

Grief in tough times

By T. Lee Brown
Correspondent

The death of a loved one. A global pandemic. Senseless violence. An attack on our nation. Sisters Country has experienced waves of collective grief in the last year. Along with the national-level issues, we faced tragic accidents, economic struggles, extreme fires and smoke, and health problems.

Carrying high levels of stress pushed some people to their limits. Some of us snapped and said regrettable things. Some parted ways with friends, family, churches, charities, and businesses over differences in politics, COVID safety, or equity.

Some kicked up a fuss on their way out. Others unfriended, blocked, or ghosted without a whisper.

That's a whole lot of loss to process.

"Grief is so personal and so subjective, and grieving is such a touchy subject," said Katie Diez, whose Comfort Seeds project engages with grief (see article, page 3). She describes grief as a "lonely place to be, even if we're in a group that's experienced loss together." Here she shares what helps her:

Spending time outside

"Getting out in nature is one of the biggest things that helped me," said Diez. "Get my hands in the dirt, walk on the dirt, touch a tree, observe what is happening in nature. You certainly see the cycle of life as you go through the seasons."

Accepting

Diez believes it helps to understand that whatever you're feeling at any given moment is "not unusual, that it's normal, really truly — whether you're feeling intense sadness or even joy." Dark humor came naturally to Diez after her father's death. "I made some jokes in the throes of grief, much to people's [shock]. All of it

is normal. We go in and out of all those stages at our own pace and in our own time."

Feeling heard

Finding an ear can help: "someone to listen, not to give you advice, but to listen." It can be a problem when well-intentioned friends say they understand what you're going through because, for example, their cat died. "People try to connect, to show empathy," with such statements, but Diez said comparisons can feel hurtful.

Being generous

Watching people go through collective grief on social media, Diez noticed that there's a tendency to judge how others experience loss. "If someone is finding a lot of gratitude, that may be a lifeline for them, not 'toxic positivity'... it's part of their grieving process," she noted. On the other hand, there are folks "who just really need to say, 'This sucks!' and really embrace that reality." Either way is okay. Diez recommends that everyone "be generous in our assumptions and our judgments toward each other through this time."

Walking the path

Writer and farmer Wendell Berry inspired Diez to "find a path, and walk that path." She thinks about it when she walks Peterson Ridge, which has changed greatly over the years. "He had a hollow, a holler, on his family property that he would walk," said Diez. Berry watched the land change with the seasons and noticed how the environment changed, which trees fell. "You can watch the nuances of the change, as humans have wrought upon that path, or nature has changed," Diez noted. "That can be in the city, in the country, anywhere."

Making meaning

"There's some power and value in creating meaning around your grief experience," said Diez. Meaning-making can arise from a wide variety of activities: storytelling, spiritual practices,

artistic pursuits, helping others, and physical movement such as dance or yoga are just a few. Creativity can unlock a sense of purpose as we process our tough times. Being "artistic" is not a prerequisite. Diez, despite the success of Comfort Seeds, doesn't consider herself an artist.

Writing it down

Likewise, being a writer isn't a requirement for the act of journaling. Diez found that "having paper and pen handy, to be able to journal whatever comes to mind, has been huge." Research shows that directed writing in particular can be helpful for those suffering a loss. A bereaved person might respond to prompts in a grief workbook, for example, writing about certain memories.

Growing

Gardening through grief has made a big impact on Diez. "It's kind of an oxymoron: embracing the impermanence," she said, "to hold and to love and to admire, to hold lightly, knowing it will pass." Every fall, she looks at her dahlias, knowing they could all be gone the next week. Then that fateful day arrives. "Now they are these blackened flowers on these blackened stalks," she said. "I mourn a little bit for that beauty that has passed. The garden will not look the same next year, it will change, but it will be back."

Finding more help

See www.comfortseeds.com/resources for ways to process grief, and help others do so.

City COVID-19 relief grants

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

Small business relief assistance grants totaling \$40,000 have been awarded by the City to 17 local businesses that have been severely impacted by the pandemic.

In the FY 2020-21 budget, the City allocated up to \$40,000 for that purpose. On March 10, The City Council approved Resolution 2021-03 authorizing the Grant Relief Program and designated Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce as the administrator.

A grant committee was formed including Councilor Andrea Blum for the City, Judy Trego and Turi Shergold for the Chamber, and Caprielle Foote-Lewis for Sisters Country Economic Development, and program criteria were established.

Eligibility required a net operating loss due to COVID-19 of 25 percent or greater (demonstrated by end-of-year financials for 2019 and 2020). Seventeen of 20 applicants qualified, meeting all four of the criteria. Because there was some money left over after each

business was granted \$2,000, the extra was divided among five businesses that had a net operating loss of 50 percent or greater. Those five each received \$3,200.

Those businesses receiving \$2,000 included: Alpaca by Design; Cascade Fitness/Premier Fitness; Clearwater Gallery; Common Threads Sisters, Inc.; Hardtails Bar & Grill DBA Mulletts, Inc.; Cottonwood Café; Metamorphosis Hair Salon; MSKL Investment DBA Mackenzie Creek Mercantile; Shanti Management, LLC DBA Sisters Inn & Suites; Spoons of Sisters, LLC; Suttle Tea, LLC; and Team Rambo Events Electrical, LLC.

Businesses receiving \$3,200 each included: Belfry Events, LLC; Central Oregon Shows; Gypsy Wind Clothing; Quoin Media & Entertainment, LLC; and Sisters Athletic Club.

City Recorder Kerry Prosser indicated that, following notification of the recipients last Friday morning, she received a number of very heartfelt responses from recipients indicating their gratitude for the extra help.

www.NuggetNews.com

BLAKE & SONS
CLEANING SERVICES

Windows • Screens • Gutters
Residential, Rentals & Commercial Cleaning

FREE ESTIMATES!
Call or text Jeff Blake
at 541-420-3020

20 YEARS EXPERIENCE • INSURED, LICENSED & BONDED

SISTERS SALOON
RANCH GRILL

LIMITED INDOOR SEATING,
ORDER ONLINE takeout/
delivery at SistersSaloon.net

Sun-Thurs 11-8 • Fri-Sat 11-9
541-549-RIBS | 190 E. Cascade Ave.

CCB#203769

ELITE ROOFING LLC

- Re-Roof & New Construction
- Composite, Metal, Flat & Cedar Shake Products
- Residential & Custom Home Framing
- Gutter Installation
- Free Estimates
- Financing Available
- Transferable Warranties
- 10-Year Workmanship Guarantee

Family Owned & Operated for 20 Years
541-526-5143

Dwell In Possibility
By Ginger

311 W. CASCADE AVE.
SISTERS, OREGON
541-549-6061
stitchinpost.com

Fabrics, charm pack, and four different kits available.

SEWING & FIBER ARTS
Stitchin' POST
EDUCATION, INSPIRATION & CREATIVITY