

# groundviews

REACHING SOLID GROUND

## An unexpected world

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### SPECIAL RECOGNITION

## Brilliance... Kindness... & Persistence...

Picora's Pizza is a New York-style hero for supporting Broadview Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing's volunteer appreciation party. Bright Horizons and Swinerton Builders hit the nail on the head with Broadview renovations. And diminutive pirates everywhere yell an *Aaaaaarrggghhh!* of thanks to the Seafair Pirates, and to all who supported the Pirates & Pipsqueaks Carnival, which raised funds for Broadview's children's programs: Dick's Drive-In, Fabric of America Fund-BP, FamilyWorks, Flying Saucer Shaved Ice, Gretchen's Shoe Box Express, Men Against Domestic Violence, Not A Number Cards & Gifts, Starbucks, Trophy Cupcakes, Wallingford Chamber of Commerce and Wallingford Community Council. ... Thanks to Hansen's Soda for quenching thirst at Penny Harvest's summer beach party

A vintage snapshot of Family Assistance program participant, Dan Terrance, from his previous days working in the Alaskan fishing industry.

and to CoinStar executives for volunteer support at Penny Harvest's third annual Youth Philanthropy Summit. ... Squeaky clean thanks go to Impinj for donating 38 cases of bar soap for clients.

Green thumbs up to Lettuce Link supporters, including: Brouwer's Café, The Calf & Kid - Artisan Cheese Shop, Dahlia Spa, Dry Soda, Fremont PCC, Furney's Nursery, Greenwood Hardware, Homegrown Sustainable Sandwich Shops, Ken's Market, Kitchen N Things, The Massage Sanctuary, Molly Moon's Homemade Ice Cream Shop, Naked City Brewery, Roosevelt Trader Joe's, Seattle Coffee Works, Sky Nursery, Tall Grass Bakery, Wheatless in Seattle and Wight's Home & Garden. ... Now that's brilliant! ●

### PROGRAM NEWS

## From the Ground Up

**Building new pathways to careers:** This month, Solid Ground's JustServe AmeriCorps team launches a new effort to create opportunities for at-risk young adults. The Pathway to Career Corps project is a strategic partnership and initiative to create viable educational and career pathways for young adults in our community, ages 18 to 24, who are at high risk of unemployment, underemployment and lifelong poverty.

"The goal is to help young adults access the stability and the learning of a 12-month intensive program, experience the transformational impact of service on themselves and the community, and develop a viable plan to move into a future living wage," says JustServe AmeriCorps Supervisor Tera Oglesby. "National Service is a strategy to help them get there."

Corps Members will experience a year of intensive case management, professional development, work experience, leadership development, service to the community, academic support for postsecondary education preparedness, and exposure to high-demand, living-wage career paths. The project builds on Solid Ground's experience as one of the largest National Service teams in the state. ●

## REACHING SOLID GROUND

# An unexpected world

If anyone can vouch for the reality that there are holes in the social services safety net, it's Dan Terrance. He learned the hard way about assumptions our society makes about people living in poverty, and the dehumanizing effect this has. Back in 2005, a fall on the job shattered his left arm and ended his 21-year maritime career: as a Merchant Marine, then on

cruise ships, and then on fishing boats. "Six surgeries later," he says, "I ran out of money – and this shoulder started to act up two years ago – and the next thing you know, you're in a world that you'd never expect to be in." A hardworking, college-educated, former world traveler, Dan spiraled into homelessness, with public assistance as his only source of income.

While the surgeries restored some use of his arm, his shoulder is inoperable. Dan describes his injury: "What I've got, it's a soft tissue injury, the tendons are all messed up – and because it hasn't been taken care of, it's just deteriorating. Basically, it can't be fixed. Steroid injections, they don't work. They put me on pain pills. Physical therapy just made it worse – so I was just stuck."

## Fight for restored dignity

Dan first connected with Solid Ground's Family Assistance program – whose staff attorneys provide free legal help to people being unjustly denied public assistance benefits – when he was fighting to prove to the Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) that he couldn't go back to the fishing industry. DSHS wanted to cut his Disability Lifeline benefits for people unable to work.

"DSHS, from the get go, said there's nothing wrong with me. They had me have an assessment. Their

doctor said there's pretty much nothing wrong with me that aspirins can't cure."

But the pain he experienced told him otherwise. So, he says, "I stayed persistent at it. Then I got an MRI in November of 2009 that showed that I had *serious* problems." So, finally, his benefits were temporarily extended.

But then a year later, DSHS determined him no longer incapacitated. So after consulting with Family Assistance Senior Attorney Stephanie Earhart, Dan successfully defended himself at an Administrative Hearing, and his benefits were restored once

again. "I won because [DSHS] tried to say that I could go back to doing the work that I did. Now the fishing industry is the most vicious, hardest work there is. And I don't care what your job position: Everybody has to be physically capable on a ship for emergencies – you cannot be up there with a bad limb – you become hazardous to your fellow crew members. And the judge sided with me."

## A world of hurt

After he won his hearing, Dan spent his time productively, studying to get MCSE (Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer) certification, volunteering with the Pike Market Food Bank and



Born in Alaska, Family Assistance program participant Dan Terrance poses with a piece of his original art in the Haida/Tlingit style.

*"They saved me a world of all that grief, stress. And I suppose they do that for a lot of other people."*

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maintaining computers in the Senior Center there, and creating his native Alaskan artwork. But then, while taking a shower at the men's shelter where he was staying, he says, "I got a backpack stolen: laptop, all my schooling, my medical records, my drawings, cell phone, my pain pills. I gotta start all over again."

