that vendor enthusiasm tends to vary. “We incentivize them with free papers,” he said, so a few vendors always show up.

The Thursday workshops complement the social hours held on the first Thursday of every month, where vendors meet to review the new issue’s articles and discuss sales hooks. These social hours, for which attendance is also rewarded with 10 papers, reflect *Groundcover*’s use of papers as a primary incentive tool. Bus tokens, or a more expansive bus pass for vendors who sell 200 papers per month for two consecutive months, are also used as incentives for vendors to sell consistently (Hoffman).

Why it Works

In March 2014, *Groundcover* vendors topped 6,000 papers in monthly circulation; in April, 7,000; by late May, vendors were well on their way to the goal of 10,000 (Hoffman). These numbers had dipped back down to 5,000 or 6,000 by January, reflecting a pattern of decreased sales in the summers when the population of the college town drops, as well as further decreased sales in the winters when cold temperatures make for fewer sales (Beckett). Speaking of the peak sales in the spring, however, staff attributed *Groundcover*’s unprecedented circulation numbers in the approximately 117,000-person city to a variety of factors. The jump in part reflects concerted efforts for improvement, they speculated, and in part simple coincidence.

The first factor Hoffman suggested as influential is the introduction of collective sales goals for vendors. Illustrating this was a hand-drawn thermometer tacked on the office wall, which represented the May 2014 goal of 10,000 papers. Staff imperfectly colored toward the top of the thermometer as vendors purchased papers throughout the month. “It builds a healthy competition among vendors,” Hoffman said. And the sales goals, which began in March, are

further tied to monthly rewards. Vendors were invited to an upscale dinner for meeting one month's goal, Hoffman said, and plans were in the works to take vendors to a Detroit Tigers baseball game as another monthly reward. On the Thursday that I visited, vendors were treated to free bowling for hitting their March sales goal. About a dozen took advantage of the offer.

The second factor Hoffman suggested as influential is an adjustment to the referral incentives that makes mentoring new vendors more appealing. The policy of offering free papers to vendors when their recruits hit a personal sales goal is relatively new, he said, and was proving effective at encouraging long-term relationships between new and experienced vendors. Essentially, he said, more experienced vendors have an incentive to mentor and assist new vendors. Beckett noted that this is particularly evident in the case of Woods, who Beckett said had made a concerted effort to recruit new vendors. Beckett similarly pointed to increases in recruitment among vendors as a reason for *Groundcover's* successes.

The third factor Hoffman suggested is a change in the training procedure so that vendors now receive a breakdown of selling techniques rather than a vague instruction to simply sell the paper. For example, during orientation, vendors are told that a sales approach consists of three parts: the hook, in which the vendor gets a passer-by's attention; the pitch, in which they explain what *Groundcover* is and how their purchase can help; and the close, in which the vendor directly asks if the passer-by would like to purchase a copy. In addition to these detailed instructions, the vendor also receives a list of suggested hooks and pitches to try with various customers such as UM students or large groups of people. Woods, for example, demonstrated these sort of hooks when he would ask passers-by if they would like to "help out the celebrity of the month," referencing the cover story in which he was featured. Only if a curious passer-by

stopped would he follow up with a pitch, explaining what *Groundcover* does as a street paper, and ask if they would like to make a purchase.

Beckett added a fourth factor to *Groundcover's* rising circulation: that the organization was enjoying greater awareness within Ann Arbor and surrounding suburbs after increased press coverage in the previous year or so. One example of this was the 2014 Vendor Appreciation Week. Community members were invited to pair with a vendor and hit the streets to sell in the Michigan winter. Local celebrity and UM basketball player Jordan Morgan, in particular, brought attention to *Groundcover* through his participation and enthusiastic use of Twitter to promote it.

Beyond these, factors that contributed to *Groundcover's* success are largely coincidental. Warmer weather brings an increase in pedestrian traffic and thus potential customers, Hoffman pointed out. Several vendors who had been major sellers in the past decided to return in the spring, Beckett added. And as retention of new vendors increased, in some cases due to mentoring relationships, Beckett said that overly aggressive, problematic vendors had tapered off.

Conclusion

The story of *Groundcover News* shows how a single sales pitch in Seattle in 2009 ultimately led to financial support and social advocacy for more than 200 homeless and low-income vendors in a city across the country. This spreading and sharing of ideas is largely characteristic of the modern street paper movement, and explains why many street papers share similar elements and policies. *Groundcover*, in particular, stands out as a beneficial case study when considering a startup newspaper for Syracuse for the following reasons:

- 1. It's a thriving paper.** For obvious reasons, it's beneficial to model a startup paper around a business plan that's successful.
- 2. It's relatively young.** Its development since 2010 can easily be tracked and replicated without factoring in major societal or macroeconomic changes.
- 3. It's based in a liberal, university-influenced city.** It's reasonable to think that a Syracuse paper would have a similar relationship to the city and namesake university.
- 4. Ann Arbor is similar in size to Syracuse.** The U.S. Census Bureau puts Ann Arbor at approximately 117,000 people to Syracuse's 144,000 ("Ann Arbor"; "Syracuse").

It's important to note that Syracuse and Ann Arbor differ in many significant ways as well, and that success for *Groundcover News* in Ann Arbor by no means implies success for a startup paper in Syracuse. The *Groundcover* case study should simply be one consideration when analyzing conditions for a potential paper in Syracuse.

Chapter 3

A Street Paper for Syracuse

People who work with the city's poor and homeless populations say Syracuse has never hosted a street paper. Analyzing characteristics of the city, particularly through comparison to previously identified measures for success, can help determine whether Syracuse is well suited for a street paper. This analysis additionally helps identify what obstacles a startup street paper could expect.

Because a street paper essentially depends on a city's poor and homeless population — for both the labor pool and the beneficiaries — this demographic is key when considering a startup street paper in Syracuse. In 2014, Syracuse was named the 23rd-poorest city in the U.S., and the Near Westside neighborhood continues to carry a nationwide reputation for poverty (Eisenstadt). This translates to an average 28.2 percent of Syracuse families living below the poverty line between 2009 and 2013, which is more than double New York's 11.7 percent average. The unemployment rate in Syracuse is 7.1 percent, again more severe than New York's average 5.9 percent rate. As a final metric, 28.7 percent of individuals in Syracuse receive SNAP benefits, formerly known as Food Stamps, compared to 14.5 percent of individuals in New York (U.S. Census Bureau, "American Community Survey"). Eligibility for SNAP benefits is determined by income proportional to household size. In this sense, statistics suggest there is a substantial potential vendor population in Syracuse.

To narrow this potential vendor population to the homeless, data from the Housing and Homeless Coalition of Syracuse and Onondaga County (HHC) is beneficial. Following guidelines from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HHC conducts yearly

point-in-time surveys that record the number of people who are unsheltered or who are staying in emergency shelters on a given night in January. While these numbers effectively quantify Syracuse's homeless population, HHC coordinator Melissa Marrone said they are not averages. The numbers fluctuate throughout the year, she said, and tend to increase in warmer months. According to HHC point-in-time surveys, emergency shelters in Syracuse hosted 490 individuals on a sample day in 2014; 463 individuals in 2013; and 390 individuals in 2012. In terms of unsheltered individuals, or those who live and sleep on the streets, Syracuse has very few — just seven counted in 2014 and six in 2013. Jim Taylor, a program director with Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, said this is because HHC is very efficient in identifying unsheltered individuals and rapidly finding them emergency shelter.

In several interviews with social services representatives, the relative lack of affordable housing came up as an issue related to poverty in Syracuse. Amanda Erwin, communications specialist at the Rescue Mission, particularly identified this as a factor that exacerbates poverty in the area. Housing often claims a major portion of an individual's income, she said, leaving little money for other basic living expenses such as food. Taylor explained with an example:

If someone is on public assistance, an individual might be getting \$400. But they're spending \$400 on an efficiency apartment. That would be taking all their public assistance grant, and \$400 hardly pays the utility bill in something the size of this room (his office). So if you're going to find housing, it's either going to be low quality or ... really small.

The most recent census data states that 50.3 percent of Syracuse's population spends 35 percent or more of its household income on gross rent ("American Community Survey"). This does not reflect a particularly expensive housing market in Syracuse, said Julie Gilbert, who helps low-income people find housing as the Samaritan Center's resource and referral specialist. The median monthly rent payment in Syracuse is \$708, and more than 6,000 people — approximately

18.4 percent of renters — pay less than \$500 (U.S. Census Bureau; “American Community Survey”). The issue is that low-income Syracuse residents often depend on public assistance grants, which do not necessarily cover even this relatively low cost of living. For example, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), better known as disability benefits, constitutes a total monthly income of \$808 in New York (Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance).

Further, Taylor said, Syracuse lost some of its low-income housing units within the past 10 years or so, which exacerbates the situation. Gilbert also said downtown development and gentrification in recent years has limited affordable housing. She added that in her experience, finding affordable housing for families in Syracuse is much easier than finding affordable housing for individuals. This is a problem for the Samaritan Center, for example, because most guests are single. “I think that’s a huge reason why they’re poor,” she said. “If you have an emergency or a loss of an income or something like that in a two-income household, the other person can help shoulder it and get through it. Without the security of two incomes, an illness is devastating.”

Statistics on poverty and the local housing market ultimately show that Syracuse has a sizable low-income population (Appendix G). This suggests that there are a good number of people in the city who could sell street papers, particularly to supplement a fixed income such as Social Security or SSI.

Support of a Sponsoring Nonprofit Organization

Because Syracuse has a strong social service presence, it is likely that a street paper could find some sort of institutional support in Syracuse. The city hosts 13 emergency shelters, said Marrone, the HHC coordinator, and the HHC counts approximately 40 member agencies. These

social service organizations work together closely and effectively, added Taylor, of Catholic Charities. This is demonstrated by the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), he said, which is an online database that representatives from any agency can update with information about a particular person. The effect is that caseworkers can keep up-to-date on the needs of the people they work with, even when the individuals seek resources at multiple agencies. The HMIS also makes it relatively easy for caseworkers to find an individual on any given night. “It’s a small enough city that on any given night, the four or five hundred people we have that are homeless, we can tell where they are,” Taylor said. “People aren’t hard to track down.”

Even when someone does seem to disappear from the HMIS, said Gilbert, of the Samaritan Center, there is a strong likelihood they will end up eating a free meal at the Samaritan Center. In part, this is because the Samaritan Center offers a no-questions-asked policy that allows guests to eat without registering or signing in. This tends to appeal to the working poor, whom Gilbert said often feel guilty about accepting aid they assume is for those even poorer than themselves, as well as those who want to live “off the grid.” She explained:

If somebody, say, falls off the wagon and isn’t reporting back to where they’re staying, they’re probably still coming here because we don’t ask questions. Or if someone gets upset at a shelter and decides to go sleep outside, they’re probably still coming here.

She added that the Samaritan Center policy against formally recording names and Social Security numbers does not mean the interactions are anonymous. Samaritan Center workers and guests build connections during meals, so it is not uncommon for a worker to ask around if a guest has not visited for a while.

The number of social service organizations in Syracuse, as well as the coordination between them, suggests that a startup paper could take advantage of an existing network of

potential vendors. The coordination among social service agencies especially means that street paper organizers could contact vendors with relative ease. This is important when considering that low-income vendors often lack reliable access to communication channels such as cell phones or email; the ability to locate and interact with vendors face to face in turn becomes critical in establishing and maintaining a strong vendor base. Further, because Syracuse hosts multiple social service organizations, it is likely that at least one would be willing and able to connect with a startup street paper. This would allow the startup paper to focus on establishing itself as a credible and functional organization in its first year or so, rather than expend resources on maintaining a legal status or creating a board of directors. Working with an existing organization would also lend a startup paper name recognition, a 501(c)(3) legal status and resources such as initial capital, office space or basic supplies.

A Positive Connection to the Host Community

It seems likely that a Syracuse street paper would face some challenges in overcoming negative connotations of panhandling and homelessness. *The Cleveland Street Chronicle* and its relatively low circulation numbers demonstrate that a city hardened to panhandling proves a difficult market for street papers. Syracuse, with a similarly controversial history with panhandling, would likely face a similar and challenging path in overcoming these negative connotations.

