

# County has suicide prevention resources

During these unprecedented times, it is natural to be concerned about suicide risk in our communities. Suicide is the most preventable form of death and something we can all do to help prevent suicide is to promote resources in our community.

“Deschutes County has certainly been impacted by suicide death; and unfortunately, so far this year we have been seeing suicide deaths consistent with our average rate over the last few years,” said Whitney Schumacher, Deschutes County Suicide Prevention Coordinator. “We have not seen a correlation between COVID-19 and suicide in Deschutes County. However, our local suicide rate is one of the highest in the state, which is why it is important that we as a community continue to prioritize suicide prevention work.”

Suicide is a complex public health issue and no single thing causes a person to take their life. However, health officials state that there are warning signs we can all keep a lookout for:

- Social isolation — physically distancing ourselves does not mean we need to socially disconnect, health officials assert. Reach out to folks in your life, whether they are near or far.
  - Despair caused by financial hardship, job loss, or other stressful life events.
  - Excessive levels of anxiety, panic, or depression.
  - Increasing use of alcohol or drugs.
  - Access to lethal means — suicides can be avoided if people do not have an easy way to act on suicidal impulses during their most vulnerable moments. Safe storage of lethal means is key to helping prevent suicide.
- Suicide during this unprecedented time is not inevitable. We’re all in this together, help is a phone call away:
- Deschutes County Crisis Line: 541-322-7500 x9.
  - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.
  - Central Oregon Suicide Prevention Alliance’s Resource page: [www.preventsuicideco.org](http://www.preventsuicideco.org).
  - If you are 55 or older and feeling isolated or just want to have a friendly conversation, call the Senior Loneliness Line at 503-200-1633.
  - If you are 21 or younger and want support for any problem, big or small, text teen2teen to 839863 or call YouthLine at 1-877-968-8491.

# Going virtual: Online auction is working for MOTH

By Jim Cornelius  
Editor in Chief

The Sisters Folk Festival’s annual My Own Two Hands art auction and party was an early victim of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. This major spring cultural event is a vital fundraiser for the year-round arts organization — and it became clear as soon as Governor Kate Brown issued her “Stay At Home, Save Lives” executive order banning gatherings that it could not proceed as planned.

But the SFF staff wasn’t about to abandon the event. The organization had already collected some 70 pieces of art donated by generous local and regional artists. That contribution needed to be honored — and the organization can’t afford to lose the infusion of cash the auction brings to support its music and arts events and education programs.

So, they did what arts organizations do: They got creative.

Initially, they thought they might postpone the event and wrap it into the September folk festival, but that posed logistical challenges, including months of storage of donated art. So they started thinking about a virtual event.

“We saw a few (arts organizations) in the Portland area that were moving to a complete online auction and having pretty good success with that,” SFF Executive Director Crista Munro told *The Nugget*.

Facing “a year of very little revenue,” the organization decided to push forward in that format. They looked at doing an online “live”

auction, but production costs were prohibitive.

“We just decided it wasn’t a good use, a responsible use, of the dollars we’re trying to raise,” Munro said.

The staff decided on an online silent auction set to open on May 8, and run through May 16.

“That’s when the real work began,” Munro said.

Teresa Mills took point on finding the right platform. SFF decided to use the auction program Greater Giving, featuring each art item with a photo and a description.

“Number one, they do their own credit card processing, which was appealing for security purposes,” Mills said.

The platform is “professional and intuitive,” Mills said.

Artists have been pleased with the way their work is presented.

While Mills worked on the technical end, Kate Donovan and Steven Remington worked with artists and patrons to ensure good representation and easy interface with the event. Dave Ehle and Brad Tisdell organized promotional videos and the Sisters Folk Festival Bandwagon took music to the streets of Sisters in a safe and enjoyable way.

They set up a Facebook live event on Saturday, featuring music from Tisdell, Beth Wood, and David Jacobs-Strain (which can still be viewed on Youtube).

“This has really been a 100 percent team effort,” Munro said.

The goal was to make things as festive as possible under the current conditions

of quarantine and social distancing. The response has been positive.

“I think everyone understands that it’s a different reality right now,” Munro said. “I think they have enough trust in the organization that we did our due diligence and chose the right path forward that was best for the organization.”

While it’s certainly not the same as a lively gathering with music and the buzz of a live auction, the virtual platform has its benefits. Patrons can readily click through to learn more about each artist, and the online reach has brought bids in from all over North America.

“Sales have been robust,” Mills said. “I really think we’re engaging a lot of people this way.”

The auction continues through May 16, so there is still time to participate at <https://sff2020.ggo.bid/bidding/package-browse>.

The September festival has not been officially

canceled, though organizers clearly heard Governor Brown’s statement last week that, “Large gatherings, including live sporting events with audiences, concerts, festivals and conventions, will not be able to return until we have a reliable treatment or prevention like a vaccine. The Oregon Health Authority is advising that any large gatherings at least through September should either be canceled or significantly modified.”

Festival staff is looking at what “significantly modified” might look like, recognizing that the quarter-century old tradition can’t go forward as usual this year.

They’re not ready to throw in the towel entirely just yet — after all, they’ve demonstrated with My Own Two Hands that they can come up with alternative events that are both creative and safe.

For information visit [www.sistersfolkfestival.org](http://www.sistersfolkfestival.org).

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