

The people behind The Nugget...

Ceili Cornelius

Ceili Cornelius grew up around news trade (she's the daughter of *Nugget* Editor in Chief Jim Cornelius), but it was a movie that set her feet on a path that has led to the journalism program at the University of Oregon, freelance work for *The Nugget Newspaper* and the Western Fire Chiefs Association Daily Dispatch, and a future career in the field.

She chuckles when she remembers her 15-year-old self inspired by "The Devil Wears Prada."

"It centered around a fashion magazine and fashion journalism and I thought, 'I want to do that,'" she recalled.

Journalism has been her aim ever since.

"There was a short time in high school when I thought I wanted to go into the medical world — but that didn't stick," she said.

The work hits its sweetest chord for her when it's paired with her other passion: music. She grew up around the Sisters Folk Festival and, though she never took to playing and performing, she loves the art and the behind-the-scenes workings of the music world.

In her freshman year at the University of Oregon, she experienced an all-too-brief spark of inspiration from Professor Tom Wheeler, a pioneering music journalist who helped launch *Rolling Stone Magazine*. His support opened the possibility that Cornelius could find a niche in music journalism.

"He passed away shortly after I met

him, at the beginning of 2018, but he set me on the path of music journalism — and hopefully someday writing for *Rolling Stone*," she said.

Much of her freelance work for *The Nugget* has centered around artist profiles in the run-up to the Sisters Rhythm and Brews Festival in July and this September's Sisters Folk Festival. She said her association with the Sisters Folk Festival has opened doors for her with artists and their managers.

"It sets up a new way for them to look at me," she said. "They open up just a little bit more."

Cornelius has also worked on stories about the activities and accomplishments of her fellow Sisters High School graduates. She ran into an unexpected challenge there: the modesty of the subjects.

"I found a lot more (former) students were a lot more hesitant to do this than I thought they would be," she said. "A lot of them don't think they're doing something worthy of being reported in the newspaper."

One subject kept coming up over and over again — so strongly that Cornelius decided it needs to be covered in its own right:

"Every student I talked to talked about the influence IEE had on their life," she said.

IEE stands for Interdisciplinary Environmental Expedition — one of the signature programs at Sisters High School where students get backcountry experience and flesh it out with

science and literary arts activities.

Cornelius interviewed the program's founder, Rand Runco, at length for an upcoming story.

"That story can be expected in the fall," she said.

Cornelius says that her early newspaper experience set her up well for her university studies. She wasn't inhibited or intimidated when it came to approaching subjects for interviews, because she's been doing it since her mid-teens.

The university program has pushed her into other forms of media besides print. She has enjoyed exploring audio and visual formats and finding which form of media best suits a particular type of story. And she is also intrigued by the intersection of journalism and public relations, finding the production of public relations materials a creative endeavor.

Social media is a critical part of the contemporary journalism world — for good or ill — and Cornelius is building her skills in that arena, too. She's working as social media coordinator for the Sisters Folk Festival.

The fundamentals of the craft still apply.

"You've got to get the who, what,



PHOTO BY BRICE VAN DER VEER

Ceili Cornelius enjoys pairing journalism with her love for music.

when, where, why and how in a post in 140 characters — and also have something visually interesting," she said. "Social media is definitely a journalistic skill, at least to me."

As both her editor and her father, Jim Cornelius sees a bright future for the young journalist in a field that is constantly shifting with new technologies and cultural changes.

"Writing and photography will always be fundamental skills — along with asking good questions and being a good listener," he said. "Ceili's developing her chops from story to story. She works really well on deadline and she has a good ear and good instincts for a story. That will all stand her in good stead going forward — no matter what totally unforeseeable direction journalism takes in the future."

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