

The people behind The Nugget... *Katy Yoder*

Katy Yoder has always been a writer. Now *The Nugget* freelancer is committed to making writing her life and career.

"That's always been my outlet and my love," she recalled. "And it started with my mom introducing me to all these great books."

Yoder recalls that her mother, Mimi Graves of Sisters, would hold out books as milestones on the road to growing up. At a certain point, she would tell Katy that she was ready for a certain story.

"She made books so exciting," Katy said. For years she kept journals and wrote poetry — and found a way to keep her hand in the trade through freelance feature writing for *The Nugget*, which started about a decade ago. Feature writing is a congenial form of journalism for Yoder. She recalls studying journalism in college and being put off by a hard-bitten ethos that getting the story was not just the most important thing, but really the only thing that mattered. An empathetic soul, she couldn't see herself shoving a notepad or a microphone in someone's face in the midst of a crisis or tragedy.

"Getting the story is more important than (people's) feelings," she said. "I knew I

couldn't do that." Feature writing offers a different path.

"I love being able to introduce an interesting person to more people," she said. "And I like telling positive stories. I really love highlighting interesting people and people who have used their lives to do good." (See her most recent story on page 3.)

“ I love being able to introduce an interesting person to more people. And I like telling positive stories. — Katy Yoder

"It gives me an opportunity to ask questions I wouldn't ordinarily ask," she said. "I'm nosy — but I'm not comfortable being nosy without a reason."

So Yoder ended up in the field she studied after all. "It's funny, because I ended up doing journalism — but I'm doing the kind of journalism that feels right to me," she said.

The words come easily. The interviews are often so enjoyable and absorbing that the stories "write themselves,"

Yoder said. Over the past couple of years, Yoder has taken up a different challenge. Diagnosed with breast cancer while she was working as the development director for Sisters Folk Festival, she started writing a column about her medical struggle — and the accompanying emotional fallout, both good and bad.

"I started writing the columns because *Nugget* editor Jim Cornelius asked me to do that," she said. "I would never have thought to do that, because I've always told other people's stories, never my own."

Writing the column caused Yoder to delve into areas she'd never opened up to before and explore dark topics — such as facing mortality.

"The reason I asked Katy to write those columns is that I knew she had the courage to be honest, real and authentic — and that she has the chops to communicate what it means to go through a life-changing confrontation with death and dying," Cornelius said. "That kind of writing has a big impact on people because everyone is touched by cancer. They've either faced it themselves or had loved ones taken by it. This is one of those situations where delving deep into the personal communicates



Katy Yoder, freelance writer.

the universal — and I knew Katy could do that." Yoder found that facing a potentially terminal illness broke down psychological barriers, and her writing deepened and became more urgent. She has also been tapped to teach classes on death and dying.

"It opened up the teacher side of me, I guess, just because of the life experience I've had," she said.

Facing mortality and

pushing the boundaries of her writing has led Yoder to devote herself to being a full-time writer. She is grateful to her husband, Gary, for his full support of that ambition. She is currently working on a memoir. And she will continue to tell the stories of Sisters folks in the pages of *The Nugget*.

"I'm really excited to be a full-time writer," she said. "To be what I've always wanted to be."

HIKE: Badlands offers nearly all-season hiking opportunities

Continued from page 7

back to the Castle Trail junction, where we had originally entered into Flatiron Rock's inner sanctum. From there, we simply retraced our steps to the Ancient Juniper Trail junction, which we ignored this time, to return on the main Flatiron Trail for the shorter return to the trailhead.

This hike is best undertaken during the early and late shoulder seasons but can

also be an option on cool, cloudy, or wet days when the mountains are not very inviting. Regardless, always bring plenty of water because this is desert country. I've tried to give detailed trail directions because it's easy to become disoriented out here where all the country looks the same. Also, carry a map; maps of the Badlands trail system are available on the BLM website and other sites.

To reach the Flatiron Rock Trailhead, simply take Highway 20 for about 16 miles east of Bend. The trailhead is on the left and is well marked by a BLM sign.

Showing kids the ropes...



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Tomas Garcilazo, charro and rodeo specialty act, visited Sisters Elementary School last week, where he thrilled the children with demonstrations of his mastery with a lariat. Garcilazo is a renowned horseman, master of the rope, and an ambassador of Mexican Charro tradition.

Firefighters to train near Sisters

The Central Oregon Fire Management Service will host its annual Guard School training this week, where 57 men and women will begin their initial training to become wildland firefighters. At the end of the week-long event, students will be qualified as entry-level firefighters, and will join more than 300 other federal and state wildland firefighters working in Central Oregon this summer.

"This type of intense training provides the essential foundation for becoming an effective, well-informed, and safe firefighter," said Nate LeFevre, Acting Fire Staff for the Central Oregon Fire Management Service, the combined Forest Service and BLM fire and fuels organization in Central Oregon.

This year, attendees are coming from a variety of agencies, including the Forest Service, the BLM, the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Bend Fire Department, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Oregon Military Department and the Oregon National Guard.

During the week of training, the new firefighters will go through a rigorous schedule of classroom and field exercises designed to teach a variety of subjects including fire suppression techniques, fire behavior, fire ecology, maps/navigation skills, radio communications and risk management. The firefighters will also learn how to operate engines, pumps and other mechanized equipment.

On Thursday, June 14, the firefighters will go through a live-fire exercise designed to provide hands-on experience in line building techniques, setting hose lays, and applying mop-up standards. Specialists will ignite a small prescribed burn in order to give the new recruits an opportunity to apply their new knowledge on an actual fireline.

Classroom work and

some of the field exercises will be taught at the Biak Training Center east of

“ This type of intense training provides the essential foundation for becoming an effective, well-informed, and safe firefighter. — Nate LeFevre

Redmond, and the live-fire exercise will occur on Forest Service lands near Black Pine Springs along Forest Road 16, about six miles southwest of Sisters. The practice fire will be a low-intensity maintenance burn in an area that was previously treated.

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