Drawing on seven years' experience and observation through her job at the Samaritan Center, Gilbert said she felt Syracuse is characterized by a very suburban mentality that in turn stigmatizes the poor and homeless. "I know people that are my age, in their 20s, and they say, 'I don't go downtown. That's where you're going to get shot,'" Gilbert said. "I think that people in

Syracuse have a lot of misunderstanding of the poor and a lot of fear.” This stereotyping is not unique to Syracuse, she said, nor does she feel it reflects an underlying cruelty. More so, she said, it reflects ignorance and inexperience regarding the poor and homeless. Gilbert, along with Taylor of Catholic Charities and Erwin of the Rescue Mission, wryly referenced the vitriolic reader comments that often appear below Syracuse.com articles about poverty and homelessness to exemplify the city’s unfavorable attitude.

Contributing to this mentality are repeated incidents that reflect poorly on the poor and homeless, which are picked up by local news outlets. The assault on a retired Syracuse Police Department officer by a homeless man on Oct. 5, 2014 stands out as one example (Almendarez). The officer was working as a private security guard for downtown businesses at the time. Another example that addresses panhandling specifically is the well-publicized complaint of a local business owner, who in late summer 2014 argued that the homeless encampment outside his Erie Boulevard building was affecting his business (Tobin, “Smith Restaurant Supply”). This complaint prompted Syracuse city officials to encourage the public not to give money to panhandlers, which to some extent hardens existing attitudes against panhandling in Syracuse. Paul Driscoll, commissioner of the Department of Neighborhood and Business Development, is quoted in a Sept. 3 Syracuse.com article on the topic: “We all agreed that giving direct cash to folks was not helping individuals and making the overall problem worse” (Tobin, “homeless strategy”). Responding to the issue on behalf of the HHC, Marrone offered a more nuanced perspective in a Sept. 12 letter to the editor. “How concerned citizens engage with people who are panhandling is their choice, though the HHC believes there are more effective and efficient ways to donate to help these individuals,” she wrote. “Panhandling and homelessness are not one in the same.” Marrone said in an email that the County Department of Mental Health and the

City of Syracuse Department of Neighborhood and Business Development are continuing to address the issue through a joint effort aimed at dealing with the dozen or so “aggressive” panhandlers downtown. Rather than planning a broad campaign against all panhandling in Syracuse, Marrone wrote, their goal is to consider the issue on an individual level. She said part of this would involve researching what other communities have done to address similar situations.

Although this example demonstrates that public opinion in Syracuse tends to be antagonistic toward panhandling, no ordinance in the Syracuse Municipal Code prohibits it. Richard Schoff, commanding officer of the Syracuse Police Department’s Community Policing Division, explained that the only legal restrictions on panhandling come from related offenses. New York law prohibits individuals from standing in the roadway where sidewalks are provided, for example, and similarly prohibits individuals from standing in roadways or any part of a state highway to sell to an occupant of a vehicle (Sec. 27.1156; Sec. 27.1157). Schoff said panhandlers at highway off-ramps — where most panhandling in Syracuse takes place — or in the Erie Boulevard median can be ticketed for violating these laws. Another offense related to panhandling is harassment, Schoff said, but ticketing panhandlers for that is far less common. “It’s a high bar to reach,” he said. “I’ve never arrested anybody for it, but I’m sure it’s happened.”

While the public may associate vendors with panhandlers, particularly when unfamiliar with the concept of street papers, it is important to remember that vendors and panhandlers are not one and the same. Sam White, a permit specialist in Syracuse’s Central Permit Office, said a vendor would better be classified legally as a peddler, defined in the Revised General Ordinances of the City of Syracuse as such: “Peddler shall mean an individual who sells or offers for sale

any food, goods, wares, merchandise or services within the City of Syracuse. Peddler shall not include the sale or delivery of newspapers or periodicals” (Sec. 9-78). White said this means that vendors would be permitted to sell a street paper in Syracuse without a peddler license, which in turn would save a startup street paper significant expense. Peddler licenses run \$75 per month; \$50 per week; or \$20 per day, according to city ordinances (Sec. 9-83).

Although vendors are not technically licensees through the city — and therefore not subject to the terms of a peddler license, according to White — adhering to these terms would be advisable in order to maintain a good relationship with city officials. These terms restrict business hours to 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. within the city of Syracuse, or 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in residential neighborhoods (Sec. 9-87.1). They also prohibit peddlers from approaching any entryway that does not face a street; mandate that peddlers must depart a business or residence immediately when asked to do so; and forbid peddlers from using deceptive acts, physical abuse, threats, intimidation or harassment in the course of business (Sec. 9-87.2). Richard Turk, residence director at the Syracuse Downtown YMCA, suggested that street paper organizers should also communicate with the Downtown Committee of Syracuse as a way to further ensure that vendors stay on good terms with the city. The nonprofit Downtown Committee represents the interests of property owners and tenants in Syracuse’s central business district. “You kind of want their blessing,” Turk said. “If you’re going to be down there working, you want them to have an understanding of what (the street paper) is.” Connecting with the Downtown Committee could also help legitimize a startup paper, Turk continued, and make clear that it is not a scam or ploy.

Because selling a street paper is often perceived as panhandling, an existing negative attitude toward panhandling may be difficult to overcome. This suggests that establishing the paper as legitimate — both by distinguishing the paper from panhandling and by educating the

public on the nature of street papers in general — would be critical to a Syracuse street paper's success. Close communication and cooperation with the Downtown Committee and local law enforcement officials would help toward this end. A well designed and informative website, as well as visible advertisement of the paper's name on vendor gear, could also help. If it could be fit in a meager startup budget — perhaps possible given that a startup paper would not be spending money for peddler licenses — a publicity campaign educating the public on the nature of street papers might be most effective. Through whatever channels, legitimizing the street paper as a business in public perception would be critical.

A Host City with Areas High in Pedestrian Traffic

The greatest challenge to a street paper in Syracuse would likely be the lack of sufficient pedestrian traffic to constitute a consumer base. With an estimated 144,000-person population according to the 2013 census, Syracuse is small in comparison to major cities with successful street papers such as San Francisco, Washington, D.C. or Nashville. While size is not in itself a determining factor, several interviewees suggested that the limited foot traffic in Syracuse could be a problem. Erwin, of the Rescue Mission, said that although business areas like Hanover Square or Armory Square host a fair amount of foot traffic during lunch hours or after typical work hours, the population as a whole in Syracuse likely is not large enough to sustain a street paper. Taylor, of Catholic Charities, explained it this way: “Your foot traffic are the people who work in offices downtown, and you'd see the same person a couple times a day. So you wouldn't be getting a new market.”

Taylor said the areas where panhandlers currently congregate have proven the most effective for catching passers-by's attention, so a street paper might do well in these areas as

well. Since he feels most people buy street papers out of charitable intent rather than a real desire for the journalistic content, however, he said selling in these areas might not be any more effective than simply panhandling. “I don’t know if it’d be any more effective than flying a sign,” he said. Gilbert, of the Samaritan Center, suggested that outside a downtown coffee shop would be the ideal place to sell a street paper. This would require significant coordination with downtown businesses, she added, which might oppose vendors lingering near entryways.

In this sense, limited pedestrian traffic would pose a significant obstacle to a startup street paper. I believe this would necessitate a modest vendor base — perhaps 10 vendors at most — so not to overwhelm the market. Street papers in Toledo, Cleveland and New Orleans have supported similarly limited vendor pools, so this could reasonably work from a business perspective.

An Enforced Code of Conduct for Vendors

Given the negative connotations of panhandling in Syracuse, an enforced code of conduct would be especially important in establishing a street paper as a credible institution. Gilbert, of the Samaritan Center, suggested that a training program of some sort should vet potential vendors. “I think you’d just need to have a strong pilot program,” she said. A training program could weed out potentially aggressive vendors and identify particularly committed vendors, she reasoned, which in turn could ensure a more positive perception of the startup paper. And having a strong base of initial vendors would be especially important in establishing a startup paper in Syracuse, she continued, when the public will not naturally distinguish a vendor from a panhandler. While all street papers have vendor trainings of some sort, Gilbert’s suggestion of an aggressive vetting system would be unusual. Given that Syracuse’s population and light

pedestrian traffic could likely support only a few vendors, however, a more rigorous training and authorization process at a Syracuse paper seems reasonable. This could simultaneously limit the number of vendors in Syracuse and ensure that accepted vendors benefit and reflect well on the organization.

In addition to adhering to a code of conduct, I would advise vendors at a startup paper in Syracuse to wear some sort of identifying uniform item. Since the intention of this, too, would be to clearly distinguish vendors from panhandlers, this identifying item should be larger and more attention-grabbing than a simple ID badge. To keep costs modest, I would suggest a colorful hat or a mesh vest that could be worn over clothes in a wide range of seasons. This would be worn in addition to a personalized ID badge, which would ensure that only registered vendors sell the papers. All identifying items should clearly advertise the name of the publication as well.

Vendors would be key in establishing a startup paper as a legitimate and credible institution. By adhering to a code of conduct and by wearing easily identifiable gear, vendors could cast themselves as respectable entrepreneurs and separate themselves from panhandlers. The code of conduct and the consequences for breaking it could easily be adapted from an existing street newspaper, as is often the practice with startup papers.

A High Quality Journalistic Publication

Quality journalism seems like a reasonable expectation in Syracuse, and one that could help a startup street paper's long-term chances at success. Given that customers often buy street papers out of charitable intent — meaning that in terms of motivation there is relatively little difference between giving money to a panhandler and giving money to a vendor — an independently desirable product could give vendors a needed advantage. “If the paper is seen as

charitable and educational, it could also get some legs under it because it's informative," said Turk, of the YMCA. "If it gives good information, then it'll get around."

Recruiting trained reporters for a Syracuse paper does not seem particularly difficult, given the presence of colleges such as Syracuse University. The S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, in particular, could provide a base of interested writers and volunteers, similar to the way that students at the University of Michigan organized as volunteers for *Groundcover News* or the way that University of Wisconsin-Madison students support that city's *Street Pulse*. Certainly an editor would need to be hired to coordinate content for a startup street paper, but finding writers to produce content does not seem problematic.

In terms of content, Turk, of the YMCA, suggested that a street paper could be especially valuable by publishing information about resources available to the poor and homeless in Syracuse. Often he works with residents at the YMCA who don't know where to go when "down on their luck," he said, and their families and friends are often similarly ignorant. A street paper, he said, could help to educate readers on what resources are available. I would advise an editorial staff to incorporate this idea into journalistic articles. For example, an article detailing the long waiting list for Section 8 housing vouchers in Syracuse would educate readers on affordable housing, or a profile of a key figure in a social service organization would likewise educate a reader on resources at his or her organization. While these issues are covered in local mainstream media to some extent, a street paper could provide a unique opportunity to expand and emphasize such coverage.

An emphasis on journalistic content should not overwhelm the importance of vendors' voices and perspectives. I would advise editors to balance journalistic content with columns, articles, poetry and artwork submitted by vendors, which could provide an alternative

perspective on issues related to poverty and homelessness. “I think it would also be a really good opportunity ... to shift people’s perceptions,” said Gilbert, of the Samaritan Center. As an example, she described a conversation at the Samaritan Center in which chatter among guests had ranged from the recent professional football game to Islamic State terrorists attacks. She said the Syracuse public doesn't necessarily realize that such intense and intelligent conversations can and do happen among the poor and homeless. “A paper could be a means to bridge that gap,” she continued.

In this sense, I believe a fairly equal balance of journalistic content and vendor-submitted pieces would be most reasonable and effective for a startup paper in Syracuse. This content should further be packaged in a visually appealing and well-designed newsprint format, because this could help to attract positive attention from passers-by. In Syracuse, where vendors will likely already be struggling to catch the attention of a limited pedestrian population, this would be especially important.

Conclusion

A startup paper in Syracuse seems to face two major challenges beyond those that any cash-strapped startup paper would face: an antagonistic attitude toward panhandling and limited pedestrian traffic. Given enough time to establish itself, a street paper could reasonably address antagonism toward panhandling through a public awareness campaign and identifying gear. The relative lack of pedestrian traffic, in turn, stands out as the biggest issue for a startup paper in Syracuse.

Adapting to this by limiting the number of authorized vendors is advisable under the circumstances, but this would notably limit the scope of success for a Syracuse street paper. For

example, the amount of work hours spent producing a paper would not lessen because only six vendors are selling it. Similarly, a low circulation would likely mean higher printing costs per issue — *Groundcover News* demonstrates that bulk printing orders are actually a greater value. In this sense, a small-scale paper could prove effective on one level but relatively inefficient on another.

