



Getting ready for the reopening of Cast Iron Cafe, Elisha Nightingale puts sunflowers on each dining table. PHOTOS BY CATHY CHENEY / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Cafe

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help?’ People with checks (were) showing their strong support. It was incredible!”

That night the Nightingales sat down and developed a new business strategy and a new plan: Reopen Cast Iron Cafe. They had been the underdog before, so why should a little global pandemic stop them now?

They needed to raise money to stock food and supplies for day-to-day operational needs. Knowing they had the support of the community, they decided to try a Facebook fundraiser to reach their \$5,000 goal. One day after launching the campaign, they had raised over 75%.

It’s not just the food and inviting atmosphere the Nightingales provide that garners their community’s support. It’s also because of who they are as people. A fundraiser was also being sponsored for Annie Schächer, owner of Gear Up, another local coffee shop, who had recently been hospitalized and needed financial support to help offset medical



During a training session, Cast Iron Cafe owner Joshua Nightingale stresses the importance of sanitation.

costs. When the Nightingales heard the news, they immediately stopped their fundraiser and directed all of their traf-

fic to Gear Up's site. This kind of genuine communal support helped ensure that both parties met their goals.

With their money raised, the Nightingales also decided to make big creative changes. They scratched their original “breakfast only” menu and moved to lunch and dinner, offering brunch only on the weekends.

They worked with Guerrero to add even more flare to their menu, deciding on a Texas BBQ style. Almost all of their food is locally sourced. All their meats come from the Mt Angel Meat Company and Lonely Lane Farms and are cooked on the iconic Traeger Grill. They have a full bakery to make their own buns. They have original seasoning. They make their own barbecue sauces, their blueberry chipotle is guaranteed to make your mouth water.

And finally, as of July 8th, The Cast Iron Cafe, thanks to the support of the community and the perseverance of the Nightingales, is open for business once again.

But the Nightingales may not be done.

“I’m always looking forward, and asking myself what’s next and why not?,” Joshua said. “Maybe another restaurant, perhaps a vineyard. Only time will tell.”

Recruitment

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their homes.

“There’s no opportunities to go out in the community to recruit volunteers,” Stayton Fire Chief Jack Carriger said.

The neighboring fire departments received a three-year \$680,000 grant from FEMA to hire Andrews in 2019 to bolster their ranks and retain current volunteers.

Stayton has 45 volunteer firefighters currently, down from 60 a few years ago, despite call volume increasing to 1,200 from 800 three years ago.

It also has five full-time firefighters on staff and tried to add three more with a levy in the May election, but that measure was voted down. And it didn’t have any new volunteers who went through training this year.

Sublimity has 30 volunteer firefighters, but its only paid firefighter is Hume. It takes about six months to train new volunteers.

“It’s just so important for people to commit the time to do this,” Carriger said.

Training new volunteer firefighters

Normally when a volunteer signs up, they would meet face-to-face with Andrews and other department staff, then go through in-person interviews before they are approved to go into training.

That hasn’t been able to happen recently.

“I was doing a lot of Zoom meetings to chat with the candidates to get them as far through the process as we could,” Andrews said.

It then takes about six months to train them, but one pool of volunteers doesn’t need as much training.

Andrews figured one of his big pushes for volunteers would be at a job fair at Chemeketa in May.

Sublimity has a program where students from Chemeketa studying fire science to be paramedics can live at the station rent free, receive training while serving as volunteers and partial tuition reimbursement, and Stayton was trying to restart its similar program.

But with Chemeketa’s campus closed

since April, there has been little chance to connect with those students. “The student program right now, their fire program is very limited,” Andrews said. “They can only drill one or two days a week. But they also lost their opportunity to intern with Salem or Marion County because of the COVID situation.”

Increase in volunteers during economic uncertainty

The recent interest in volunteering in Sublimity is not unusual.

Hume said when he started in Sublimity 10 years ago during the Great Recession, the department was in the middle of a spike in the number of volunteers.

With a record high unemployment rate, more people are able to spend the time to volunteer.

“We had several people who were unemployed who volunteered here,” Hume said. “They were here all the time. If you think about it, if you have a bunch of people hanging around because they don’t have to go to a job or school, that decreases your response time on calls. “We see benefits from it.”

Carriger said Stayton has lost a few firefighters since the pandemic hit, but it was because of other situations in the volunteers’ lives.

“I would not say it’s directly involved in the COVID situation,” he said.

But finding more firefighters is key for the departments to remain viable.

With events around Stayton and Sublimity closed, Andrews has spent a good deal of time building and maintaining social media for the departments, something that was often neglected.

And he’s updated the volunteer retention programs, something that was long overdue.

“He’s done a fantastic job and he’s rolled with everything thrown at him with COVID-19,” Hume said. “We couldn’t be happier with the grant program, in spite of all the stuff that’s happened.”

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Stayton Fire District Chief Jack Carriger, center, speaks with others about the process that will happen during a live fire training exercise on N. Gardner Ave., on Saturday, April 11, 2015, in Stayton. BRENT DRINKUT/STATESMAN JOURNAL



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