Things seemed to be looking up when he moved out of the shelter into low-income housing in late October 2010, but then he learned in November that his benefits were going to be cut *again*, because he hadn't returned paperwork. As it turns out, DSHS had mistakenly sent the paperwork to the men's shelter where he no longer lived, and then penalized him for their mistake.

"Without my money, I can't pay my rent; without paying my rent, I'm going to get evicted. So then what they're doing is putting you right back out on the street, in harm's way." To make matters worse, DSHS "... began to say that my MRI was irrelevant. Within months, it was too old!" So he had to fight to get another MRI, costing \$3,000.

With all of this stress, something had to give – and in January 2011, Dan suffered a heart attack. "I was

here at six in the morning, waiting to do my maintenance on these computers, and it felt like a fire poker going right into the center of my chest." Yet just a week later, with bandages still on his surgical wounds and no money for bus fare, he found himself walking over a mile uphill to obtain medical records, because DSHS demanded he prove he had a heart attack. When he got to the hospital office, he learned it would cost \$1 a page to print his records – and there were 40 pages. Hospital staff, realizing his desperation, printed it for free.

At the breaking point now, Dan got back in touch with Stephanie. "I called her and said, 'I'm in a world of hurt with these people.'"

### Navigating the system

Dan says, "Stephanie knows the system, she knows what's right, how to take care of things. She kept saying, 'This is outRAGEous!' So, she immediately sends a request for an extension. And then she got me in touch with Tony [a Family Assistance Legal Intern; see spotlight in green box at bottom left]. And then after that, it was all phones and emails and letters. 'Can you do this?' And I'd do it. And he would ask me to fill this out so he could get medical records, so I'd fill this out and send it back.

"They saved me a world of all that grief, stress. And I suppose they do that for a lot of other people. I still don't know the system! And I finally got the MRI in July. As this radiologist says, it's worsened since the last MRI. They found me incapacitated for another year. And so Stephanie and Tony got them off my back. They handled all the interoffice communications. So that's what they did for me; they got the stress off.

"This was a completely honest injury, on the job. There's a lot of people in a bad way that are not there because of drugs, alcohol or crime. It's just the facts of life. And anyone could end up there.

"Here I am, five years later, six surgeries later, trying to get back into the workforce, trying to get a home going, a daily ritual. I do what I can, I volunteer. I give back what I can so I'm not just leaching off the system. And without their help, who knows where I would be." ●

**For more information about Family Assistance, contact Stephanie Earhart at 206.694.6714 or [familyassistance@solid-ground.org](mailto:familyassistance@solid-ground.org), or visit [www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Legal/Family](http://www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Legal/Family).**

#### FAMILY ASSISTANCE LEGAL INTERN SPOTLIGHT

### Tony Ramsey

Now starting Year 2 at the University of WA School of Law, Tony Ramsey is the Family Assistance Legal Intern who helped get Dan Terrance's benefits restored. Dan describes Tony as "compassionate, straightforward and empathetic."

Tony says, "My experience working at Solid Ground this summer was easily one of the most influential experiences of my life and has strengthened my interest in doing public interest legal work. Working with clients on a daily basis, helping people in crisis, and negotiating with DSHS, I saw firsthand the many barriers that people in poverty face just getting the assistance they need to survive on a daily basis.

"The anti-racism and anti-oppression training I received through my service as a JustServe

AmeriCorps Member prior to law school made me want to return to Solid Ground. Social service providers are gatekeepers, and I knew I would continue training on how to deliver services in a culturally competent way."

Tony's internship ended September 8. Thanks, Tony, for your commitment! ●



COMMUNITY NEWS

## Cool / Not Cool

**Cool:** Last month Lettuce Link's new Seattle Community Farm at Rainier Vista had its first harvest!

It weighed just under six pounds, but subsequent harvests have grown substantially. The most recent weighed a plentiful 132 pounds, and the coming bounty testifies to a community working together to address hunger.

So far, the Farm has harvested lettuce, basil, collards, radishes, beets, turnips, tomatoes and lots of green beans. Zukes and cukes are coming on strong! Most of the produce goes to Work Trade participants (who might not otherwise be able to afford fresh produce) and the Rainier Valley Food Bank.

Now comes the fun part – figuring out what to do with the extra vegetables. We're having a few potlucks and meals at the Farm where people can teach each other how to cook the veggies we grow. Farming is about eating, after all, and eating is best when it's shared with friends and neighbors. ●



Volunteer Emily Tzeng holds some of the first collard greens harvested at the Seattle Community Farm at Rainier Vista.

TAKE ACTION

## Some Ways to Get Involved!

- **Don't miss Chef's Night Out (CNO), 10/30/11, 5-9 pm at The Golf Club at Newcastle!** CNO is Seattle's ultimate culinary and wine experience! One of 15 renowned Seattle-area chefs will prepare and serve your table of 10 a five-course meal paired with fine wines. 100% of ticket sales/proceeds benefits Solid Ground's Cooking Matters. For more info, visit [www.solid-ground.org/News/CNO](http://www.solid-ground.org/News/CNO).
- **For Volunteer Opportunities at Solid Ground,** please contact Indiigo Klyne at 206.694.6825 or [volunteers@solid-ground.org](mailto:volunteers@solid-ground.org).

**solid ground**   
Building community to end poverty  
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