Another consideration in a small market is the sales period. It seems that a monthly publication schedule would be reasonable for a startup paper with a limited budget. However, vendors would likely be making far fewer sales by the end of the month in this case, having quickly saturated the relatively small customer market. A shorter selling period — perhaps weekly or biweekly issues — would work better in a small market because a more frequent product would enable vendors to cycle through the buying population more often. Biweekly circulation is a recommendable long-term goal for a startup Syracuse street paper, but I do not believe it would be reasonable with limited human and financial resources in the paper's first year or so.

Taken as a whole, this suggests that a Syracuse street paper is not inherently poised for success. While existing papers with similarly low vendor bases and city populations demonstrate that this obstacle is not insurmountable, it should certainly be a key consideration when planning a startup paper's budget and editorial schedule. Editors and organizers would have to keep this and other challenges, such as an antagonistic attitude toward panhandling, in mind in all decisions — and particularly so in the first months of operation when the street paper is still developing recognition in the community. In this case, I think a street paper could eventually thrive in Syracuse.

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Appendix A

Vendor Profiles

A supplemental income: Rissa Haynes



When it comes to Social Security, Rissa Haynes steps onto her soapbox.

“Social Security, you know, it doesn’t really provide anything but rent,” she said. Food, medication, toiletries — everything that the Michigan native needs on a day-to-day basis — is left up to her.

Of course, she’s quick to point out that government dependency is not her ideal situation. She’d much prefer to earn her own way, she said. That’s why she earned a technical management degree from DeVry University in 2007 and is currently working on a master’s degree in technical education and business administration. But when her studies didn’t translate into a job — especially frustrating, she added, since she had returned to school as a non-traditional student — her financial options became limited.

Enter *Groundcover News*.

Haynes became the street paper's eighth vendor in 2010, putting her among the original vendors who sold the inaugural issue on Ann Arbor's streets. She's been a relatively constant presence both in the organization's office and the city's streets ever since. For the business-oriented Haynes, who said she'd always wanted to go into business for herself, *Groundcover* offers both a supplemental income and a legitimate entrepreneurial opportunity.

When publisher Susan Beckett and her early staff first pitched the job at Ann Arbor's Delonis Center, the homeless shelter where Haynes was eating that afternoon, she said she jumped on the offer to buy papers for \$.25 and resell them for \$1.

"I just thought, 'You can't beat this with a stick,'" Haynes said. "That's a profit margin. ... I jumped right on it."

That profit margin was putting about \$260 in her pocket each month as of May 2014, she said, when she estimated that she was selling about 350 copies of each monthly issue. And that's significantly less than the 800 papers she used to sell each month in front of the People's Food Co-op before a health-related sabbatical, from which she was just returning in May. Those sales numbers had put \$600 in her pocket each month, even before factoring in customers who tack additional donations onto the \$1 cover price.

These high sales translated into a "corner card" before her sabbatical, which gave her priority over any vendor who might want to sell in front of the Co-op. That in turn paved the way for some of the repeat customers that she now counts among her friends.

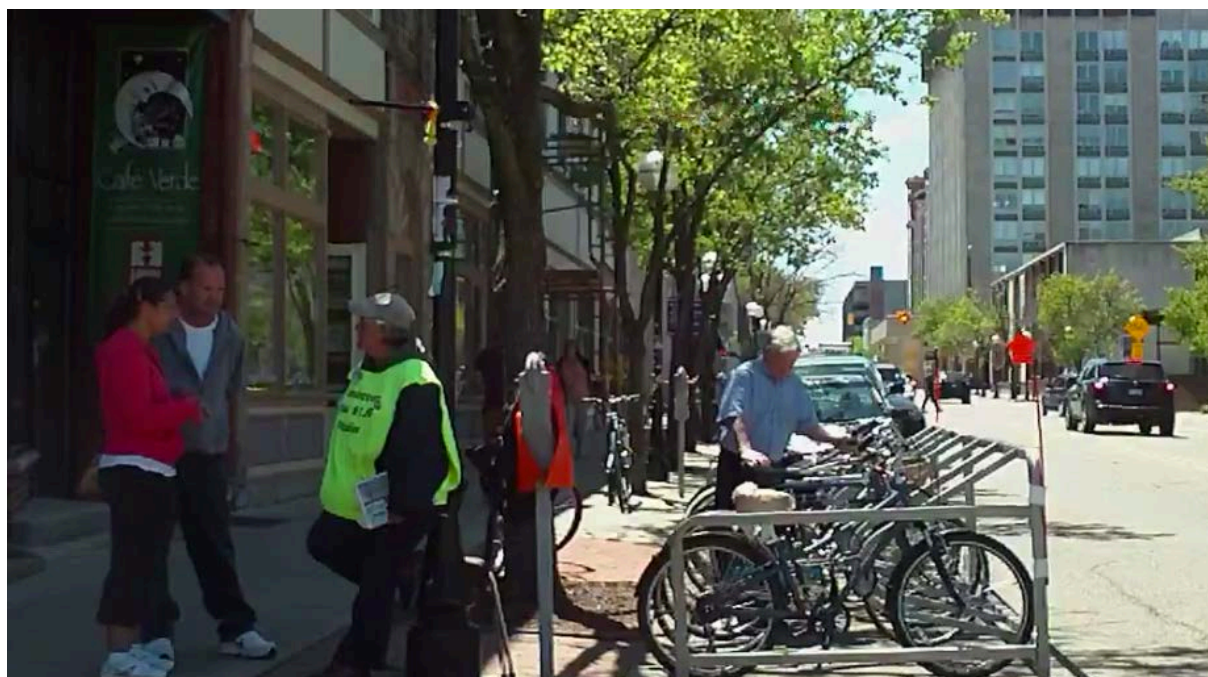
"I get customers when I'm on the corner who just hug me," she said. "We have such philanthropic-minded residents here and I'm blown away by their generosity, their consideration."

For Haynes, with her business mindset, one major benefit of *Groundcover* is its legitimacy. Each vendor card is stamped by the city and the state, she emphasized, differentiating vendors from the panhandler she faced off with when she first staked a spot in front of the Co-op, for example.

"That was his territory and I really invaded his property," she remembered. "But it wasn't really his property because he didn't have a badge and I did."

"We are a legitimate business," she said.

A sense of community: Peggy Donham



It sounds silly to call *Groundcover News* a family, admits Peggy Donham. But that’s the quality that keeps the two-year vendor standing on Ann Arbor’s street corners between 7 and 9 a.m. each morning.

Donham started selling *Groundcover* in 2012 at the suggestion of a friend who was already working as a vendor. As the street paper’s 98th of more than 200 trained vendors, she had distinguished herself as one of *Groundcover*’s most consistent vendors by May 2014. But more importantly, she said, she had found a family both inside and outside of the social justice-oriented organization.

A self-described morning person, Donham prefers to wake up early to sell papers on the sidewalk that her “corner card” reserves for her any time she feels like selling: in front of the People’s Food Co-op. Her selling style is fairly passive — she’s not one to shout her sales pitches to every passer-by — but she’s developed a community of repeat customers regardless, she said.

The Co-op tends to attract a clientele that’s particularly supportive of the paper, she noted. And the \$1-off coupon that the Co-op has been printing in the \$1 paper since its early days certainly helps, she added. Customers who buy the paper for \$1 can recoup it all when they shop.

But for Donham, who is comfortably sheltered in an affordable housing unit and financially stable through medical retirement payments and pension, sales numbers and strategies aren’t critically important. Her *Groundcover* profits are helpful for letting her relax about finances and

pay off minor debts, she said. By selling all 800 papers that keep her corner card up-to-date in a month, she can put a not-insignificant \$600 in her pocket monthly. But the money is secondary to the person-to-person connections she makes on the job.

“When I wake up in the morning, I look forward to that,” Donham, who was diagnosed with depression in 1988, said of her customer interactions. “That helps me so much. That’s worth more than anything I make in a day.”

She has friends in both the Co-op’s clientele and management, she said. And at St. Mary Student Parish, where she’s also been selling papers for about two years, she said she similarly is surrounded by familiar faces.

“I feel so welcomed, like I’m part of that family,” she said.

Community is what draws Donham to *Groundcover* as an organization as well. There, she said, she attends organized social hours at least once a month to catch up with other vendors, many of whom she counts among her friends. And there, she said she often heard former operations manager Greg Hoffman asking about vendors he hasn’t seen around lately or publisher Susan Beckett talking about visiting a vendor who had landed in jail.

“Wherever you’re at in your life, she keeps that connection,” Donham said of Beckett. “I like that a lot.”

A fulltime job: Joe Woods



Joe Woods took to selling *Groundcover News* like a natural.

“I have a sales background,” Woods explained in between enthusiastic pitches to Main Street’s pedestrian traffic. “I did door-to-door sales, from the age of 18 to 25.”

Where Woods sold papers on a bright May morning was just next to the corner where he first learned about *Groundcover* in 2012. He had recently returned to Michigan to take care of his mother after a car accident, he explained, and he’d been out on Main Street looking for work. That’s when another vendor piqued his curiosity and, after a conversation, encouraged him to go to a *Groundcover* orientation.

Two years later, Woods is a sales leader at *Groundcover*, where he’s one of just a few who rely on *Groundcover* profits as a sole form of income. The organization staff touts him as a leader among vendors, citing his regular attendance at social hours and naming him as a model for new vendor mentorship.

But Woods laughs when you point out his leadership qualities to him.

“Me, I’m just a vendor,” he said. “If I can help somebody, I’ll help somebody. But I just consider myself a vendor.”

With *Groundcover* as his full-time employment, Woods said he's usually out and about during the week between about 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. He likes selling at the intersection of Liberty and Main streets as well as at the Michigan Theater, he said. But he finds walking around the most effective — he prefers the “element of surprise,” he said.

This works particularly well for Woods given his decision to focus on “special issue” papers rather than the monthly issues that most *Groundcover* vendors sell. These papers, published every sixth month and featuring content from street papers across the U.S., are sold for \$10 rather than \$1. For Woods, that means a greater profit for each sale.

And once customers get over the initial shock of doling out \$10 for a newspaper, he said, his sales are pretty good. He almost sold 100 papers in each of the last few months, he said, putting his monthly profits at close to \$1,000.

Some of this profit is earmarked for an apartment of his own, said Woods, who currently saves himself monthly rent payments by staying with a cousin. He's slowly saving for an apartment that he can afford — and that he likes, he emphasized, naming one of Ann Arbor's less desirable suburbs with a laugh.

“I don't want to live in Ypsi,” he said.

A creative outlet: Sasha Williams

Williams, who sells for Washington, D.C.'s Street Sense, was not interviewed as part of the Groundcover News case study.



Almost as soon as Sasha Williams finished her vendor orientation at Washington, D.C.'s *Street Sense*, she was back in the office for a writing workshop. And she was excited, she said — she hadn't had any real opportunity to express herself since she quit publishing poems online around 2004.

“Ten years later, I'm getting back to what I should have been doing,” said Williams, still a relatively new vendor in July 2014. “I'm excited for that opportunity.”

Williams, a working mother of an 8-year-old daughter, said she had actually been looking for a writing workshop when she ran into a *Street Sense* vendor and started chatting. Although Williams had known about the paper since 2012, this conversation ultimately convinced her to sit for an orientation. It's a move she credited with bringing both a supplementary income and a writing outlet into her life.

Weeks after her initial orientation, Williams had introduced *Street Sense* into her already packed daily routine. She usually sells papers for an hour or so in the morning four days of the week, she explained, before hopping on the metro to drop her daughter with an aunt. Then Williams heads to her primary job in direct sales. Her schedule, which she checks every morning, is conveniently flexible — so long as she visits all the businesses she's assigned, she can make her sales at her own time. When she wraps this up, she returns to pick up her daughter in the evening again.

Selling each paper at a \$1.50 profit margin — buying for \$.50 and reselling for \$2 — she estimated that she can make between \$60 and \$65 in a morning through *Street Sense*.

And while extra income certainly helps the young mother, what really excites her about *Street Sense* is the opportunity for creative expression. Taking a break from the poem she was working on at an afternoon writing workshop at the *Street Sense* office, she said she was excited to see her work published in an upcoming edition. And she likes getting feedback on her poems during the loosely organized workshops, she added.

“I want to keep voicing everything that's on my mind,” Williams said.

“Sometimes you just are meant to be a certain place at a certain time,” she continued. “I'm in the right place at the right time.”

Photo courtesy of streetsense.org.

