

Streetvibes Reaches A Milestone - A Few Celebratory Thoughts From A Contributor

This is the 500th edition of StreetVibes. At such a moment, It is appropriate to look at the past, present and future of this publication, while also celebrating the reaching of this milestone. The people who edited the paper over the years can take pride that they succeeded in achieving the initial goals of this publication. StreetVibes provided a product that individuals with little or no income could sell on street corners and other local venues. Meanwhile, the contents of this biweekly offered readers ongoing information about homelessness, the lack of affordable housing, and other critical local and national issues.



I did not start writing for StreetVibes until 2012. Although my connections with the Coalition goes back to 1987 and AIR, Inc.'s study of homelessness in Greater Cincinnati, my initial pieces in StreetVibes were Mother Goose rhymes satirizing national politics. It was a Presidential election year, and many of these spoof/poems dealt with the race between President Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney. Although striving for a bit of humor, I also tried to expose wrongs such as voter suppression laws, untrue campaign rhetoric, and the warping impact of "big money" on the political process.



Justin Jeffre

Thus began a decade of writing these satiric rhymes for the StreetVoice page of the paper. Jason Dean was the StreetVibes editor who accepted my initial spoofs for publication, but at some point during that first year, Justin Jeffre took over this position. I already knew Justin from his involvement in community issues, and he was very encouraging concerning my contributions to the biweekly that he was now editing.

In fact, it was Justin who prompted me to create another regular piece for StreetVibes. I showed him some cartoons I had sketched of a cat asking outrageous questions about government and politics, and he urged me to put something together for the paper. Under the heading of "Poll Question," I drew a cat, known of course as "the Poll Cat," who would pose questions like: "Do we now have the best Congress money can buy?" "Poll Question" began appearing regularly in 2014, and it also found a place on the StreetVoice page.

Finally aware of my involvement in numerous community and government issues through Applied Information Resources and Common Cause Ohio, Justin asked me to write some serious articles for the paper. This led to an occasional piece on affordable housing or political reform, but I gradually began to submit these articles on a regular basis. Although it was fun



Bill Woods

creating my political Mother Goose rhymes and Poll Questions, the opportunity to write analyses of critical local and national issues became important to me. With the need for political reform steadily increasing, I saw the importance of keeping readers informed about issues that were undermining the democratic process in Ohio and the nation.

So, my commitment to StreetVibes has grown over time. After working with Justin Jeffre for six years, Gabriela Godinez Feregrino became the editor at the end of 2018. Then when Gabriela decided to go to graduate school, Dr. Mark Mussman took on the job last August. Although they all possess different styles and approaches to editing, they share a commitment and the abilities to produce a good publication. I have enjoyed working with all three of them. Dr. Mark's current innovation is planning each issue with a particular theme, and the paper is now published every three weeks instead of two.

What about the future? It would be a better city and world if we no longer needed the Homeless Coalition or StreetVibes. However, present conditions make their services more necessary than ever before. Homeless services have improved over the years, but homelessness has increased and the lack of affordable housing amounts to a major local crisis. Other economic and social inequities also need to be addressed. StreetVibes must continue to shine its journalistic light on these problems.

Some critics may dislike the paper's strong points of view, but it backs up its advocacy with facts. In contrast to the many new communication channels built on misinformation and "alternative facts," StreetVibes is part of a long tradition of advocacy journalism that provides factual information as the basis for its editorial positions. With the age of misinformation upon us, advocacy journalism offers readers a refreshing antidote to counter all this fictional news. As it looks to the future, StreetVibes needs to continue in this tradition.

Finally, let us not forget to celebrate this 500th edition of StreetVibes. Its editors, vendors, writers, funders, and regular readers need to take a few moments to remember the achievements of the paper from its founding until today. So many newspapers and magazines have closed their doors in recent years, but StreetVibes continues to get its message out. One key reason for this success is the fact that its bottom line isn't making money. The many people associated with the paper want it to succeed because of what it stands for, and they contribute their time, talents, and dollars to keep it going.