

THE OPEN DOOR:
Owners seek to give back to the community

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where their frame shop had once been located, with the major addition of The Open Door and a large courtyard for use in the summer months.

Now with grown children, two of whom work in the business, and having made it through the recession, Dan and Julia are entering a different phase of their lives. Youngest daughter Emily, now graduated from college, is managing The Open Door, providing Julia the opportunity to step back a bit from the everyday running of the business. She has taken advantage of the time provided to reflect on where they have been and where they want to go from here with the business.

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— Julia Rickards

“It feels like a season where we are flipping over, and it is an opportune time to give back for all that we have received.” She went on

to explain, “There is a ripple effect of gratitude we feel for all the support the community gives to the arts, which has directly benefitted Dan’s career, the support to kids which has positively impacted our children, and the support to us as a family and as a business.”

While celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary on Maui, their first time away together in 20 years, Dan and Julia spent time creating a list of wishes and plans for the future and ways they could possibly give back to the community. With that information Emily created a PowerPoint presentation for them. Out of that process came the idea for Dine for a Cause.

Not only will the nonprofits benefit from the money received: Julia sees it as a way to connect their patrons with the nonprofits and raise the awareness of available services and their need for support. On the first Tuesday of each month a representative from the featured organization will briefly explain their program during either lunch or dinner. The servers will be trained to talk about the work of the nonprofit, and information handouts will accompany each bill.

Tuesday, which used to be the day the bistro was closed, was chosen for Dine for a Cause, and now the gallery and wine bar are closed on Sundays to give everyone on the staff a day of quiet rest, not a day filled with the appointments and errands that Tuesdays had become.

The inaugural month of February is featuring Heartwarmers, which began in the early months of 2013, after founder Mary Tomjack, a Plainview resident, received a fleece cut-and-tie blanket as a gift from a friend in Georgia. That blanket inspired nine more blankets to be made and donated to KIDS Center.

From those small beginnings two years ago, Heartwarmers has grown into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with 110 volunteers in Sisters, Bend and Redmond who meet twice a month for an hour-and-a-half to make blankets — and friends. The blankets are donated to nine non-profits that work with abused and at-risk children and adult patients who are receiving treatment for cancer at St. Charles Cancer Centers and Bend Memorial Clinic.

The program and what it offers keeps expanding as volunteers come up with more and more ways to make use of every scrap of fleece — nothing is wasted. Two Aspen Lakes residents make hats, which go with the blankets for the cancer centers, along with a pair of socks and body lotion. Fleece scarves make use of long remnants left after cutting the blankets.

Soft fleece blocks filled with small scraps go to infants and toddlers. Dog and cat toys are created from braided leftover material. And small hearts are cut out and packaged to be used as promotional pieces for telling people about Heartwarmers.

A mother-and-son team

in Redmond heard about the project over a year ago and began making teddy bears to go with the blankets for children, covering all the costs themselves.

In the first two years, 1,555 blankets have been donated, and over the last year 400 bears have found new homes. The main expense involved is for the purchase of the fleece. Everything else is donated and volunteered.

On Tuesday, February 3, The Open Door was filled with Heartwarmers volunteers who had gathered for lunch to kick off their month of being featured. Repeatedly the women who create these wonderful gifts of warmth and comfort expressed how much fun they have, the friendships they enjoy, and how meaningful it is for them to be involved in making life better for someone else.

“Heartwarmers satisfies my desire to do something of service with the added blessings of friendship and meeting a community need,” said Lynnette Wilson, a Sisters resident who moved here from Alaska. “We can’t stop. I wouldn’t want to stop.”

The Sisters group meets the

first and third Tuesday of the month from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in the council chambers at City Hall. No sewing is required to make the blankets, just a pair of sharp scissors and a willing heart. For more information contact Tomjack at 503-880-5832 or email hwb.heartwarmers@gmail.com.

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In March the Sisters Folk Festival will be the featured nonprofit, and in coming months the Sisters Trails Alliance, A Home to Share, and Fostering Hope will receive donations.

Nonprofits interested in being a part of Dine for a Cause can contact Julia Rickards at jarickards@gmail.com.

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