Appendix B

Groundcover News video

Link: <https://youtu.be/iN9UXu39Ceo>



Appendix C

Street paper comparison chart

STREET PAPERS: COMPARISON

<u>PUBLICATION NAME</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>YEAR FOUNDED</u>	<u>BUSINESS MODEL</u>	<u>CIRCULATION*</u>
<u>Toledo Streets</u>	Toledo, OH	2009	non-profit; independent	375
<u>Street Sense</u>	Washington, D.C.	2003	non-profit; independent	6,000
<u>Street Sheet</u>	San Francisco, CA	1989	non-profit; under umbrella of separate organization	8,000
<u>The Contributor</u>	Nashville, TN	2007	non-profit; independent	11,000
<u>Street Chronicle</u>	Cleveland, OH	1993	non-profit; under umbrella of separate organization	500
<u>Real Change</u>	Seattle, WA	1994	non-profit; independent	11,500
<u>Spare Change News</u>	Boston, MA	1992	non-profit; under umbrella of separate organization	3,250
<u>Groundcover News</u>	Ann Arbor, MI	2010	non-profit; independent	1,500
<u>StreetWise</u>	Chicago, IL	1991	non-profit; independent	4,500
<u>The Exchange***</u>	New Orleans, LA	2013	non-profit; independent	200

*Estimates reflect weekly circulation in February/March 2015

**Estimated ratio of vendor-produced content to traditional journalistic content in each issue

*** The Exchange is not currently active; numbers reflect the paper at launch during winter 2013.

FREQUENCY	PRICE TO BUYER	PRICE TO VENDOR	WRITER BASE (VENDOR/JOURNALISTS)**	NUMBER OF ACTIVE VENDORS	ADVERTISING	ONLINE CONTENT
monthly	\$1	\$0.25	1/9	8	yes	yes
bi-weekly	\$2	\$0.50	50/50	120	minimal	yes
bi-weekly	\$1	\$0	15/85	240	no	yes
weekly	\$2	\$0.75	75/25	220	minimal	no
quarterly	\$1.25	\$0.35	60/40	20	minimal	yes
weekly	\$2	\$0.60	0/100	325	minimal	yes
bi-weekly	\$1	\$0.35	25/75	100	minimal	yes
monthly	\$1	\$0.03	25/75	30	yes	yes
weekly	\$2	\$0.90	50/50	125	minimal	yes
quarterly	\$1	\$0.25	25/75	6	yes	no

VENDOR DISTRIBUTION METHOD CONTENT

First come, first serve	Themed issues; address homelessness and economic inequality indirectly
First come, first serve	1/2 news and feature on poverty and homelessness; 1/2 creative contributions from vendors
First come, first serve	Traditional journalism focused on poverty; also literary journalism, artwork and poetry
First come, first serve; priority for "map badge" vendors	1/2 news and feature on poverty and homelessness; 1/2 creative contributions from vendors
First come, first serve; priority for vendors who produce content	Traditional journalism focused on poverty; also testimonial/editorial content
First come, first serve; priority for top-selling vendors	Traditional journalism, focus on economic issues
Assign primary and secondary location	"Social justice journal"
First come, first serve; priority for top-selling vendors	Mix of traditional journalism and light-hearted content such as puzzles, games, etc.
Assign location at orientation	Content reflects vendors' concerns, as identified through vendor meetings
First come, first serve	Each issue has a theme; mix of traditional journalism and creative content

Appendix D

Sample code of conduct

Code of Conduct

- 1) Vendors must be sober while they represent Real Change to the public. Drug or alcohol use while selling the paper is not allowed. If you appear intoxicated or smell of alcohol, we will not sell you papers.
- 2) Please be respectful of others while selling Real change and while you are in the office. Abusive language or threatening behavior of any form is not acceptable. You represent Real Change, and reflect upon all of us while you sell the paper.
- 3) Vendors must wear their Real Change Badge in a clearly visible manner while they sell the paper.
- 4) The Real Change Badge, and the papers you buy, cannot be loaned or given to another vendor.
- 5) Do not fight with other vendors or panhandlers over turf. Either agree to share space, or find somewhere else to go.

Violation of this Code of Conduct, or of the rules described in the Orientation may result in suspension or termination. Repeated suspensions will result in permanent termination of all rights to sell Real Change or be involved as a member.

I understand that I am responsible for my own tax liability. Suspensions and terminations by staff may be appealed to the Vendor Representatives, but are in effect until overturned.

I have read and fully understand the above Vendor Code of Conduct, and agree to remain within these guidelines while I sell Real Change papers.

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Referring vendor # _____

Staff use only:

Vendor ID #: _____

Vendor Rep: _____

Source: Harris, Timothy and Layla Mewburn. "Street papers: a guide to getting started." International Network of Street Newspapers and the North American Street Newspaper Association.PDF file.

Appendix E

Groundcover News code of conduct



Groundcover News Vendor Code of Conduct

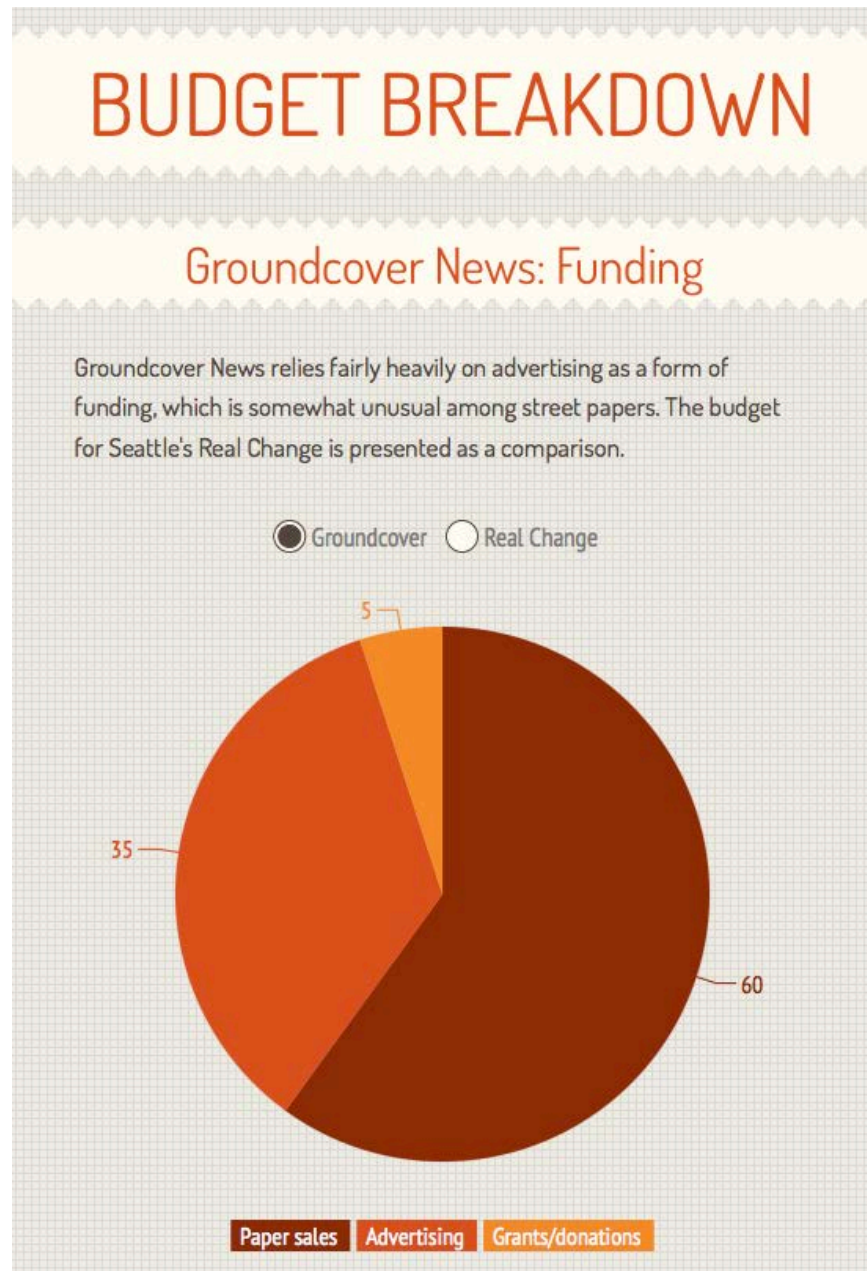
For Vendor

- 1) Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1.00. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or solicit donations by any other means. Special Edition Papers are sold for \$10.
- 2) I will only sell current issues of Groundcover.
- 3) I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle while selling, including panhandling with only one paper.
- 4) I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- 5) I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- 6) I agree to treat all customers, staff, other vendors, respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, and other vendors verbally or physically.
- 7) I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Office staff will not sell me papers if I appear under the influence, or smell of drugs or alcohol. I will not attend Groundcover meetings while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- 8) I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- 9) I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- 10) I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- 11) I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- 12) I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.
- 13) I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

Appendix F

Groundcover News budget infographic

Link: https://infogr.am/budget_breakdown



Paper sales

● **\$0.25**

Amount vendors pay to Groundcover News for each issue.

● **\$1**

Amount vendors charge for each issue of Groundcover News.

Advertising

● **14**

Number of advertisements in the May 2014 issue of Groundcover News

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES

Size	Black and White	Color	Approx. Size
Business card	\$49.95	\$65.95	2 X 3.5
1/8	\$89.95	\$129.95	2.5 X 6.5 or 5 X 3.25
1/6	\$129.95	\$165.95	4.5 X 5.5
1/4	\$159.95	\$215.95	5 X 6.5
1/2	\$299.95	\$399.95	5 X 14 or 10 X 6.5
Full Page	\$495.95	\$669.95	10 X 14

Groundcover News: Expenses

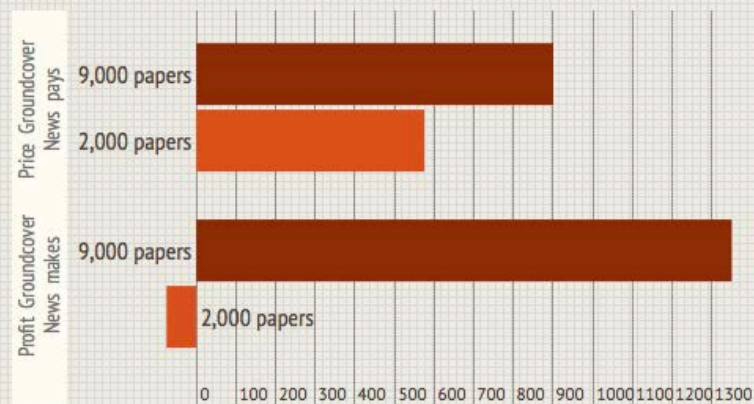
Groundcover News has two major expenses: printing and employees.

Employees

\$650

Amount paid to each of three employees each month.

Printing



All data from Groundcover News, Real Change.



