



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION

Ground Score Association (GSA) is an association of informal recyclers, canners, dumpster divers, and other waste pickers who create and fill low-barrier waste materials management jobs in Portland, Oregon. Ground Score is collectively-organized and radically inclusive, prioritizing work opportunities for those facing work and housing insecurity. Ground Score seeks to build a more environmentally and socially aware community, while also changing society's perceptions of what and who is considered valuable.



Photo: Nic Boehm

INTRODUCTION

Ground Score Association (GSA) was founded in 2019 with a vision to restore dignity and hope to communities facing housing and job insecurity, discrimination, oppression, and social isolation. What started as a small group holding monthly meetings with megaphones on park benches has grown into a dynamic, worker-led, membership-based organization with multiple programs, and a lasting impact for and by some of our city's most precarious workers. Ground Score operates out of a warehouse in Old Town (624 NW Couch) and its attached gallery

(34 NW Broadway), a bottle and can redemption site in SE Portland under the Morrison Bridge, a laundry facility in Portland's Clinton Triangle, and cleaning and outreach routes across Portland, Oregon.

Ground Score is a democratic and radically inclusive organization, operating through grassroots leadership structures. Our 5 person Workers Council selects our Board, writes policy, hears HR cases as requested, and meets regularly to make recommendations about GSA operations. Our 250+ members

and most of our staff are workers who entered the waste sector informally, through can and bottle collecting (canning), dumpster diving, metal scrapping, etc.

Members have the quarterly opportunity to attend General Assemblies to vote on policies, elect Workers Council representatives (every 2 years) and meet for a shared meal. This bottom-up approach empowers our members to take ownership in Ground Score and seek out pathways to stability, leadership, and growth.



GLITTER workers running bagless waste collection with reusable bags. Photo: Nic Boehm

TRANSITIONS

In 2025 Ground Score registered as a 501 3c non-profit, effectively moving out from under the fiscal sponsorship of the non-profit Trash for Peace. Ground Score’s elected Workers Council selected our first Board of Directors, which is composed of strategic partners and supporters who bring a unique blend of professional expertise and deep-rooted community connections.



Brandy counts cans at The People’s Depot
Photo: Brodie Cass Talbott

THE PEOPLE’S DEPOT (TPD)

The People’s Depot (TPD) is a beverage container redemption center run by and for canners (workers who informally collect cans and bottles for income). Founded in 2020, TPD currently operates for 2.5 hours a day, Monday-Friday, under Portland’s Morrison Bridge. In 2025, The People’s Depot directly impacted a major change in The Oregon Bottle Bill with Senate Bill 992. This amendment to Oregon’s Deposit Return System on beverage containers enables The People’s Depot to apply to operate as an

Alternative Access Redemption Center (AARC) and access additional funding from retailers. This means TPD will be able to move indoors, be open for longer hours, serve more customers, offer more hours for its current employees, and further develop its low barrier job program. In 2025, TPD was primarily funded by the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative (OBRC).

Despite that The People’s Depot has been operating for five years under a bridge, where we count cans and bottles in

kiddie pools and distribute cash from a fannie pack, the program has become locally, nationally and internationally recognized for providing trauma-informed recycling services and pathways for waste pickers into formal employment. Recognized as one of the most efficient and effective bottle redemption options in Portland, we continue to break our own records and influence recycling policy to advance social and economic inclusion.

THE NUMBERS

In 2025, The People's Depot:

- Redeemed 10.1 million bottles and cans: 6.9 million aluminum cans, 2.5 million plastic bottles, and 670,000 glass bottles totaling over 300 tons of recyclable materials redeemed by Portland canners
- Facilitated 38,587 transactions; an average of 62 customers served hourly
- Over 90% of TPD's 11 employees have transitioned from homelessness to housing



TPD Manager Kris Brown (right) and worker Tom Waterbury at The People's Depot.
Photo: Mac Smiff

The People's Depot customers Tonga and Jon Marc



Photo: Milo Mattern



Photo: Nic Boehm

GLITTER PROGRAM

GLITTER means Ground Score Leading Inclusively Together Through Environmental Recovery. The GLITTER program promotes environmental justice by providing essential trash and recycling collection services for homeless communities that are often otherwise forced to burn or bury their waste. GLITTER teams also push for more environmental, less carbon-intensive practices within the waste collection industry—by moving around the city largely on foot, by wheelchair/scooter, and on public transit and e-bike. Ground Score deploys a fleet of e-trikes in the downtown areas and the Lloyd District, along with our truck fueled with biodiesel, and in 2026 will be bringing on two electric trucks thanks to a grant from the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF). Much of the waste we collected with e-Trikes is also collected with reusable rather than disposable bags, eliminating the use of thousands of plastic bags each year.

