

and residents. She reminds us that “we are graded as a community and must concentrate on the ‘we’ rather than the ‘me’,” even if that means we individually struggle more than we are comfortable with.

“I think that the county and this town have respected things more than probably other places,” said Bijou Theatre owner Keith Altomare. “I think that people are very respectful.”

This community has worked together to donate to businesses, deliver food to those who do not have it, and because of our fast, socially distanced responses we have succeeded as a group in keeping our infection numbers low.

Another frustration that has been expressed is that most of Saturday’s rally included participants from out of our area, at a time when we are being encouraged to stay close to home and not travel unless it is essential. Being a town that relies heavily on our out-of-town visitors, it has been a difficult process for many to accept that a resource they feel should be open to all — such as our beaches — must be kept to locals only for the greater well-being of our community. Even within our local population, the divide has been noticeable as those who want to ensure our tourists always feel welcomed here are clashing with others who feel we need to strongly encourage people to stay away for now. Oregon Women for Trump founder and Saturday’s event coordinator Carol Leek expressed that even before the pandemic locals didn’t seem to want them (outsiders) here and that, coronavirus aside, they don’t feel liked by the general populace of the area. During the course of writing this series of articles, we have spoken with many local business owners and are business owners ourselves. In our experience, the town welcomes tourists and their patronage, but as Karla Fisher points out, the data supports limiting recreational travel and indicates there is a direct correlation between our low case numbers and restricting travel into our small community from outside areas. The resounding consensus, no matter which side of the close-vs.-open debate you fall on, is that locals want this town to continue to be a tourist destination that people flock to when restrictions are lifted.

We have refrained from editorializing in these articles previously, however, as business owners we feel as though we have a personal stake in this disagreement. We fall somewhere in the middle of the road, as single moms caring for children and immune-compromised family, we



ABOVE: LCPD Chief Palmer addresses the gatherers at the Saturday, May 9, rally. **RIGHT:** The Bijou Theatre is selling curbside popcorn in an effort to generate income until they can reopen safely.

fully see the need to continue this bubble of safety we have all managed to place around our precious home. However, as business owners who have struggled through application after application, and are seeing our reserves run dry with no government support to date, we fully understand the pressing need to allow the roadways leading to the ocean to reopen to others. Without the tourism industry, we, along with many other small businesses you know and love, are going to disappear. We hope that a compromise can be reached; one that somehow manages to prioritize the health and safety of our residents, friends and family, but also allows businesses to thrive in a currently unforgiving economy.

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In addition to being professional photographers, Krista Melone and Rachel Baird are co-owners of Tah•Lume Curiosities & Gifts, which offers online commerce at www.tablume.com.