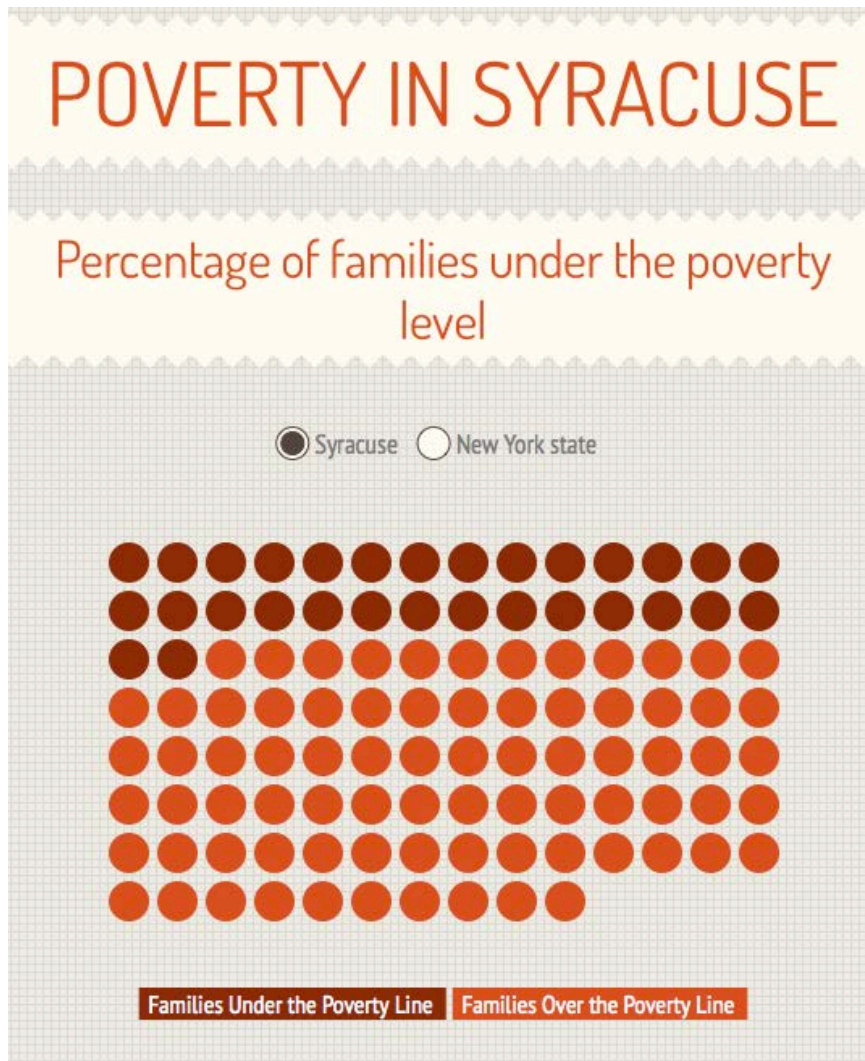
Create infographics

infogr.am

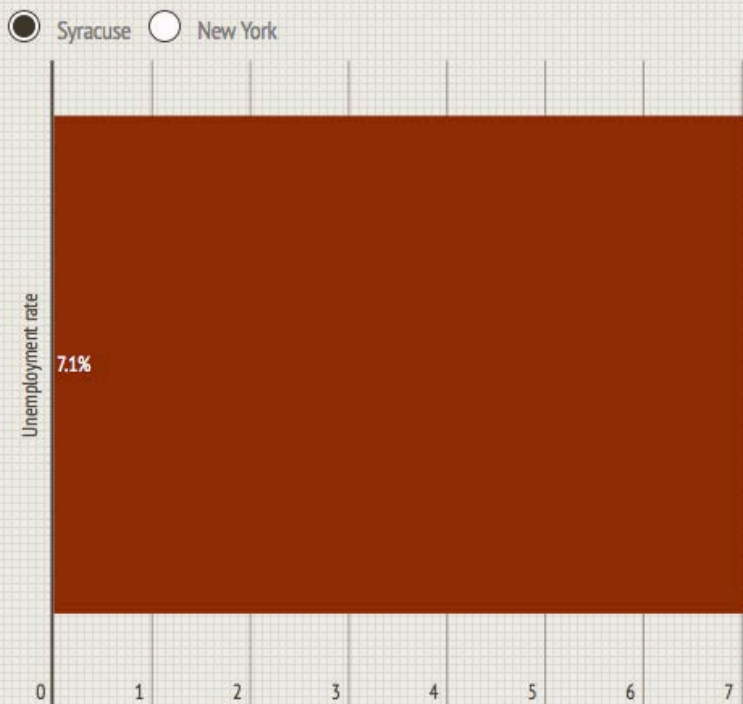
Appendix G

Poverty in Syracuse infographic

Link: <https://infogr.am/poverty-in-syracuse>



Unemployment in Syracuse



Homelessness in Syracuse

490

Number of individuals in emergency shelters on one day in 2014.

7

Number of unsheltered individuals in emergency shelters on one day in 2014.

All data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Create infographics

infogr.am

Appendix H

May 2014 issue of *Groundcover News*

GROUNDCOVER
NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

MAY 2014 VOLUME 5 ISSUE 5

Your donation directly benefits the vendors.
Please buy only from badged vendors

\$1

INSIDE

- Bonds beyond family – p. 2
- AATA expansion – p. 2
- All-season shelter – p. 2
- Found voice – p. 3
- A speech for Obama – p. 3
- Corner Health Center – p. 4
- Supportive housing – p. 5
- Vendor Week – p. 6
- Rare butterfly in area – p. 7
- Puzzle – p. 8
- TEDxYouth @ A2 – p. 9
- Warming Center – p. 10
- Rice & bean salad – p. 12

Meet Vendor Joe – p. 10

www.GroundcoverNews.org f t

Bonds beyond family



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

The lady among us have experienced the deep love of at least one parent. Whatever our parenting experience or not, we are sure to reflect on it during May and June as advertisements abound with come-one-for-perfect presents for Mother's and Father's Day. Watching people perusing the selections of Mother's and Father's Day cards can be difficult for those whose parents can no longer receive or appreciate our expressions of love for them, and for those who were never fortunate enough to have living parental relationships.

As we deal with loss and heat, we learn to find love around us. We form families with our friends and reach out to others who touch our hearts.

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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Facebook.com/groundcover
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734-767-4110

Groundcover: New vendors tell me about customers who have asked the vendors to call them occasionally in winter so they could measure themselves of the vendor's well-being when they hadn't seen them for a while. They tell me about customers who have them over for holiday meals with their families, who help them move, who make sure they're warm. They tell me about customers who got them Christmas presents and drove around with the presents in their cars until they finally spotted the vendor-recipient in April when the weather broke and they could deliver them. They often refer to these customers as their friends.

What I hear when they tell me these things, is that they feel cared for, special to someone. Thank you for reaching out like this and creating family within our community. Though there is no Hallmark day for it, you are appreciated all year long as your expressions of love resonate with those who need it most. Let every hard, deep, spring flower blossom and sunny day renew you and fill you with the love you have so generously shared.

Shelter needed in every season

Elizabeth S. Kurtz, aka "Lit"
Groundcover Vendor #158

The decision to extend the Warming Center has been applauded by many, though I have often heard comments such as, "At least it's not cold in the spring." What many fail to realize is that warmth is only one factor.

Any camping trip will let you know that insects are not kind to people living outdoors. Last year, I struggled along with many of my friends to find relief from the leeches and tiny bumps brought on by insect bites, particularly from the swarms of nocturnal mosquitoes who welcome human skin as one of their choices of sustenance. And then



there are the ants who like to find their way into one's campground, and from what I've heard, they invite their friends and are not willing to leave when asked.

Even when the weather is warm, the risks to human life are enormous when

Welfare Simulation correction: In our March issue, we erroneously stated that the welfare simulation was produced by the Ginsberg Center. In fact, it was not put on by the Ginsberg Center, but by the **Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ)** for the Ginsberg Center. ICPJ has put these simulations on for many different groups (Headstart and WIC conferences, college classes, high school students, social service agencies, public and charter school staff, congregations, etc.) since 2004.

Patients dumped?

Dear Editor,

Reports are currently surfacing that indigent patients from other areas are now being dumped into our community. While this may not be technically illegal, leaving these marginalized people to be dealt with by our own local support agencies is clearly unethical. This type of abuse by far-away institutions should be ended as soon as possible!

Paul Lambert

AATA expansion good for everyone

by Susan Beckett

Young professionals in high-demand fields evaluate their potential new communities as they decide which employment opportunity they will select. Business locales where they can find talent. Unlike most of Michigan, Ann Arbor makes a good showing on both counts, due in large part to the walkability of the city, its vibrancy, and the availability of public transportation.

However, when compared to cities like Chicago, Austin, Boulder, Seattle and much of the east coast, it becomes obvious that not owning a car here means greatly limited housing, shopping, recreation and entertainment options than it does in other high-tech areas. If the Ann Arbor area is to continue attracting and retaining high-growth businesses, it needs to continue investing in full-service public transportation in the region.

Doing so will allow more people to work odd shifts, stay out and party knowing they can get home safely, live in places they can afford, and have choices about where they sleep. Roads

and parking lots will be less congested. It will stimulate growth at all levels of the economic ladder and enhance our quality of life.

For our business, expanded bus service would enable Groundcover transactions to take place in more areas beyond downtown Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor, and be available more on weekend mornings and evenings. Customer convenience and our capacity for workers both increase.

The current plan may not be perfect, and perhaps the AATA could trim its management costs, but as Vladimir warned, the best is the enemy of the good. The aspiration to link nearby cities by rail has been put off for 30 years awaiting the perfect plan. Bus routes and schedules can be adjusted as needed. There is a need now for service to more places throughout the evening and on weekends.

For more information on the May 8 ballot measure, visit our website: www.groundcovernews.org

living outdoors. The ever-present threat of an assault is always foremost on one's mind when sleeping outdoors. Any individual, but particularly a woman, has an increased risk of being the victim of assault.

The weather, of course, brings its own set of problems. Rainy nights bring soaked tents and drenched clothing. The sun, though enjoyed by sunbathers, can be a source of peril for those who cannot escape the high temperatures that accompany it. Windy nights and tornado warnings make fear in the souls of people living outside.

Bathroom use is a constant struggle. From wearing adult diapers to carrying urinals, there are no easy answers.

The Warming Center allows people to be indoors during one fraction of the year. The remaining months can take an exacting toll and should always be considered when dealing with human life.

1001 East Liberty Street
Ann Arbor (734) 769-7750

Shop in for a hand-dipped caramel apple!

Candy by the pound
Buy one six of judge and get one free
Expires Nov. 30, 2014

LOOKING WITHIN

3

Found voice



by Rev. Dr. Martha
Brantell
Groundcover
Contributor

She was different from the other teachers we had in earlier grades. For starters, she hadn't been at the school before. That school year – when I was in the sixth grade, and President Kennedy was shot, and the Beatles came to the Ed Sullivan Show – was her first year at Herman Avenue School. She was considerably younger than the other teachers there and she was Roman Catholic. I don't remember a teacher's religion ever being a topic of conversation before that year, but I did know that Mrs. Dec was Catholic. That identification was a bigger issue in 1963-64.

She had taught in a tough urban school across the state before coming to us. I had to get used to her classroom manner. Her ways seemed harsh and critical at first. She did what she knew well, but we were a very different group of children, on the right side of town, in a much smaller community, well past its prime and glory days.

We were getting ready for Father's Night, an annual evening open house for fathers who worked during the day. The name assumed that all mothers were due to drop into school while it was in session. It turns out that my parents, who both taught, were in the reverse situation. My mother, a high school history teacher, was unavailable throughout the school day. My father, a college professor, had lots of flexibility in the hours he could show up at school. I might have been the only kid in the class whose mother was an attendee at Father's Night.

There was always a flurry of activity in preparation for the open house. This particular year, Miss Becker, our unpleasant art teacher, gave us large sheets of pink paper. Our assignment was to draw an imaginary animal. The critic I created was a whale with short legs and big wings. After our colorful creations were done, they were pinned up on the bulletin board where all our fathers

would see them. Then Miss Becker went up to the bulletin board with her large black crayon, like the ones teachers used then to mark packets of meat, and she proceeded to correct our drawings. I have never forgotten the violation I felt as she "improved on" the products of our imagination.

Although I was well-behaved and an excellent student at school, I marched up to the bulletin board, ripped my pink page off the wall (since it was no longer my drawing), crumpled it up, and threw it in the waste basket. I didn't know what to do next. This was not customary behavior for me. And so I ran out of the room, down the hall and found sanctuary in the girls' bathroom.

Our classroom teachers always had a break during art class. When Mrs. Dec returned to the classrooms, she set out to find me. She discovered me still in the girls' bathroom. She looked at me and said, "What Miss Becker did was wrong. You had every right to throw that drawing away."

In that moment 50 years ago, I learned the importance of sounding your own voice, of giving expression to what you see and want to share. That finding and sounding of voice has remained with me throughout my life personally and professionally. Much of what I say and write, and how I lead, reflects over and over the critical nature of claiming and protecting what we authentically know. Groundcover News is many things for me. One of the most important is that it is a safe and open space for many voices to be heard and to be offered widely. I am glad for each and every one of those voices.

Last I checked via internet, my sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Dec, was still alive in the town where I grew up in upstate New York. It's time I thanked her for that precious gift offered to me in the bathroom of an elementary school so long ago. As this column is emailed to Ann Arbor, another is on its way to her. Thanking her, I also thank you – the various voices, discerned and hesitant, familiar and strange, serious and funny, occasional and often heard, that speak in and beyond the Groundcover News community.