THE NUMBERS

- In 2025, GLITTER teams:
- Collected 562,718 lbs of trash from camps and streets
- Diverted 36,464 lbs of that trash for recycling and reuse (11k lbs was textiles washed and redistributed in partnership with Hygiene For All)
- Collected 11,833 sharps
- Connected with 11,111 individual community members

GLITTER's impact on workers, based on a 2025 evaluation published by the City of Portland:

58% of GLITTER workers were homeless when starting work at Ground Score, with 71% now in permanent housing. 100% of workers who lived in a tent are now in temporary or permanent housing (83%); 55% directly attribute these shifts to working for Ground Score.

81% of workers report health improvements, with the percent of workers who report struggling with drug abuse dropping from 48% to 12%, as a direct result of working for Ground Score.



GLITTER e-trike workers
Photo: Nic Boehm

DAY STORAGE

Ground Score's day storage facility, located in our Old Town warehouse, has space for up to 15 community members to securely store personal items under lock and key during the daytime hours. The Storage Program is a vital foundation for stability and personal agency by enabling participants to work, attend job interviews, engage with the community, and attend legal and medical appointments with the peace of mind that their possessions are safe. The impact of the program was further amplified this period through strategic investments in our staff.

With enhanced digital literacy training, our Storage Coordinators have evolved into high-capacity navigators who not only manage logistics but serve as a bridge to community resources, weather preparedness, and peer support. Despite reaching full capacity and identifying a growing need for overnight storage options, the Storage Program remains a cornerstone of dignity, allowing our community members to focus on their future rather than the immediate burden of protecting their belongings.

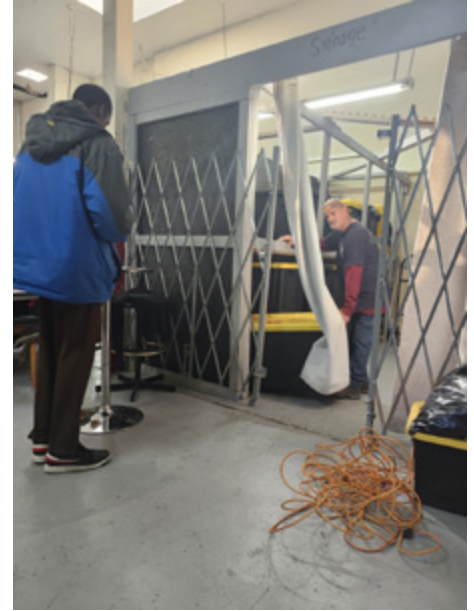


Photo: Mo Heisner

THE WASH HOUSE

Launched in late 2024, The Wash House pilot program tackles textile waste by offering laundry services for marginally housed and unhoused individuals and families. We also piloted a program which sorts and reclaims "dispossessed" textile items from shelters and street cleaning programs that have historically sent those materials to the landfill. Instead, these items are now laundered, sorted and redistributed directly to community members in need, through Ground Score's community closet in our Old Town warehouse, and through our growing network of community partners (including Hygiene4All, Blanchet House, Portland Street Response, Rosehaven Women's shelter and Transition Projects).

Our program directly advances Portland's climate resilience goals through a closed-loop sustainability model. In 2025 we laundered and diverted from the landfill about 60,000 pounds of

textiles, resulting in a reduction of approximately 48 tonnes of CO2 emissions. Recent waste composition analysis conducted by Ground Score reveals that textiles comprise 17% of homeless camp waste, making our intervention particularly impactful in addressing the 5,700+ tons of annual waste generated from homeless camp cleanups. By recovering, cleaning, and redistributing these materials, we create a sustainable alternative to the landfill while meeting essential community needs.

