

Jack's Hobo Bakery: *continued from front page*

portion of the operation. The Kauppila's son, Shane, works the front counter, and they have already hired two other employees to help with the baking.

Jack is also baking breads, which he sells through the Bread Club; customers can join the Bread Club and pre-order bread for pick-up the next week, either at the bakery or online at hobobreadclub@gmail.com. Breads include, white, wheat, rye, olive, garlic, chocolate cherry, gluten free, vegan, and vegan olive. You can also pre-order other baked goods as well.

The Bread Club is how he originally started baking, which is an interesting story itself. Jack, who had experience as a cook in Tacoma, Washington in his younger days, had been working in IT for 20 years in a dream job for him, when he had, what was supposed to be, routine eye surgery over five years ago. When he came out of surgery he developed a rare neurological condition called complex regional pain syndrome, a form of chronic pain not well understood by the medical community. "I'm in pain constantly, 24/7 all over my body," says Jack. "It comes and goes, and does whatever it wants. I wasn't able to continue in my IT job because I couldn't sit and concentrate. As it progressed I continued to lose more of my life. I had to give up my volunteering. I couldn't do things with my family. I couldn't go out. For

years I was waiting for the pain to stop and worked with different doctors and healers, did all kinds of tests, and tried all kinds of medications, but nothing has really worked."

He has found that meditation and yoga does help him manage his pain somewhat. "I'm just learning to live with it," says Jack.

As another way of coping with his pain, Jack discovered that baking offered some form of relief. "I always loved the idea baking but I've really never had the patience for it," explains Jack. "But I decided to try baking bread, and I got a book and tried it out. The bread was really amazing but it was certainly more than we could eat as a family, so I started a bread club and gave it away to people who were interested. I took donations to cover the cost of ingredients and people were really generous, so I got to make more bread and the club kept growing."

Having an obligation to the bread making process has allowed Jack to work through his pain. "I discovered that when I'm baking, no matter what part of me is hurting or how I feel, I know I have to take care of the bread, and the amazing process that is happening on my counter," says Jack. "I feel really lucky that I get to be part of something like this. That really keeps me going. My pain hasn't changed - I'm still

in pain all the time - but my suffering has been reduced. I don't spend my time worrying about the pain."

Jack says his bread making process is long - about 48 hours from start to finish. He bakes the bread in a cast iron dutch oven. "Sometimes it can get a little dark in spots because of the cast iron, and the first time I made it I thought it looked like a hobo had made it, so I started calling it my Hobo Bread," explains Jack. "The great thing about the bread making process is there are all these little half hours of time where I can stop and meditate. I try to put a lot of love and kindness out into the world and a lot of peace, and love, and understanding into my bread."

"I really believe that's why everything he bakes tastes so good," says Mary. "I think people can taste the difference and the love Jack puts into it."

The Kauppilas had visited Vernonia looking for a house and property where they could build an outdoor bread oven, and just happened to notice the bakery for sale on the corner. "The previous owners, JD and Emily, had a sign in the window that said they were looking for someone who could keep the bakery open a couple days a week and who wanted to give back to the community," says Jack. "That just touched my heart because that was exactly what I wanted to do. So without a plan to open a business we contacted them and within three weeks we owned a bakery."



"Jack's been an entrepreneur in his head and in his heart his whole life," adds Mary, "but he's never owned a business before this. This is a first."

Jack says he really wants the bakery to belong to the community. "I want people in Vernonia to think of me as their own personal baker," he says "I want them to bring me their old family recipes to try. I have a guy who brought me a raisin rye bread recipe his mom used to make. I made one for him. I'm making three for him this week. We've gotten a few requests like that and I love doing it."

The Kauppilas are still working out regular hours but are currently open Friday through Sunday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Pizza Nights will happen occasionally, about once a month, and on those Saturdays they will close between 2:00 and 4:00 pm to prepare the pizza. They serve vegetarian pizza, including cheese, margherita, and veggie sausage, olive and peppers. Jack's Hobo Bakery will be providing cookies for kids who complete the Summer Reading Program at the Vernonia Library this year, and are also contributing cinnamon rolls for a grand prize winner. They also are considering a pay-it-forward program, where someone can come into the bakery and use accumulated dollars if they are short of money. "I really don't want price or money to be an issue for someone," says Jack.

"I have no reservations about being open six or seven days a week if the demand is there," says Jack. Grand future plans include a Hobo Sandwich Shop and Hobo Pizza Company.

Jack continues to be good natured about his pain and accepts his reality. "I'm just trying to live my life now," says Jack. "I don't think of myself as a sick person. I don't think I have an illness and I don't think there is anything to cure or fix. The pain is just a part of me now. My good friend who has been with me through all my pain reminded me the other day that two years ago I was just hoping for death with dignity. 'Now you have a bakery,' he told me. Now I have a life with dignity."