The speech I wish Obama would give

by Keagan Ivers
Groundcover Contributor

America has seen dark times before. Our very birth as a nation was at one point nothing more than a wild fantasy concocted by a group of idealistic dreamers – but against all odds, we made it happen. Soon after, we nearly tore ourselves apart as a nation over the issue of slavery. It seemed at one time that there was no way that half the nation could survive without the forced labor of others, and that our country would never again be united – but against all odds, we made it happen. When we faced the greatest economic crisis in our nation's history, many feared we were doomed – but against all odds, we rose again. When we were threatened by the hatred and bigotry of segregation, many said that integration was a distant dream, but we made it happen. Less than a century after the end of slavery, Nazi Germany under Hitler rose to be a seemingly indomitable power, poised to take over the world. They were an evil that many said could not be stopped – but against all odds, we made it happen. When Soviet Russia rose after the Second World War to become the new global threat to freedom, many said they, too, could not be brought down – but we made it happen.

I say we, because as a nation, we accomplished all of that – and I believe we could do it again, if needed, because we are Americans. We accomplish what others say is impossible, and it has led us to become the greatest nation on earth.

But it will not remain that way for long if we do not take action. We are faced with yet another crisis. But this time, there is no enemy to meet on the field of battle. The threat is not from outside our nation, but from within. Sometimes great nations are not toppled by fists of arms, but by lack of vigilance towards their internal affairs as they endure the slow and steady decay of time. So it was with ancient Rome; so it is with America today. We face the prospect of decline, of no longer being the city on a hill, a shining light and beacon of hope for the rest of the world to gaze upon in wonder.

We have become a nation where luck and birth, not merit, determine one's place in life. We have developed a new aristocracy, similar to the oppressive one we so despised in colonialist Britain. Long ago, we decided that we would become a nation where hard work and talent determined your place in life, giving everybody the chance for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But we are currently failing in that goal. We continue to favor a highly privileged upper class at the expense of the middle and lower classes, and that

has created a new and oppressive oligarchy in America. Our money says "In God we Trust," and this is appropriate, because money has become our national god. If our government continues to worship at the altar of the almighty dollar, our nation will collapse.

I speak today for the single mother working two minimum-wage jobs trying to make ends meet. I speak today for the small business owner working 80-hour weeks, trying to get a new business off the ground. I speak today for the recent college graduate, stuck with tens of thousands of dollars of debt and no job. These people deserve a break. America deserves a break, and needs one. It is in our best national interest that every citizen of our great nation has the tools to realize his or her potential. Every business that goes unfunded for lack of resources or unfair competition, every child that goes uneducated for lack of funds, every person that dies due to a preventable illness is not only a tragedy on the personal level, but a squandered resource and a detriment to our nation.

We have the resources at our fingertips all that is lacking is the political will to extract them. I do not wish to declare war on the wealthy or on businesses, but we as Americans have a sacred duty to help our fellow countrymen, especially those who have not been as fortunate as ourselves. I would ask that the wealthy and profitable corporations make contributions towards that end.

A strong middle class is what has enabled our nation to survive this long. Unbridled capitalism inevitably breeds inequality and erodes the middle class. We need an institution that will correct this and provide a path to the middle class for anyone willing to work hard and take advantage of the opportunities they're given. Too often, people fear government expansion so that I say, make your government fear you. Vote on Election Day, become politically active and informed, do your duty as a citizen, and we as a people will elect representatives who will not allow government overreach to happen. We will, in theory, have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people; the reins of government are in our collective lap, we need only seize them and we can take the power back from the plutocrats and oligarchs that have taken over.

One characteristic that has distinguished our nation throughout its history is our idealism, our ability to work towards a common good. I would ask that we tap into that spirit of cooperation and goodwill once more, with malice towards none, and charity toward all, and become a land of opportunity for everyone again.

Sundays to Savor

Water Hill Music Festival, May 4, 2-6 p.m. Programs at the 600 block of Miner St. and online at waterhill.org

The Swami Beyondananda, comic comedian Steve Bhaerman, headlines an evening of fall equinox FUNdraising for Groundcover News, September 21.



AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

The Corner Health Center: a place where people really care

by Sue Bradin
Groundcover Contributor

One morning, a teenager came to the Corner Health Center with an upper respiratory infection. It turned out that she was having an asthma attack. A nurse gave her two breathing treatments and, when it was discovered that she hadn't eaten in several days, gave her some food. The girl had no insurance or money for medication. The Corner covered the cost and helped her sign up for insurance. She left with another appointment scheduled and a bag of groceries from their food pantry. This is typical of the compassionate care the Corner gives their patients.

The Corner Health Center is currently housed in a renovated historic building on Huron Street in Ypsilanti. It began in 1981 in the old Ypsilanti High School because of the recognition of higher teen pregnancy rates in eastern Washtenaw County. Their mission was to provide teens not only with information on birth control but also with comprehensive health care as well. Once the public schools decided not to offer birth control services, the Corner Health Center moved so that they could continue to offer those services. Their new center opened in 1987 and they have been expanding it ever since. Walking down the warmly colored hallways, I looked at examination rooms and offices with Montique Schines, health educator, and met some of the other staff. I was impressed by their commitment to making the center as welcoming as possible.

The Corner serves youth ages 12-21. There are no income limits, either high or low. They charge on a sliding scale but turn no one away. Clients are asked to pay 10 percent of the cost of the visit. As in the situation described above, they will help someone apply for insurance, often Medicaid, especially since new legislation in Michigan allows many more people to qualify. The Corner pays 67% of the cost for a visit because even after Medicaid coverage, there is still a gap in cost. Anyone, including those who live outside Washtenaw County, is eligible for their services.

Of course, this coverage and many of their other services require outside funding sources. Funders include, among many others, United Way, The Washtenaw County Public Health Department, The Ann Arbor Community Foundation, private donors, and fundraising events.

The Corner's services include general and reproductive health care, pediatric health care for clients' children (including immunizations), mental health services, support groups for parents, classes on childbirth preparation,



The Corner Health Center provides services to adolescents and their babies.

breastfeeding, safe sleep and parenting, fitness and nutrition groups, and referrals to other agencies. They believe in using an "Integrated Care" model in which all health providers of the patient look at her total needs – physical, emotional, economic and social – to come up with a treatment plan. They meet daily as a team to review cases before appointments and come up with a plan that looks at the whole person.

It is often discovered that what may appear on the surface as a purely physical problem may have emotional components, as well. Patients may also struggle because of limited income, homelessness and abuse. Staff is very mindful of the stigma attached to mental health issues. So in the context of a physical exam, this subject can be broached with sensitivity and openness once the problem is discovered and the patient is assured that all medical records are confidential.

Community Support and Treatment Services provides one social worker and the Corner hires another. They both work with patients to help them connect with other services in the community. Through a partnership with the University of Michigan graduate medical education program, a psychiatrist comes one day each week to see clients. All of this care is given in the same building, facilitating treatment for clients with transportation challenges. Medical staff from St. Joe's also provides needed health services.

The Corner also houses an office of the Maternal and Infant Health Program, a Medicaid-funded program that provides nursing, social work and nutritional counseling to pregnant women and parents. This is, again, an on-site program, eliminating the need to travel to other agencies. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – another federally-funded program that provides

workshops engage youth in discussions of the topics that were presented.

The Corner's Youth Leadership Council provides leadership training and development of advocacy skills. Last year, the Council created a public service announcement on bullying prevention. This coming year, the Council will be creating an assessment tool that will be given to patients on "youth friendliness" at the Corner. Plans are also in the works to invite three young people to be on the Corner's board. Staff firmly believe that youth voices need to be heard in determining ongoing and future services and policies.

Staff at the Corner know the importance of making strong ties with the community. Last September, more than 400 community members came out for "Rock the Block," organized by their Youth Leadership Council and agencies serving youth in Ypsilanti. There were performances, food, activities and information. They will be looking again this year and everyone is invited.

At a recent meeting of national health care experts, The Corner was cited as an "out-parade" adolescent health care center, a model that sets the standard for other clinics in the delivery of information to this age group. We are very fortunate to have them so close.

For more information on the Corner Health Center, check out their website, www.cornerhealth.org.

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MAKING CHANGE

58

Save money with supportive housing

by Keagan Irwin
Groundcover Contributor

It turns out that the simple, obvious solution to homelessness – simply providing housing at low or no-cost – is also the most effective and cost-efficient one. It costs more to keep a homeless person on the streets, where they often frequent emergency rooms and jails, than it does to simply give them affordable housing, according to a study conducted by Philip Margano – homelessness policy czar under George W. Bush – and a study conducted by the state of Utah. Programs around the country have been effective at getting people off the streets and out of ERs and into cheap or free housing.

However, housing alone often leaves several problems unaddressed. Many unhoused people have a substance abuse problem, disability, or mental illness, and require further support beyond mere housing.

The solution, which communities around the country are discovering, is supportive housing – affordable housing coupled with support services such as counseling for substance abuse or mental illnesses, job training, job-search assistance, child care and so forth. Many governments have implemented supportive housing projects, and they have been a resounding success.

Utah has reduced homelessness by 78 percent in eight years, and is on track to eliminate homelessness by 2015, according to shant.org. The state started giving away apartments, and assigned each person a caseworker to help them become self-sufficient. Given Utah's conservative politics, it may come as a bit of a surprise that they did this, but they did the research, crushed the numbers, and then created policy based on hard data. If it can happen in a state as conservative as Utah, then it can happen anywhere.

There are also several supportive housing programs in the city of New York. Most of them target specific groups, such as Medicaid users, people with

HIV/AIDS, or veterans, but there are a few general supportive housing programs for those who don't fall under any of those categories. The city also has something called the Supportive Housing Loan Program, which provides financing for nonprofits that want to provide supportive housing. The programs have been a success; in 2005, the city's landmark NY/NY VIII Agreement committed the city to creating 9,000 supportive housing units over 10 years – nearly 7,000 of which had been created as of 2011 – saving New York City taxpayers an estimated \$10,000 per tenant, per year, according to shant.org.

And locally, there's Avalon Housing in Ann Arbor. They're a nonprofit that seeks to provide supportive housing for low-income residents of Washtenaw County. The housing is low-cost rather than free, but is still offered at a significant discount. For example, with Avalon's new Pauline apartments, "fair market" rents would range from \$768-1,232, depending on the size of the apartment in question, whereas Avalon is making them available for \$270-400. Overall, Avalon is home to more than 400 people in 268 apartments scattered across Ann Arbor.

There is an opportunity to build on the success of Avalon. A resolution will be considered at the June 2 Ann Arbor City Council meeting to designate approximately 33 million from the sale of development rights on the downtown library lot towards supportive housing. Local advocates are urging supporters to attend the council meeting and arrive by 6:30 to ensure seating.

Supportive housing has proven to be an effective means of ending or mitigating homelessness. Policy makers can find successes beyond those listed here; supportive housing saves the taxpayers money, but even more importantly restores dignity, stability and hope for a segment of the population that is all-too-often lacking in those areas. Governments everywhere should be encouraged to make the correct choice and implement supportive housing.



HOUSING ACCESS for WASHTENAW COUNTY (HAWC)

734-961-1999

MONDAY – FRIDAY 8:30am – 5pm

Who Should Call?

Individuals or Families:

- At Risk of Homelessness
- Who are Homeless
- Who are in the Eviction Process
- Who may need Financial Assistance for Housing
- Who have any Housing Questions

Please Note:

- All shelters in Washtenaw County are filled by HAWC.

What Happens When I Call?

- You will hear an automatic message and will be next in line if there is a wait. Please stay on the line and listen for additional instructions as appropriate.
- You will talk with a staff member who will help determine if you are eligible for assistance.
- If eligible for assistance, you may be scheduled for an assessment appointment.
- If you are not eligible for assistance or if assistance is not available, you may be given additional resources.

HAWC is a program of The Salvation Army in Washtenaw County in partnership with Interfaith Hospitality Network at Alpha House, The Shelter Association of Washtenaw County, SOS, Housing Bureau for Seniors, Ozona House, Michigan Ability Partners, SafeHouse Center, Washtenaw County OCED, and the Washtenaw Housing Alliance.



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STREET BUZZ

Vendor Week lesson: "It was very cold out"

by Lauren Halperin
U-M Student Contributor

International Street Paper Vendor Week was February 4-10. The Groundcover student group decided that, to celebrate this time of the year, each student would shadow a vendor for a day to help him or her sell, get them coffee, and really just give them some company. I had the pleasure of working with Michael, vendor #163.

I met Michael in front of the Groundcover office. We started our journey on Main Street near Starbucks, went in to get some hot coffee, and then walked a couple blocks after a small altercation over territory with another vendor.

