

Redmond store finds connections between customers and their food

Schoolhouse Produce sells a local bounty

BY NICK ROSENBERGER
Redmond Spokesman

Hanging on a wood beam at the checkout counter, the telephone at Schoolhouse Produce would ring once a day when Dennis Slimkosky called in his soup order.

About two months ago, the order never came in, though store owner Heidi Cook waited.

Starting with the tuna sandwich, Slimkosky had quickly become a regular enamored with the grocery store's homemade soups. He loved them so much, Cook said, he began to give critiques and suggest recipes and became deeply ingrained in the comings and goings of the small store.

"We were his third space," Cook said, referencing an article from The Atlantic explaining that everyone needs a place away from home and work to commune with other people. Schoolhouse, a Redmond market that focuses on organic produce, specialty foods and local ingredients, became that third space for Slimkosky.

Eventually, however, his health deteriorated. About two months ago, his daily order never came in and Cook learned he had passed away — leaving behind a Mexican street dog named Daisy. Cook called his caregivers and adopted her.

"No one at Fred Meyer is going to adopt your dog if you die," Cook said. "But he was such an integral part of our lives."

Slimkosky, like many others, had found a home at Schoolhouse Produce. A book, chockfull of names and their requests, sits on the counter. Items line the shelves, many of which come with personal stories.

One young customer named Travis, Cook said, would come in solely for the spiciest peppers they could find. Any time a new one came in, they knew they had to call him and let them know.

Another young customer, she said, visits the store nearly every week to buy his wife a bottle of sparkling rosé.

"It's like the sweetest offering," Cook



Heidi Cook stands in front of the produce section at Schoolhouse Produce at 1430 SW Highland Ave in Redmond on Sept. 13.

Nick Rosenberger/Spokesman



Nick Rosenberger/Spokesman

Schoolhouse Produce can be found at 1430 SW Highland Ave in Redmond.

said. "He's the only one who buys that wine."

Stories like that are what tie Cook to the store and the customers to Cook. When someone comes in asking about food, she tries to have her own story ready — in hopes of creating a connection and a good customer experience.

"To me, it's creative. It's like a painting or something," she said. "I'm just fascinated by people and their experience with food."

This fascination comes in part from a cooking show called the Frugal Gourmet, which Cook watched in college. The host would start the show by go-

ing to his local farmer's market, then prepare something with the items he found and the ingredients in his larder and pantry. Even though Cook is sure it was staged, the fun and flexibility of the work affected her.

"It was like jazz," she said. "It was like he was improvising."

Stand in the store's lime-green interior long enough and you can see Cook's own improvisation start to play as familiar customers waltz in, whether its local high schoolers asking about apples or moms looking for lettuce.

"Sometimes people just want to talk and food is a really good way to allow

that to happen," Cook said. "I can tell when someone is in here for another reason other than shopping."

"People come to hang out," said Allen Martin, an employee who has worked at the store for more than three years.

Store employees know what a lot of the customers prefer, Martin said, so they can be more personable and help game-plan a special meal, rather than being a stocker like at some chain grocery stores. Cook also owns the local salsa producer Salsa De Wela. She originally sold that salsa to Schoolhouse Produce, but loved the store so much that she'd shop and talk with the previous owner after delivering her salsas. When she heard the previous owner was looking to sell, she said it felt like the perfect opportunity to try on ownership.

Cook said the store's central core is its organic produce. Throughout the summer, they focus on Central Oregon-grown produce and try to support local farmers.

"All of our carrots, all of our greens, all of our root vegetables, the turnips, the radishes, all of the kales, all of this is local, Central Oregon grown organic," Cook said.

They also sell locally grass-fed lamb, beef and pork and usually have farm fresh eggs from local farmers.

"One of my farmers was just telling us we're their third-biggest client and we're not the third biggest client of anybody," she said. "We're really excited about that."

And, as often as possible, scraps and unsold produce go to customers to feed their livestock.

Many of the customers come in specifically for their lettuces, Cook said. She said that may be because staff trim their lettuces every morning. They won't put out anything they wouldn't buy themselves, she said.

"If you wouldn't give it as a present, we shouldn't sell it," she said.

Many of the packaged products on sale in the store are also local, including items from Dry Canyon Salts, Prescott Honey Farms, Holm Made Toffee and Justy's Jelly.

The store also has full lunch offerings with smoothies, sandwiches, salads and the daily homemade soups that Slimkosky loved so much.

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Mosaic Medical celebrates 20 years

BY SUZANNE ROIG
CO Media Group

Seventeen years ago, a pregnant Luz Monroy, of Redmond, needed medical help.

An immigrant who only spoke Spanish, Monroy also had no health insurance.

But Mosaic Medical took care of her. The Federally Qualified Health Clinic found ways to help her through her labor and delivery. Later, it helped her when she needed health care for a gall bladder issue, and help with managing her diabetes.

Monroy, an in-home, self-employed child care provider, has gone to the Redmond clinic for ultrasounds and medical procedures, COVID-19 tests and vaccinations.

Never once was she made to feel like she was asking too much when she couldn't afford to pay.

And everything is done in her native language, Spanish, she said through a Mosaic Medical translator, Jason Villanueva.

"Everything is done in Spanish. The paperwork is in Spanish. The doctor speaks Spanish. That has left an impression on me," Monroy said. "And there's always a translator available."

