

LUKENS: Sisters woman will return to England this month

Continued from page 3

do not just one, but two, independent study courses on topics of her interest that weren't covered in depth in the regular curriculum.

As a senior in high school, Lukens did most of her coursework at Central Oregon Community College through the Expanded Options program, which she says not only prepared her more for her next steps, but enriched her educational experience.

"COCC is a great school and I am so glad I had the opportunity to take classes there," she said.

When it came to deciding what school to attend after graduation from high school, Lukens initially considered staying in Oregon after being admitted to Oregon State University, but she had gotten a taste of England at age 10 on a trip with her family, which got her thinking about other options.

"I thought that getting fully immersed in another culture, rather than just going abroad for one term, would be fascinating," she said. "And it turns out it was true."

Bachelor's degrees in the U.K. are completed in three years, so Lukens will graduate in May with a degree in social work, which will allow her to practice in the region. However, she is applying for Master's programs with a focus on human rights law. Her intention is to attend a campus in a larger city after three years on the Warrenton campus, which is situated in a town not much larger than Sisters, where she can experience more diversity.

While she says her experience of studying overseas has been positive, it has not come without some challenges.

"One thing that surprised me is having strangers asking me rather blunt and intrusive questions about my origins," said Lukens, who was adopted from India. "People were confused by my accent in relation to my skin tone, expecting me to sound like someone from India rather than sounding like an American."

Some of these encounters

were based solely in curiosity, according to Lukens, while others "felt a bit hostile," which she had never experienced before.

"In Sisters I have always just been Alana," she said. "And I have certainly experienced and witnessed xenophobia."

Lukens is the president of the International Student Society at Chester, so she rubs elbows with students from a number of other countries and has learned firsthand some legal restrictions, some of which she believes are unfair, that are placed on international students regarding being able to work in the U.K.

As is her way, Lukens decided to take action.

"I wanted to be able to earn some money while in school, but quickly learned that the law only allowed me to do very menial labor with very strict hour limits," she said. "I found I couldn't tutor, I couldn't teach music lessons, freelance or do anything artistic for pay. About all I could do was work in low wage jobs, like at the little pharmacy down the street."

Her concern over this issue led her to initiate a petition and ultimately to arrange a meeting with a member of Parliament from the Warrington District, which is

set for September 1 via Zoom during which she hopes to relay her concerns and promote change.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic spurred Lukens into action on other matters as well. She thought she would be coming home to Sisters in March, but her ticket got canceled and she found herself stuck, isolated in her room. Ever active and always thinking, Lukens found herself asking, "What can I be doing during this time?"

Her answer was to start an online blog and Instagram platform called "The Empowerment Project," with focus on well-being, mental health, cultural awareness, diversity/inclusion, and activism through promoting empowerment of ethnic

minorities and vulnerable populations.

Her launch of the project, which is multi-layered, has resulted in hundreds of followers and even a connection with a women's group in Uganda for which she is sharing curriculum that she has developed focused on women's empowerment.

"I always feel like I should be making an impact somehow beyond just doing things for myself," she said. "I like the feeling that I am moving forward."

Lukens says she is inspired by women like Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex; and Michelle Obama, former first lady.

"These women started relatively 'normal' lives and ultimately found themselves

in positions where they can really make a difference," she said. "I hope that I can meet one or both of them someday."

She continued her work on the project while back in Sisters this summer and will proceed to do so as she returns to Chester in early September.

Ever-busy, Lukens has also continued pursuing her love of music through songwriting and recording.

"I am glad I can keep music as part of my life, sort of on the side, where I can control it," she said.

Alana is the daughter of Miki McFadden and Peggy Lukens of Sisters.

Those interested in learning more can access Lukens' work at www.instagram.com/empowerment_p.r.o.j.e.c.t/.

Red sky at night...



PHOTO BY AL KRAUSE

Spectacular sunsets have continued through fire season.

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SUDOKU SOLUTION
for puzzle on page 10

2	3	5	7	8	1	6	9	4
9	1	4	3	6	2	5	8	7
8	7	6	9	4	5	1	2	3
6	8	1	4	2	7	3	5	9
5	2	9	6	1	3	4	7	8
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7	9	2	5	3	6	8	4	1
4	5	3	1	9	8	7	6	2
1	6	8	2	7	4	9	3	5

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