The Wash House serves as a critical resource hub providing free, accessible laundry services to unhoused Portlanders, addressing a fundamental hygiene need identified as a significant service gap. This service is particularly crucial during Portland's wet seasons, when keeping clothing and bedding dry becomes nearly impossible for those living outside. The Wash House also generates

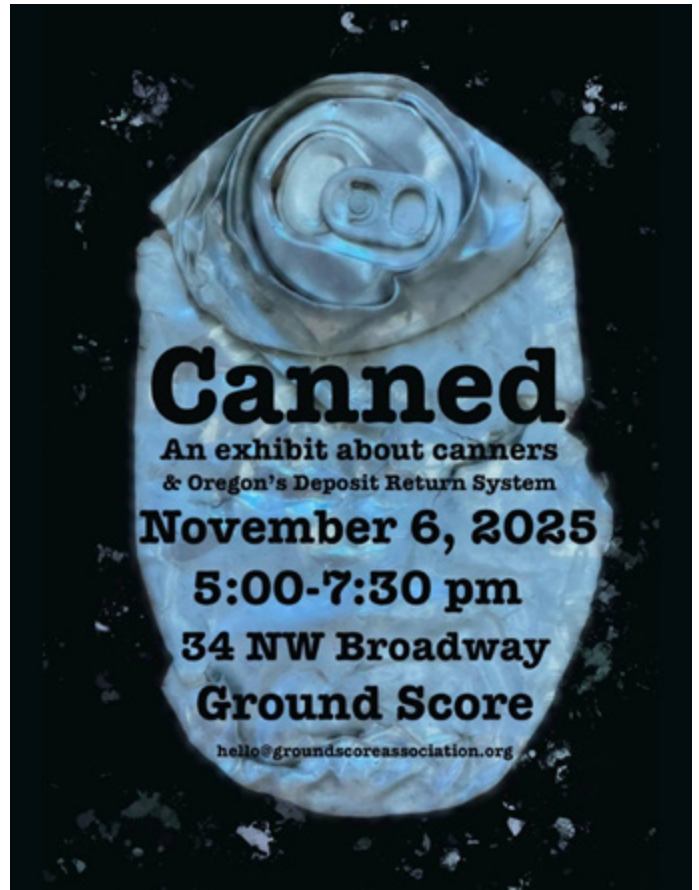
decent, indoor jobs that build skills in customer service, time management, teamwork, data and material tracking, material sorting, textile sanitation and safe management of issues like bed bugs.



Photo: Nic Boehm



Derrick and Milo prepare for a Ground Score Studios event
Photo: Taylor Cass Talbott



Ground Score Studios Exhibit "Canned" Flyer

GROUND SCORE STUDIOS

What started the year as Ground Score's Reuse and Repair program ended the year, rebranded, as Ground Score Studios. Ground Score Studios is where artist members of our association come together to share space and ideas in the creation and exhibition of art and social commentary. The exhibits, which often collaborate with other organizations and artists, are normally held the first Thursday of every month, from 5-7pm.

They usually carry messages about social and environmental justice issues and the challenges that our workers and the waste picking community face in accessing decent livelihoods, and in managing waste, in today's society of rising economic disparity, homelessness, and job insecurity. The studio supports extremely low barrier income opportunities for creatives, while building a community of support that lends courage to people to show and sell their work.

In 2025, thanks to funding from Unite Oregon and Plastic Solutions Fund, we held 6 first thursday exhibits covering a range of social and environmental topics, and strengthening the organization of more than dozen workers who are growing leaders in Ground Score's creative communications. In 2025 this work also benefitted from small grants from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and Rotary, as well as our ongoing partnership with Depave.

OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY PROJECTS

AMERICAN WASTE PICKERS PODCAST PROJECT



GSA worker Sonja Birdwell being interviewed for the podcast

Photo: Nic Boehm

In 2025 with a grant from the Story of Stuff Project, and support from The Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission (MHCRC), Ground Score Association established a small recording studio and successfully launched its American Waste Pickers podcast initiative, to amplify the voices of waste pickers.

Listen on Apple Podcasts: <http://podcasts.apple.com/.../american.../id1817564402>

Listen on Spotify: <http://open.spotify.com/show/4VBDP9PnIFa071BHBO5Ahg..>

OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY PROJECT

Through a grant from Oregon Health Authority, Ground Score Association collaborated with non-profits Trash for Peace and Portland Street Medicine to better engage and inform our unhoused, housing-insecure and the Latinx community on health issues related to Emergency Preparedness, Climate Adaptation, and Communicable Diseases.

Through a series of collaborative listening/working sessions with community members, as well as outreach both in the streets and with other organizations serving our community, we engaged directly with over 6500 community members living outside and 150 Latinx community members living in affordable housing. We also developed an informational booklet, which was distributed along with supplies to more than 500 people, and which can be found online in English and Spanish.

THE INTERSTATE/GREELEY EMBANKMENT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Interstate/Greeley Embankment Improvement project, a grassroots initiative by Ground Score Association (GSA), in collaboration with Wapato Island Table, is transforming a neglected hillside into a stable green space through ecological restoration and peer-led stewardship.

