

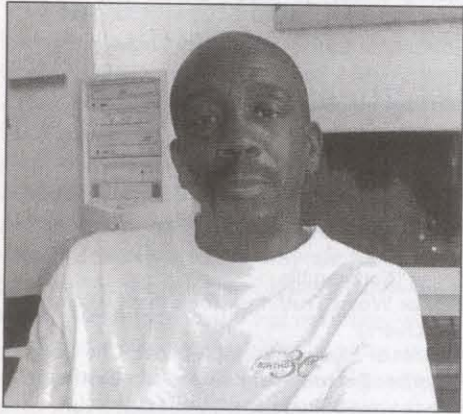


If you're reading this, it's a pretty safe bet that you like *Whats Up Magazine*. In that case, you're probably wondering where you can get it. Unlike most magazines, *Whats Up* can't be found in vending machines or in the bigger stores. We do have a strong and loyal network of socially conscious businesses that are kind enough to carry the mag for no profit, but it is a small group. Most of you bought this copy from a member of our street team—a dedicated and hardworking group of men and women that put in many hours a week out in the squares, on the campuses, and on street corners all over the metro area to get *Whats Up* to you. Why? This page is where we get the answer straight from them.

Keeping Positive

by Seth Baum

Vendor Profile: Allen Reid



Where to Find Him: Newbury Street, Faneuil Hall, Northeastern, and BU.

Allen had been working for several years as a driver for a Boston detox, taking people to appointments and other activities. When the center closed last year due to budget cuts, he lost his job and, like so many others around the country, was unable to find work elsewhere.

Shortly afterwards, Allen bumped into a *Whats Up* vendor while walking down Newbury Street. Curious, he had the vendor explain what *Whats Up* was all about. He needed to supplement his unemployment pay, so when he found out that one can sell *Whats Up Magazine* to make money, he decided to give it a try himself. Today, he sells all over the city, at many different spots to avoid bumping into the same potential customers multiple times.

While he wishes he could have a regular full-time job, he said he enjoys meeting the wide range of people he encounters on the street while selling. "On Newbury Street in particular you meet a lot of different styles: high class, yuppies, punk rockers, college students," Allen said. This diversity also leads to

diverse responses to him as a vendor. "You meet good people. You meet . . . I wouldn't say bad people, but you can catch people on a bad day," he said, reluctant to speak disparagingly of those who weren't polite to him.

Despite this positive outlook, Allen still seems somewhat hurt by the negative attitudes and stereotypes that some people have towards vendors. "Most people think that you're homeless when you're selling, and obviously some may be but everybody's situation is different. Some may be homeless, some may be supplementing their income. Don't look at it like, 'Oh, you're homeless, that's all you're capable of doing, maybe that's all you want to do.' Because then you're judging something that you don't know anything about." He emphasizes that vending is "not a negative thing. It's helping people to survive, it's helping the community to be aware of things that are going on."

When I asked him what he would do if he could be mayor, he described the need for affordable housing. "They're putting up complexes, buildings, properties, but it's all condominiums, duplexes and you need a lot more affordable housing." Given the opportunity, he would "allocate a lot more funds for community programs, for the homeless or low-income—that would be a good thing, too." Having seen the detox center he worked at fold, this issue hits especially close to home.

Allen is still looking for a regular full-time job. "You need work to survive. Unemployment doesn't last forever," he said. Meanwhile, however, he'll be out selling *Whats Up Magazine*, overcoming people's bad days and false stereotypes in order to stay optimistic. "[Finding out about *Whats Up*] was a blessing because what if my unemployment ran out and I'm still looking? What are you going to do?" he said. "You gotta keep a roof over your head and you gotta eat; you can't sleep in the streets and you can't starve." **WU**

Whats Up Vendor Quick Facts

- A street paper is any publication sold on the streets by homeless and low-income people to make some money for themselves.
- Some street papers only cover issues related to poverty and only publish writers that are experiencing it. Others (like *Whats Up*) cover a wider range of social justice issues.
- Street papers are much more than a temporary job. They're also a voice for people who usually feel that no one cares about what they are going through.
- *Whats Up* vendors purchase copies of the magazine for a quarter and sell them on the streets for \$1. The profit is theirs to keep. The money they pay covers administrative costs and printing.
- The cover price of the magazine is just that—it's *not* a donation. Street paper vending is a real job, and customers are only expected to pay what the magazine is worth. Tips, of course, are gratefully accepted.
- *Whats Up* vendors are doing more than earn some money when they make a sale. They're contributing to our mission to combine the arts with social awareness in an inspiring way.