Once we ventured these couple of blocks, we stopped where the sunlight could still reach us between the buildings. Sun was a very sought-after commodity on this cold February afternoon.

The cold weather offers special issues for vendors. People will walk out of an establishment, put their hood on, napkins in, and scarf up to their eyes, determined to get to their next destination as quickly and warmly as possible. This leaves no time to stop and inquire about a \$1 donation for a newspaper for



The author and Michael, seated, sold together during Vendor Week in frigid February.

which this person is then going to have to sacrifice a hand out of their pocket to hold on the way home.

However, Michael was determined. With a smile on his face, he inquired to every person walking by, "Have you read the new issue of Groundcover?"

He was referred about the stories

inside, which allowed him to use that as a selling point to potential customers. He would even playfully use me as a way to gain the attention of passing crowds saying, "She writes for them! She's a great writer! A smart move, if I do say so myself."

Going into Vendor Week, I was expecting to write about the trials of a Groundcover vendor, the harsh winters and even harsher rejections. After selling with Michael that day, however, I realized a lesson that I truly have tried to apply to my own stresses and hardships: it's all about the attitude. The faces you see selling Groundcover News papers are happy to be out there; they understand that when you hear a "No, thank you," that person may have some where else to be and need it less to stop but simply does not have the time.

As Michael pointed out to me after standing out in the cold for hours with 30 newspapers under his arm and not going home until he had sold all of them, "Not everyone has time to stop and chat, and it IS very cold out today."

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www.annkiwanis.org

NATURE

7

Rare butterfly frequents Michigan

by Rob Hughes
Groundcover Contributor

The Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly is one of the world's rarest butterflies and may be found here in Washtenaw County. Named by G. H. French in honor of Professor J. W. Mitchell from the University of Michigan in 1889, this butterfly depends on swampy wetlands and their plants for its survival. It is a small butterfly with a wingspan of about an inch.

These wetlands, called fens, were never very numerous and with the advent of modern civilization are under constant threat of development. In addition to

the direct destruction of the ecosystems the butterfly needs for survival, it faces indirect threats. In some instances water flow is altered enough to upset the fen's delicate pH balance, eliminating the sedges the butterfly depends on for survival. In other cases, non-native species replace the native foliage the butterfly eats.

The Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly starts life in the summer with a female butterfly laying her eggs in the fen. When those eggs hatch, the emerging caterpillar goes through three molts before winter sets in. At that time, this amazing creature goes into a hibernation period under the snow.

When spring returns, the caterpillar goes through two more molts to finally emerge as a Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly. In this, its final form, it has just three short weeks to find a mate, reproduce and lay eggs before it dies. It lives its entire life in only a small portion of the fen where it was born.

The butterfly is found in the lower 50 miles or so of Michigan, along the southern Michigan border from Toledo to Lake

Michigan. In this area, there are only 13 known fens that meet the butterfly's needs. It is also found in a couple of


see BUTTERFLY, page 11

Praise and Thanksgiving!

Five years serving our neighbors with the Riverside Community Meal. Every Wednesday 5-8 pm.



The First Presbyterian Church of Ypsilanti, aided by the Presbyterian Churches in Washtenaw County.




St. Francis of Assisi
PARISH

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"Go and learn the meaning of the words, I desire mercy, not sacrifice." I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)

Mass Schedule	
Saturday	5:00 p.m.
Sunday	7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m. 12:30 p.m. & 5:00 p.m.

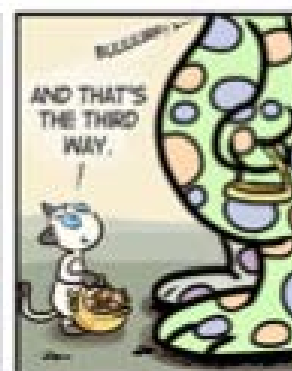
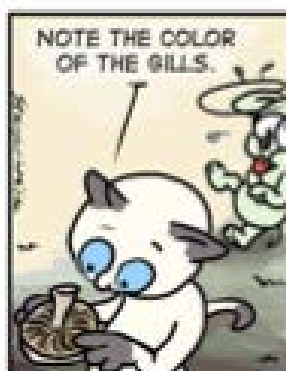
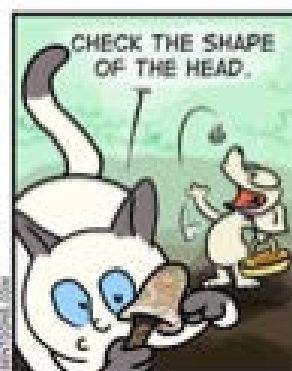
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	9	1	3	6				
4	6							
3			8		6	5		
				4	7			
1	2	5	6		4	8		
	4	7						
	5	3		7				4
						2		6
			9	3	7	1		

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

Cryptoquote

"LFIYV CH ZGHV KPCGHQ P YGDDYA
 ZFSA TFS P ZEVEHPYV'W UPZJISQAS
 GT CH TAYD DUPD CFI LASA DUAH
 UAYKGHQ DF KSEZEDA DUA UEZPH
 KFDAMHDGPY PSFIHV IW PHV HFD
 VGWPSV GD!"

- KPIY WPCQPL

ACROSS

- Leafy root
- Salmon's eye
- Children
- Cartoon show
- Statement of ownership
- DEW + S
- _____ of the U.S. coastline
- Peas
- Tea
- Over again
- NOODLE (over level)
- Day's transportation guide
- NY product
- Egyptian god
- Cartoon
- Beats part
- Legumes (plural)
- Protein salad
- Computer program
- Flang
- Comics
- Dyes for dyes
- Depressant
- Quaker's mascot
- _____ de mer
- Year in Japanese
- Bar type of wood
- Asian clothing
- Wool's size
- Flax
- Shrimp size
- Asian deity
- Desert plant
- Famous substitute
- Preposition
- Asian Buddhist deity
- _____ water
- Range
- Car
- Proverb
- Legume

DOWN

- "I feel great," acronym, coffee, herbs, _____
- "Years _____," Lillooan
- Wine hybrid
- Facial expression
- NYC street
- Dr. Jekyll's doctor
- Radio feature
- Don't know
- SA _____ and the Comets
- POWERS
- Indonesian island
- _____ (over 80)
- Aggravation rate
- Fast finger
- Poisonous
- Accomplice
- Blackened (animal)
- Clown of an ancient civilization
- Over it
- Dutch product
- Wildcat (animal)
- Story
- London marketplace
- State on the margin
- Farm raising
- Breadfruit
- Season
- 1850 martyr
- Millions of years
- Play tactics
- Breeding
- Captive human
- Fruit
- Water station
- _____ (from CDP, 1899 novel)
- _____ (by the law itself)
- British
- People of Honduras
- Angloper (bird)

Puzzle by Jeff Richardson

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted staff members, we will share expressions of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discuss a vendor violating any terms of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our Community.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or collect donations for any other reason.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to peddle, including peddling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News itself and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to meet all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and success.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not allow it. I will present my badge when purchasing the paper.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling or peddling, federal property or items unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor code policy.

If you see any Groundcover News vendors not abiding by the code of conduct, please report the activity by contacting groundcovernews.com 734-972-8926.



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(Bethlehem Church is the home of the Groundcover office)

WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

PLEASE JOIN US!

8:30 am - Worship Service in Chapel

10:00 am - Worship Service in Sanctuary

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 4th (Sunday) 11:15am - Cake Auction and Brunch

May 17 (Saturday) 10-12am - German Pretzels sales

May 30th (Friday) 12pm-3pm - German Pretzels sales 1.00 each or 10.00/ dozen

THINK ABOUT IT

9

TEDxYouth: Ann Arbor's Inaugural Forum for Youth Perspectives

by **Francesca Lupis**
Groundcover Greenhills Contributor

As I entered Skyline High School's cavernous auditorium on the morning of March 22, I expected to hear a lot about robots. The intricate language of technological innovation and computerized ciphers seemed inherent in the motto of the 2014 TEDxYouth@AnnArbor conference: "Decode, Decrypt, Decipher." Intrigued by the lecture series' much-touted mixture of brevity and creativity, I arrived at the eight-hour event curious but convinced that much of the "decoding" discussed there would be accessible only to the scientifically trained mind.

In fact, the deciphering that unfolded on the Skyline stage was societal rather than scientific. The event's 23 high school speakers each took three to 18 minutes to address such diverse topics as urban renewal in Detroit (the topic of Greenhills senior Tristan Lopez' opening speech) and the therapeutic power of art. Although the ideas put forth were complex, the speeches, in Lopez' words, could be understood by "an audience that is almost universal."

The Skyline event, which featured four themed sessions (Innovation, Philosophy, Introspection and Interaction, and Society) and was streamed on an online feed, was one of hundreds inspired by the annual TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) conference.

Founded in 1984, TED conferences (sponsored by the nonprofit Sapling Foundation) feature innovative lectures that strive to share "ideas worth spreading" in a user-friendly format. The talks have flourished in the Internet age, with over 34,000 talks from worldwide TED conferences (and TEDx events, which are independently organized) available online.

TEDxYouth@AnnArbor, which student organizers hope to make into an annual event, was the product of diverse and devoted student leadership. The Skyline High School Student Action Senate (SAS) and Skyline teacher Cheryl Duval led the event's development process. Pioneer seniors Eric VanDeWegge and Mackenzie O'Connor hosted the event, and audience members enjoyed musical entertainment from by the Huron High School a cappella group.

The speeches varied dramatically in content and composition. In his lecture "President Ted: What Makes a Great American President," Pioneer senior Josh Lash wove savvy and sharp speaking humor into a refreshing examination of the American chief executive.



Pioneer senior Josh Lash correlates characteristics like height with those elected president of the United States.

"America has never had a perfect president," explained Lash, "so we're going to create one."

Adorning a projected image of the hypothetical "President Ted" with time-tested attributes — from a Harvard diploma to military medals — linked to presidential popularity, Lash commanded the stage with campaign-trail confidence. Most well-loved presidents, he explained, have shared certain characteristics, from a liberal policy record to masculinity (although, as he noted to cheers from the audience, "we're long overdue for an awesome female president"). Lash's examination of the "exceptional everyman" in the Oval Office had a tone of playful satire, but it revealed deep-seated political dilemmas. "Why have we most loved those presidents who look like us?" Lash inquired. "Why should we place our trust in a candidate based on those attributes?" The search for a perfect president, Lash concluded, will always be a fruitless one; his examination of the biases of American voters, from the aesthetic to the policy-based, though, offered plenty of food for thought.

Other speeches struck a more sobering tone by bringing critical social issues into the spotlight. Pioneer senior Aaliyah Jihad, whose speech was entitled "Cultural Appropriation: Why Your Poshorties Costume Was Not Okay," dissected flashy photographs of "edgy" pop icons (think Miley Cyrus and Lady Gaga) to reveal the racial prejudice inherent in their fame. Cultural appropriation, explained the poised but passionate Jihad, "involves popularizing elements of a minority culture in an ignorant and dehumanizing way."

For example, the transformation of the traditional Native American war

illustrated her points with a series of photographs, showcasing celebrities from Lady Gaga (led in a sex-through burqa) to Miley Cyrus (surrounded by Black female backup dancers and spewing quotes about "what it means to be black"). "White artists use the trends popular among minority groups as a device to be 'edgy' and gain street cred, while members of minority groups are criticized for showing their heritage. It's easy for Lady Gaga to criticize Muslim women by declaring the burqa 'sexy,' but her actions demand the modesty that burqa-wearing women strive to protect," declared Jihad. "When Miley Cyrus uses black people as tools to validate her own edginess, she sends a message that minorities can only play the role of accessories."

The use of well-recognized visual icons to illustrate a pervasive societal problem made Jihad's speech a truly resonant one; indeed, its discussion of the intersection of race and pop culture should probably be required viewing for every young American.

Perhaps most significantly, Aaliyah Jihad ended her address with a thought-provoking challenge: to move, in our own lives, from cultural appropriation

to respect ("a reward for an act of valor" in many Native cultures) into a fashion symbol strips the sacred object of its cultural significance. "Cultural appropriation," Jihad elaborated, "is the symbolic annihilation of a minority culture. When a culture's sacred objects are transformed into fashion accessories that culture is dehumanized, and the voices of its members are muted."

