

POLITICIANS: YOU'VE GOT MAIL

Eugene's Erika Leaf has created a line of postcards to inspire political activism

Eugenean Erika Leaf found inspiration for activism in the 2016 election. After thinking about what she could do to change the alarming status quo, she used her background in printmaking and politics to create original postcards for people to send to their politicians.

"After Trump was inaugurated, I channeled my distress into action by trying to create a set of postcards that people could use to write to their elected officials," Leaf says.

From there, she started her own organization, Collective Vision.

The first set of postcards Leaf created, the "Democracy Pack," has photos Leaf took at the Women's March in January 2017. The cards tell people how best to contact their elected officials. She succeeded — that set of postcards is now sold out — and continues to expand on her ideas.

"You can use any postcard, and postcards are so much easier than writing a whole letter. It's less intimidating," Leaf says. "All you have to do is tell them the basics of your position, and they count it. If they get a huge amount of contacts from constituents on one issue, it really gets their attention."

The next step, Leaf says, was to reach voters within their homes.

About a year ago she linked up with the Georgia-based Postcards to Voters, which aims to engage voters across the country by sending handwritten postcards. When she saw that the organization was having a hard time making postcards for volunteers to use, Leaf offered her services.

Now, postcards that she helped create that read "Be a voter!" are available for postcard-writers to use.



ERIKA LEAF'S COLLECTIVE VISION POSTCARDS

PHOTO BY TAYLOR GRIGGS

Writing postcards to voters is even easier than writing to politicians.

"Once you get registered with Postcards to Voters, you can request addresses whenever you want," Leaf says. "There's always an election happening somewhere, a special election, a primary. There's pretty much always a campaign going."

As the midterm elections get closer, fervor will get even stronger.

"There's a great need for more volunteers who want to write postcards between now and the midterms. The capacity for the organization is limited only by how

many people are willing to write," Leaf says. "It's the perfect time to really make a difference. Because, dang! We need a blue wave!"

Leaf is planning to create another postcard pack to be sent as a thank you to people who are doing good work. This pack will have original artwork; the cards are intended to thank activists and maintain morale.

"There are always activists out there who are working on things who really need our support," Leaf says. ■

More information on Collective Vision and Postcards to Voters and what you can do can be found at collectivevision.us and postcardstovoters.org.

HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

RALPH MCDONALD

When Ralph McDonald's job as national sales manager for Eugene's Percon Inc., maker of hand-held scanners, went away after the company was sold in 2001, he turned his hobby as an antiquarian restoration bookbinder into a second career. "Starting about 1820, masses of people began to read, and a hundred times more books became available," he explains. "No one wants to throw out books that have been passed down for generations." McDonald buys and resells antique books online and also works for bookstores, libraries and individuals. He recently repaired a copy of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* for a centenarian who had received it from her mother in 1906. "A dog had eaten a corner," he reports. "I found another copy and spliced them together." An Oregonian since age 12, when his family moved from Caldwell, Idaho, to Salem, McDonald married his wife, Bev Mc-

Donald, in 1971, graduated from Western Oregon University in 1973 and moved to Eugene in 1974. He protested the Vietnam War in the 1970s, when he spent time in jail in San Francisco, and later demonstrated against U.S. interventions in Central America and the Middle East. Recently he's focused on environmental issues. A river runner and a Sierra Club member, McDonald served as plaintiff in the Western Environmental Law Center's legal action to protect the Western pond turtle in the Rogue River. "I consider myself to be semi-retired," says McDonald, co-chair along with Janet Bevirt of the Southwest Hills Neighborhood Association. "I have the time and flexibility to be a civic volunteer." This year, as a member of the Eugene Sustainability Commission, he chaired a committee that asked the city to ban the use of anti-coagulant rat poison that also kills pets and other wildlife.

