

Entrepreneur artist seeks to bring joy to Sisters

By **Katy Yoder**
Correspondent

When she was 30 years old, Kelly Rae Roberts discovered it's never too late to start playing with paint. After an early career as a clinical medical social worker, she felt a calling to seek a more creative and joy-filled life.

Her generous heart was brimming with possibilities. She wrote a book and produced compelling images and ideas that generated lucrative licensing deals. Her dream to share the joy she'd found was realized, and her artwork and insights were featured in gift shops and home décor stores around the globe.

Then she and her family decided to make Sisters home. They were seeking a slower pace with more community and heart-centered connections; but opening a store wasn't part of their plan. Then building owners, Dana and Nancy Bratton contacted Roberts about an opening in their Hood Avenue building, and she was intrigued. It was the first of many serendipitous moments that helped Roberts and her family decide to open a retail store and food truck in Sisters.

"Having a vegan food truck has been my husband John's dream," Roberts said. "The Brattons were so excited about the idea. Within 48 hours, we were signing leases for both spaces."

The whole family is contributing.

"We were in Portland for 20 years, but we've always

loved Bend and Sisters," said Roberts. "So, we moved here and so did my parents. Now we live just a few blocks from each other. My dad helped us build out these spaces; he's been such a big help."

Roberts wanted to create a shop for creative people, and a space blooming with color. Every part of SoulShine & Co. has been carefully curated from bright, cheerful color combinations to a pleasing collection of vintage light fixtures, displays, and of course, the products she carries.

"I have a lot of artist friends, like Carrie Schmitt whose paintings are currently featured in the shop," said Roberts. "I thought her flower paintings were perfect for our opening month."

Outside the dressing room is a sign that says, "Wear Your Joy." The concept came from Roberts' early years as a mother.

"I found myself still wearing maternity clothes and sweats. One day I found a pair of cowgirl boots that just spoke to me and I purchased them. Those boots really inspired the idea of wearing my joy. Even if I want to wear a pair of sweats, they should be sweats that delight me. I've been doing this practice of wearing my joy for about 10 years. I created an online course called, Wear Your Joy. It's been taken by thousands of people. I deeply believe we've got to be in love with everything we own, whether it's a piece of clothing or a candle."

Almost everything in SoulShine & Co is produced by small-batch, women-owned companies; with a few larger manufacturers to help round out the price point. The recent protests and uprisings supporting Black Lives Matter continue to inspire Roberts to carry pieces made by people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

"I look at who my vendors are and if I'm including Black, Indigenous, and people of color," she said. "We're doing that, but I know we can do better."

The store's EnergynSoul clay earrings are made by Quan Santos, a Black single mother from Virginia.

"We love her work!" said Roberts. "We also carry books written by Pixie Lighthorse, an Indigenous woman from Redmond. All of Lighthorse's books sell out fast. As an artist, offering a diverse array of fair-trade items bringing joy and a feeling of belonging to all customers is important. I work extremely hard to choose vendors making ethical and sustainable choices when producing their wares. A beautiful example is the responsibly-sourced smudge



PHOTO COURTESY IN HER IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Kelly Rae Roberts has launched SoulShine & Co. in Sisters.

sticks created by a Native person on her Native lands. The more we practice and understand how we can be more inclusive in our choices, the more opportunities there are for growth on a personal and community level."

SoulShine & Co opened in mid-July and their food cart, Nourish opens in September. There's a new mural painted by artists Katie Daisy and Karen Eland on the store's exterior wall.

"It's a selfie-mural,"

said Roberts. "There's a big owl, rabbit, elk, and other local wildlife." The mural is another realization of the dream for a joy-filled, happy life. "We've met so many friendly locals. Sisters is a very welcoming city."

To learn more about Roberts' career and offerings, visit KellyRaeRoberts.com.

SoulShine is located at 351 W. Hood Ave. in Sisters. Store hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday noon to 5 p.m.

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