It's all in a day's work at Mosaic, which began in the two room Ochoco Community Clinic in Prineville in 2002. Today, it's grown into a 14-clinic, three county community health center serving Medicaid or uninsured patients by providing an ever growing range of medical services to the community. This year marks the nonprofit clinic's 20th anniversary.

Scott Cooper, former Mosaic board of director and now executive director of NeighborImpact, said the community values that started the health center are the same ones present today: Help people in need to maintain



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Megan Haase, family nurse practitioner and CEO of Mosaic Medical, stands in front of the health center's mobile clinic during a stop in downtown Bend on Wednesday.

a healthy lifestyle.

From the beginning, Mosaic has wanted to serve the immigrant community in Central Oregon, Cooper said. It took vision to create a Federally Qualified Community Health Center, which receives funding from the Public Health Services Act through the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration. The designation allows the health center to open in traditionally underserved communities and maintain a mission of being the safety net.

As part of the designation, Mosaic must re-assess its mission and determine if it's meeting the needs of the community, Cooper said.

"Mosaic provides huge coverage around our region with services," Cooper said. "Prior to Mosaic, there was always chronic conversations about the unmet health needs of the community. Now we just send people to Mosaic."

"It's one of the gems of Central Oregon."

Mosaic's primary principle is to help everyone who comes in the door, said Megan Haase, Mosaic Medical CEO and family nurse practitioner. Haase, who was Mosaic's second med-

ical provider in the Prineville clinic, has worked her way up the ranks and became the CEO in 2010, leading the clinic's expansion and team-based care model.

Haase calls the approach barrier busting. Everyone deserves access to quality health care that is affordable, and accessible, she said. Over the years, through outreach Mosaic has formed relationships with housing groups, schools and mental health centers. Those relationships work together to break the barriers, Haase said.

"There is such a need in Prineville when we started and the community wanted to remove the barriers," Haase said. "They were then and still are committed to meeting the needs that existed across Central Oregon."

"The impact we're having on families every single day are life changing. To be a part of an organization like that is a job and an honor."

When patients can't make their way to a clinic, Mosaic brings the clinic to them. One of the services is housed in a RV that goes to homeless camps to help that segment of the community. Recently the clinic

Mosaic Medical

Mosaic Medical, a federally qualified health center, operates 14 clinics around Central Oregon including four main health centers in Bend, Madras, Prineville and Redmond and 10 satellite clinics that include five school-based health centers and one mobile unit. Mosaic sites that include full dental sites are in Bend, Madras and Redmond. Mosaic also operates three retail pharmacies in Prineville, Madras and Bend.

The following is a timeline of key expansion events:

- **2002:** Opened its first federally qualified health center clinic in Prineville.
- **2005:** Opened a clinic in Bend.
- **2006:** Opened a clinic in Madras.
- **2012:** Opened a clinic in Redmond.
- **2020:** Opened first pharmacy in Prineville.

Source: Mosaic Medical

added dental and prescription drugs, two areas that have a high need in the community.

According to the nonprofit's tax documents, about half of Mosaic patients in 2021 were on Medicaid, a quarter on commercial insurance, 15% were receiving Medicare and 10 percent were uninsured.

By being a Federally Qualified Community Health Center, Mosaic can serve everyone, regardless of the ability to pay, said Linda Hatch, a Mosaic Medical family nurse practitioner who became involved with the founding of the clinic by reaching out to Crook County community leaders.

That first year, Mosaic saw

700 patients. Last year it saw 27,000 patients.

In 2021, the year data are most current, there were an estimated 19,200 people without health insurance in Deschutes and Crook counties, or about 7% of the population, according to data from the American Community Survey.

Providing access to a community's uninsured or low income plays a role in the economy, said Jake Procino, Oregon Employment Department workforce analyst, for the East Cascade region. In general, access to healthcare has positive effects on the community because healthy workers are more productive on the job and miss fewer workdays.

"I never envisioned that we'd be out there breaking down the barriers to care," said Hatch, who still sees patients. "I stayed with Mosaic because it's about helping people. We are here to help people and meet them at their level."

"I've been here so long that I can see people making improvements and getting better because of the access to healthcare."

Because the community health nonprofit sees anyone, regardless of the ability to pay, groups like NeighborImpact and the Latino Community Association work closely, often referring potential patients.

"Our federally qualified health center, Mosaic Medical, plays a huge role in ensuring access to affordable healthcare for many of our immigrant families and others without health insurance," said Brad Porterfield, Latino Community Association executive director. "They have a significant number of staff and doctors who speak Spanish and who believe everyone deserves quality medical care regardless of their ability to pay for it."

Homicide suspect dies by suicide after search for 7 hours

By SPOKESMAN STAFF

The suspect in a shooting death in Redmond shot and killed himself after a seven-hour police search on Sunday.

Oregon State Police identified the victim as Trevit C. Law, 45, of Redmond.

State police identified the suspect yesterday as Skyler R. Myers, 32, of Redmond.

Police responded to 5677 SW Young Avenue at about 8:30 a.m. Sunday. They found Law, who had been shot, and performed first aid, but he died.

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office, Bend Police Department, Redmond Police Department and Oregon State Police searched for Myers for seven hours, according to a press release.

Police found him near Gift Road and the Deschutes Canal, and he shot himself. Personnel took him to St. Charles hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

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