

Sisters Folk Festival has deep roots

By Jodi Schneider
Correspondent

An Indian poet once said, “The greatness of a culture can be found in its festivals,” and here in Sisters you don’t have to look far to find that greatness.

Birthered 25 years ago, Sisters Folk Festival (SFF) had humble origins as a one-day music event with just a few hundred people attending at the Sisters Middle-High School (now the middle school).

In 1995 the seed for the festival was planted when two local musicians, Dick Sandvik, then owner of Paulina Springs Books, and Jim Cornelius, then an employee at the bookstore, started kicking around ideas of how to figure out a way to extend the shoulder season by having an event that would bring people to town.

Cornelius said, “There wasn’t a lot happening in Sisters after Labor Day and the tourist traffic dried up. The idea was to enhance economic vitality by bringing people to town later in the season. Originally the first couple of folk festivals were held at the end of September.”

Cornelius and Sandvik found common ground in their taste for music.

“Jim and I discovered we liked the same kind of music,” explained Sandvik. “And we were not finding that kind of music anywhere here. You’d have to go to Portland to find it. It was what they call Americana now, but it was a blend of folk music and country and bluegrass and gospel. We played guitar together quite a bit and decided that we wanted to come up with a music event that served as a cultural purpose too. We thought a modest folk festival might have a chance to succeed.”

Cornelius added, “We both really believed strongly in the power of music to bring people together.”

They ran SFF out of the office of Paulinas Springs Books with Sandvik’s wife Diane Campbell at the helm behind the scenes.

“We probably would have never succeeded, but for her,” Sandvik said.

Sandvik said, “We purposely started very small because in part we didn’t know much, and we didn’t have a huge budget. We couldn’t bring in much



Sisters Folk Festival co-founders Dick Sandvik and Jim Cornelius.

PHOTO BY LYNN WOODWARD

talent of national or even regional claim. So, we settled on a handful of artists.”

Cornelius noted, “It was a one-day deal, and it was all regional artists.”

The Sisters Sound Check Band, which included Cornelius and Sandvik, along with Doug and Phyllis Sokol, opened the first event and Peter Yates, an Irish balladeer from Vancouver, Washington, was the headliner and closed the festival.

Sandvik said, “We muddled along trying to get

sponsors and talked to Ed Fitzjerral of Metabolic Maintenance — he still owns Metabolic Maintenance — and he said he would give us a thousand-dollar sponsorship for our festival if it would be used for a songwriting contest.”

SFF incorporated a songwriting contest, publicized it and sent 200 flyers to music

stores throughout the region. The festival received over 40 entries. Brad Tisdell, now the creative director for SFF, was one of the top-10 finalists.

Sandvik said, “After the first festival, I got together with some friends, and they said ‘It was so simple, small and intimate, don’t change a thing.’ So, Jim and I changed everything the next year.”

See DEEP ROOTS on page 13

CORK CELLARS
WINE & BISTRO

What's Cooking?
TAPAS, FLATBREADS & DINNER SPECIALS...
TRY OUR PAELLA!

Dine-In, Outdoor Seating
Tues. - Fri., 3 to 8 p.m.,
Sat., Noon to 8 p.m.

391 W. Cascade Ave. | 541-549-2675
corkcellarswinebistro.com

HOLA!
MEXICAN PERUVIAN RESTAURANT

NOUVEAU MEXICAN-PERUVIAN CUISINE

Camp Sherman
Open Wed.-Mon.,
1 to 9 p.m.
541-595-6420

SISTERS COFFEE CO.

WELCOME to the SISTERS COFFEE CURBSIDE CAFE

open every day 7am to 4pm

Please place your order at the front door and pay with a card if you can.

THANK YOU for your continued support!

THANK YOU SISTERS!

Open 7am-4pm Coffee Roasted Daily 273 W Hood Ave. Sisters, OR

2020 Sisters Artist Studio Tour



Celebrate the Arts in Sisters, September 26–27

Take a self-guided tour to meet 36 artists, up close and personal, explore their studios, learn about their work, and buy art you can’t live without. Using masks, hand sanitizing, and social distancing, you can experience the beauty of the arts in Sisters Country. This event is in keeping with state and county guidelines. #sistersstudiotour



Look for Studio Tour Guides in early September at galleries, hotels, and restaurants, and online at sistersartsassociation.org