

## Commentary... When the smoke clears

By Katy Yoder  
Columnist

It sure seems like things are falling apart. Hurricanes, fires and crushing snow have left so many feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Our brothers and sisters in arms have been fighting wars that never seem to end. Our first-responders have been stretched to breaking trying to deal with it all. Firefighters are getting pulled from disaster to disaster as the emergencies shift like the wind.

“Act of God,” has often been used to describe the mayhem. I’m sorry, but I just don’t accept that. I know there are religious leaders who talk that way. But in my lowly opinion, Love doesn’t start fires or floods or blizzards. God is in the aftermath, and all the acts of mercy and courage ordinary people are compelled to show. God is there to help us find the strength to act on the compassion we feel for others... even when they look, talk and feel differently than we do.

Watching the firefighters as I drive to and from work, I am reminded there are so many human beings who choose to help even when their lives are at risk. They fight fires for the people who are displaced and the animals who could be killed. They sleep next to the highway in little tents with an army of compatriots who work beside each other slowly putting out the flames. They labor in the smoke we are all choking on. And they don’t stop.

Sisters was hit hard this year. Some people are still not back in their homes after ice dams built and water crept quietly down their walls and buckled their floors. Businesses have been devastated by the aftermath. Others are overwhelmed with

work that they can’t get to. Through it all we’ve waited for it to be over. But it isn’t.

The beautiful and truly amazing eclipse seemed like an economic solution to our winter woes. Yes, it would be inconvenient with the traffic and all those extra eclipse-chasers, but they’d stop to eat in our town. They’d fill up their gas tanks and maybe stop to shop in our stores. But the fire and smoke kept them away. We all heard stories of restaurants and stores that stocked up for the throngs that didn’t come. The loss of income for our local businesses has slowly bled them dry.

Now the fires that are blazing across Oregon continue the devastation. Even as the firefighters are taken to bigger fires, we have been left with the smoke that is carried along on the wind. I keep telling myself that the smoke will clear, but it’s still here. Even after a torrential downpour left standing water in the desert, it wasn’t enough to bring the smoke down.

This is my final year with Sisters Folk Festival and my last festival as an employee. I envisioned how it would go. One more chance to talk to all the people who come to the festival and our patrons

and sponsors. But the smoke changed that and now I know my last festival was 2016.

It’s OK. When I think about the challenges facing so many around the globe, I know my disappointment doesn’t even register in importance. I’ll be fine. It’s my friends, the businesses and the animals I’m worried about.

It’s up to those of us who haven’t been so severely devastated to help where we can. Sending money to organizations who are assisting the victims is so important. But so is helping keep our local businesses alive. I’m afraid that many won’t make it through another winter. If you’re able, please patronize our stores in Sisters. Go out to eat, buy groceries and a little (or big!) gift for your loved ones.

There’s something so comforting about going into a store where you know the person behind the counter. When they smile and say, “Hello,” I know they’re truly happy to see me. Anyone who’s lived somewhere bigger knows that’s not something to be taken for granted. We have a wonderful place to call home — and when the smoke clears, I am hopeful it’ll all still be here.

## Oregon man shares blacksmith skills on YouTube

By Carisa Cegavske  
The News-Review

ROSEBURG (AP) — Scott Wadsworth has been fascinated by blacksmiths since he was 12 years old, when he kept running across descriptions of them in the Western books he enjoyed.

He was camping the first time he experienced the joy of shaping metal. He put some nails in a campfire, and once they were hot he started hammering them flat.

“I didn’t know what to do with them, but I kept doing it over and over,” he said.

Wadsworth went to Oregon State University, intending to study for an engineering degree, but dropped out to pursue a construction career. He owned Wadco Construction in Roseburg for several decades, married his childhood sweetheart, Kelly (they met on a school bus in Glide), and raised four kids.

Twelve years ago he received a life-changing gift from former Douglas County Commissioner Bill Vian.

Vian gave Wadsworth all his blacksmithing tools — tools he himself had received from Roseburg Forest Products founder Kenneth Ford in 1978.

The equipment is worthy of a museum, but Wadsworth has no intention of leaving it to collect dust.

“When Bill gave me these tools it really altered the course of my middle age,” he said.

Today, Wadsworth builds a wide variety of metal objects, from chandeliers to range hoods to swords.

His favorite creation to date is a set of gates patterned to look like dogwood for a design studio belonging to Jennifer Jackson of Sutherlin. It’s the type of creation Wadsworth likes to call house jewelry.

The next step in the journey he’s taken came when his son Nathan Wadsworth of Mesa, Arizona, a millennial in his early 30s, suggested his dad put up some videos on YouTube. That seemed like a horrible idea, Wadsworth said.

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