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Portland Mayor Sam Adams shares a little more about Mike and Jean

By Janie Har, The Oregonian

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Perhaps more than the \$16 million in sidewalk funding or \$2 million for college scholarships, Portland Mayor Sam Adams' second state of the city speech may best be remembered for this: Who are Mike and Jean?

Adams cited the two people — no last names — in his annual address before the Portland City Club earlier this month as a way to illustrate the hardships faced by everyday Portlanders.

Reporters have pressed for more details, to no avail. The mayor does not collect phone numbers or surnames of people who approach him randomly, said his spokesman Roy Kaufmann.

In an interview with The Oregonian on Monday, Adams followed up by saying he hears all kinds of personal stories from residents, ranging from "I'm doing great" to a plea for help.

"I shared two in the state of the city, of real live people struggling to make ends meet," he said.

Mike was described in the mayor's speech as a stout man with a hat who was selling tamales door to door in the mayor's home neighborhood of Kenton.

Jean was a mother "with a long face" and two infants in matching red sweaters facing foreclosure on her home. Adams met her on his way home one night, on MAX.

In his speech, Adams vowed to make the city a better place for people such as Mike and Jean and their families. New sidewalks and scholarships for at-risk youth to attend Portland Community College or Mt. Hood Community College would help Adams look the Mikes and Jeans of Portland in the eye and say "I've got your back."

Adams said Monday he has not seen Mike or Jean since. Asked to describe when he met Mike and Jean, Adams said:

"The weather was still relatively warm so it must have been early fall or late summer for Mike. Jean was during the holiday season November/December."

The mayor said he bought a tamale from Mike.

"It's really easy for all of us to forget the human beings behind the statistics, and people really are struggling," Adams said.

"It moves me. It touches me, it makes me want to try harder."

-Janie Har

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