Punctuated with occasional gasps and sighs from the audience, Jihad's lecture

see **TEDx**, page 11



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Vendor Interview Series: meet James "Joe" Woods, Vendor #103

by Amelia Brown
U-M Student Contributor

Like many of the vendors who currently work for Groundcover, James Woods (or Joe, as we all know him) brings a unique personality to the organization. As I adjust the video camera and read over my interview questions, Joe flicks through texts and missed calls on his cell phone, always busy and always social. Joe has been with Groundcover for nearly three years and has become one of the strong foundations of the organization. His penchant for light-hearted jokes and lively gestures fills both the office and his selling spots with energy; when you meet Joe, you will know it.

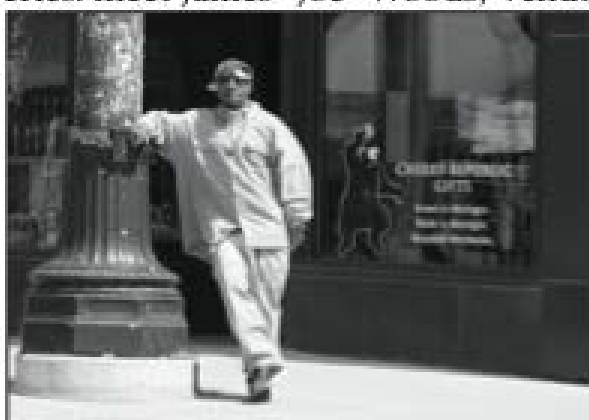
Joe's personal style is one of the factors that make him such a successful vendor for Groundcover. In his words, "I just go out there and do my thing." He mainly sells the \$10 special edition papers, which is a risky move because they are more expensive, but Joe seems to have no problem racking up sales. When I inquired about his tendency to only sell the more pricey papers, Joe explains:

"I have been in sales since age 18. There are certain things I have been trained to do, so a \$10 paper is nothing. Other vendors may think, '\$10 for a paper? Oh no, that's too much,' but not me. That's just not my mentality."

This statement in itself reveals quite a bit about Joe. He is hardworking, driven, and always up for a challenge.

Many new ideas for Groundcover come from Joe, and he is working tirelessly to make them a reality. One of his more recent concepts is a \$20 paper, a sort of "special" special edition, if you will. Joe says, "If I can get a paper for \$100, I'll sell it." In addition to brewing up new business ventures, Joe is involved with Groundcover in myriad ways. He has been through the Groundcover Money Management program, has received a certificate from the University of Michigan to teach HIV/AIDS Awareness through Groundcover, and also acts as a mentor for new vendors. Mentorship is key for Joe, as he views the success of Groundcover as dependent on each vendor.

"I'm trying to get to where everybody in Groundcover is making money. So, I'm doing little things to try and help other vendors with their sales pitch," he says. "Sometimes I have them shadow me and see what I'm doing, or I'll shadow them and critique them... at the end of the day, the bottom line is numbers. If everybody is selling papers, everybody is making money, and



One of Joe's favorite selling spots is outside Cherry Republic at Liberty and Main. Everybody is happy."

Joe certainly has a wealth of knowledge to share with new vendors in terms of his sales tactics, which I have seen firsthand. Before my personal involvement with Groundcover, Joe was a familiar face to me, as his presence on the corner of Main and Liberty reaches outwards across the street and is hard to miss. As Joe says:

"I like messing with people. And they like it, too, because you never know what type of day a person is having. You never know if a woman just got into it with her husband, or if the baby just got sent to the hospital, or somebody recently passed away. If a person doesn't buy a paper, I'll still say 'Have a great day' or 'God Bless' and that might turn that person's day around."

Joe's approach to selling papers for

Commissioners extend Warming Center through April!

by Elizabeth S. Korta, aka "Lit"

The 21st century has ushered in some of the warmest winters in Ann Arbor history. As if history hadn't already been made by March, recording an overall season total of 90.3 inches, yet another snowfall greeted us on The Day to exceed that record. However, thanks to the efforts of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, dozens of individuals from the DeLoon Warming Center were promised to have a roof over their heads on April 15, 2014 and at least two weeks beyond.

When approached by a delegation from the DeLoon Warming Center about the inhumaneness of human beings having to sleep outdoors during any season of the year, the Commissioners went into overdrive and spent nearly one-and-a-half hours in deliberation following their public meeting on April 2 before

Groundcover is friendly, professional, and perceptive. One of his main motives is that you can never take the "no" personally. "You have to brush it off," he insists. "Give them a 'Have a good one' and just keep going."

Brushing off the "no" is extremely important, as they frequently occur. Part of this is due to the fast-paced lifestyle of our society, and part of this is because in the five or six seconds that it takes for a person to walk by a vendor, there is not much time to convey what the organization is all about. If given the time, this is what Joe told me he would want each passerby to know about Groundcover:

"What it stands for. It's not just a paper. A lot of people think Groundcover is 'the homeless paper,' and I'm trying to get it to where it's not 'the homeless paper,' it's a paper helping people who

deciding in a 6-2 vote to give the DeLoon Center of Ann Arbor the additional \$35,000 needed to extend the Warming Center an additional three weeks.

When approaching the Board of Commissioners, Ray Gholston, one of the members from the Warming Center delegation, denounced the practices in the county allowing human beings to sleep outdoors "when even cats and dogs are treated more humanely" in society. As a member of the working class poor, Gholston told the Board that he should have the right to have a roof over his head and not have to sleep outdoors while trying to locate an affordable apartment on a minimum wage job. Without the Warming Center, Gholston said, he might have to quit the job where he has worked for several months.

want to help themselves. Most of the people who sell Groundcover are not homeless. We have places that we live, and we have bills to pay. And this paper is paying those bills for me and other vendors out there. I don't get a check a month, but this is my income. So I take it seriously. This is my business."

Another topic we touched on was the personal aspect of selling papers out on the street. Like every basic human interaction, vendors are often judged based on appearance, as that is the information that comes across in the time it takes to walk by. Because of the nature of the job, vendors are put in a position of vulnerability and necessary sociability that not many jobs require. An averted gaze can feel like a personal insult. And though Joe is adept at not taking the "no" personally, that is a challenge that many vendors must overcome. Joe and I discussed the facet of being a Groundcover vendor, and although he is tough and seems to shake everything off, he does admit to having feelings on the matter:

"I know they think all kinds of crazy stuff about me. A lot of people see my outer appearance, and I'm pretty sure I get people who judge me by the way I dress, but if they stopped and got to talk to me they would see it's more than just my hat flipped to the back, or what I might wear that day. I want people to know I am like a Transformer; there is more to me than meets the eye."

Joe sells on Liberty and Main in front of Cherry Republic, and on Liberty and Washington in front of the Bank of America. You can find him weekdays, between noon and six o'clock.

The Board of Commissioners not only worked to extend the Warming Center this season, but showed a renewed interest in finding solutions to bring homelessness to an end in Washtenaw County. With any luck, this year will not only be remembered for record snowfalls, but for record-breaking discussions paving the way to end homelessness for good.



"It's time to leave the static of the head for the ecstatic of the heart. The more we expand our hearts, the less we will need to shrink our heads."

— Swami Beyondananda

OUTDOORS

Rare butterfly frequents Michigan

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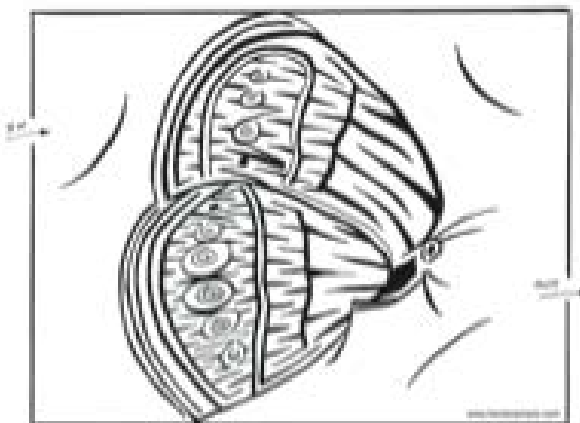
parts of Wisconsin, New Jersey, and Ohio, and also locations no longer available in Michigan and Indiana. Recent populations discovered in Virginia, Mississippi and Alabama await DNA testing to see if they are truly Mitchell's Satyr Butterflies, or another sub-species that looks very much like the Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly.

In the western portion of Washtenaw County, there are farms that may support the Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly. Many of them are privately owned. One pub-

lic space in which you might find the Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly is Park Lyndon County Park. This park is located one mile east of M-52 on North Territorial Road. Here you will find over 500 species of plants and animals spread over fens, marshes, bogs, ponds, forest and prairie. Because there is a fen here, the Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly might be present, too. However, it is not listed as habitat for this creature. All the known sites for this butterfly are privately owned with access only granted to research personnel.

Can you solve the Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly maze?

The Mitchell's Satyr Butterfly may be found in Washtenaw County



State Museum Satyr Butterfly, Michigan Journal 4 pages

We Survived Winter!

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Cryptoquote Solution

"Would you mind paying a little more for a McDonald's hamburger if you felt that you were then helping to promote the human potential around us and not discard it?"

- Paul Saginaw

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TEDx: Ann Arbor

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tion to cultural exchange. Those who practice cultural appropriation often act under the assumption that they are merely "honoring" or "appreciating" aspects of other cultures. Rather, I had argued, we must strive to "listen carefully to the perspectives of people of other cultures, learning about their traditions in an accurate and respectful way." I had relevant, eloquent discussion led the audience (including the author) to question their own biases and provide ways to appreciate diversity with sensitivity in their own lives.

Although Lash and I had's speeches, among many others, captured and inspired audience attention with their relevance and passion, a few persistent pitfalls plagued some speakers. While a few speeches seemed at times to be overly technical, a more common mishap was overgeneralization. After pitching concepts to the organizational committee at December auditions, TEDx speakers were assigned time frames for their presentations. Although some speakers, including Tristan Lopez, found the time constraint to be "valuable" in helping them develop concise arguments, other speakers suffered from lack of elaboration.

Conversely, Lopez noticed, the universal appeal of the TED talk model put pressure on speakers to push their speeches toward the theoretical. While working with a "peer liaison" to develop his speech, Lopez decided to expand his Detroit-focused talk to a more general model for urban revitalization. When he gave this revised speech, though, the Farmington

resident realized that the talk had lost its localized passion. The most successful talks, he noted, were those that held specialized meaning but inspired large-scale thought among their audiences.

This relatable, evocative individuality brought the conference's true immersion to light. By "decoding" human interaction in their speeches, Ann Arbor's youth shared their own insights and experiences while allowing the audience to draw personal inspiration. It's the task, after all, of every reader, every observer, and every human to draw meaning from the experiences and voices of those around us, and TEDx Youth at Ann Arbor filled my notebook and my mind with reminders about my values and prejudices. The ideas expressed on the Skyline stage were certainly "worth spreading," but the empathy and engagement inspired by youth voices is a phenomenon perhaps even more fascinating to witness.

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Rice and Bean Salad



by Lisa Sonnenberg
Groundcover Contributor

- 1 cup rice
- 1 can of black beans (14 oz)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup oil
- 1 1/2 cups salsa
- 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 4 cups lettuce, chopped
- 4 green onions, chopped
- 2 cups tortilla chips or two tortillas, chopped and toasted
- Optional toppings: guacamole, sour cream, salsa

1. Cook rice according to package directions.
2. While rice is cooking, sauté onions in oil in large skillet or frying pan for 5 minutes or until onions are translucent.
3. Add salsa, chili powder, oregano, salt and pepper, and bell peppers, and cook for another 5 minutes.
4. Add beans and cook until heated through.
5. Add cooked rice and stir all ingredients thoroughly.
6. Place 1 1/2 cups of mixture in bowls. Top with 1 cup each chopped lettuce, green onions, and 1/2 cup tortilla chips or toasted tortilla pieces.
7. Top with your favorite toppings.

Serves four. Extra rice and bean mixture can be stored for later use as tortilla filling, or on its own.



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Panel 1: Mother: "This towel on the floor is a wonderful surface for cats!" Daughter: "Are you sure that's what it's for?"

Panel 2: Mother: "It's comfortable and it makes the very happy to be on it. What else could it possibly be for?" Daughter: "I dunno, but I'm gonna look underneath...."

Panel 3: Mother: "What's going on here, you dastardly towel? I turn my back for a moment and you scratch my girl?? You can't go around eating my babies like that!" Daughter: "Hey, I'm OK; it's just me playing under here."

Panel 4: Mother: "What??? I don't believe in talking towels!! I will attack you until I rescue my rickshaw kittens...." Daughter: "What if I don't want to be rescued? This is fun!"

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