Funded by Metro and administered by the Portland Harbor Community Coalition through the North River Roots Community Grant, this project also generates high quality, low-barrier work for residents of Hazelnut Grove – a tiny home community of formerly unhoused individuals and people living with disabilities. The initiative has already dedicated 238 combined staff and volunteer hours to sowing over 490,000 seeds and planting 316 native species on the hillside.



Ground Score Outreach Workers
Photo: Angela McGuire



Photo: Katie Palmer

OTHER OUTREACH EFFORTS

Thanks to the support of Oregon Health Authority and United Way, in 2025 Ground Score hosted community wellness fairs to grow our community and bridge gaps between our unhoused neighbors and partner organizations that can support them in various ways. Each event brought in over 100 guests and featured tables from dozens of partner organizations, bringing supplies, information and intake services to connect our community with housing, health services, jobs programs, and various other supportive services.

Since the summer of 2025 we have held monthly First Thursday art events in the gallery space of our Old Town warehouse (34 NW Broadway entrance), where Ground Score creatives and friends showcase and sell art and craft, highlight issues that matter to us, and grow our broader community.

In 2025 Ground Score also helped host the annual Homeless Day of Remembrance vigil in partnership with several local organizations: Central City Concern, The Everly Project, Ground Score, Hygiene4All, Multnomah County Homeless Services Department, PDX Saints Love, Rose Haven, Sisters of the Road, St. André Bessette, Street Roots, the Welcome Home Coalition, and performances by the Aurora Chorus.

OTHER OUTREACH EFFORTS CONT.

Ground Score's collaboration with Depave includes providing peer-led environmental stewardship of streets, schools, church yards and other green spaces; as well as the creation of large shade covers for Depave's annual event. The covers are sewn by our Studio team from broken tents collected by our GLITTER program.

The People's Depot (SE MLK and Morrison) hosted events this year, including a canners appreciation day and Thanksgiving lunch, as well as regular meals and other resources thanks to community partners.

Ground Score is fortunate to be hosting three social work interns from Portland State University's School of Social Work, who come regularly to Ground Score sites to counsel and help our community members find and follow through with resources.



Juri and Wilson redeem cans at The People's Depot 3 to 4 times per week.

Photo: Nic Boehm

As part of our affiliation with global trade union [International Alliance of Waste Pickers](#), Ground Score leaders serve on the Executive Council and are active in international committees related to advocacy, communications and workers education to support the advancement of democratic waste picker organizations around the world.

We are also active in our regional network- the North America Waste Pickers Alliance (NAWPA), which held an exchange in Vancouver BC this year, and launched a [website and toolkit](#) in 2025. We actively organize with fellow NAWPA members Sure We Can and the Alliance of Independent Recyclers (Brooklyn), Cooperative Les Valoristes (Montreal), Binnens Project (Vancouver, Canada).





GLITTER workers

Photo: Nic Boehm

2025 NUMBERS

Revenue: **\$2.6 Million**

Program-related payroll: **54%**

Program expenses total: **\$2.2 Million**

Admin: **15%**

In 2025, Ground Score programs and projects were funded by: The City of Portland, Multnomah County, The Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, Lloyd ESD, Plastic Solutions Fund (a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors), The Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission (MHCRC), Depave, Unite Oregon, the Oregon Health Authority, the Portland Harbor Community Coalition, SOLVE, Portland Street Art Alliance, Trash for Peace, Story of Stuff and Niagara Cares.

Unrestricted and lightly restricted funding from the following organizations helped us immensely in 2025: United Way of Oregon, The Granville Foundation, the Oregon Community Foundation (the Eva Chiles Meyer Fund; the William H. Hunt Fund for the Homeless, Hungry, Hungry, and Poor of Oregon; and the Karen J. Fishel Fund of Oregon Community Foundation), The Sorenson Family Charitable Fund, Red Gala PDX, and individual supporters.

We also count on so much in kind and moral support from our community partners, who you can learn more about on our [website](#). Thank you!

WHAT'S BIG FOR US IN 2026

The People's Depot will move into its brick and mortar and begin operating for longer hours.

We are working to ensure more stable and secure funding for our Wash House.

We're excited about the rise of Ground Score Studios as a leadership and community-building space.

We are always looking for funding to grow our training curriculum so that more of our members have access to training in things like leadership, IT and communications, de-escalation, and mending and sewing.



THANK YOU FOR READING

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