



*"In here there are no strangers..."*

# Sisters Of The Road

*...just friends we've never met."*

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **SISTERS OF THE ROAD ENDS PARTICIPATION IN THE MAYOR'S STREET ACCESS FOR EVERYONE (SAFE) WORKGROUP**

**Portland, Oregon (May 8, 2008)** – Sisters Of The Road (Sisters) Community Organizer Patrick Nolen and Associate Director Michael Buonocore announced the decision that Sisters would not continue as a member of the SAFE Workgroup at its May 8 meeting.

"We were assured that the enforcement of the SAFE sit-lie ordinance would not target homeless individuals. It has been shown to do exactly that" said Nolen.

The SAFE Workgroup was established by the Portland City Council on May 24, 2006 , developing "Five Strategies for a More Livable Portland." According to the Executive Summary of this process on the Mayor's website, "The Workgroup emphasized that consensus around this strategy would not endure unless all five parts are implemented together."

Sisters' staff representatives on the SAFE oversight committee noted that the services associated with these strategies, including day access center space, public restrooms and benches, have not been implemented in a timely and adequate manner. In deliberating whether Sisters would continue to participate in the oversight committee, it was highlighted that the future day access center is two years from completion and the current interim locations do not have the capacity described in the Mayor's Executive Summary of SAFE (Dec. 2006). It was also noted that the strategies for providing adequate public seating and restrooms are not met.

By contrast, the strategy of a "High Pedestrian Traffic Area" (or "sit-lie") ordinance that prohibits anyone from sitting or lying on a public sidewalk between 7 am and 9 pm has been fully implemented.

"Most importantly, this 'sit-lie ordinance' strategy has amplified the tragedy of the existing anti-camping ordinance, which also criminalizes those who have nowhere to sleep at night. Between these two laws, it is effectively illegal to be homeless in Portland, a city in which our elected officials acknowledge that there are not enough shelter beds, day access, transitional and affordable housing for all of our citizens" said Buonocore.

Added Monica Beemer, Executive Director of Sisters Of The Road, “We appreciate the work and good intentions of those involved in the SAFE Workgroup. We agreed to participate in the process in the spirit of collaboration, to ensure that the aforementioned services were implemented and that homeless people were not targeted by the ordinance. That has clearly not been an effective use of our time, which we now recognize would be better spent advocating for the repeal of the unjust anti-camping and sit-lie ordinances.”

Sisters Of The Road has called on Portlanders to immediately contact their elected officials and demand the repeal of these ordinances, which is punishing to thousands of Portlanders who lack adequate, safe and affordable shelter.

*ABOUT SISTERS OF THE ROAD: Founded in 1979, Sisters Of The Road uses non-violence to support community driven solutions to the calamities of homelessness and poverty. Sisters' cafe is open to everyone, serving low cost, hot, nutritious meals. Sisters also provides job training, support to parents and children, and innovative solutions to the issues surrounding poverty and homelessness through self and community advocacy.*

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