

# Jody Swanson believes in the printed page

Cloud & Leaf Bookstore in Manzanita is the last independent bookstore in Tillamook County

Over the past few years, there has been a lot of speculation about the state of the American bookstore. With the surging popularity of online retailers and e-books, how can small independent bookstores survive?

It's a sobering thought, especially when combined with a 2010 article in TIME Magazine, which listed "Real Books" as one of the things that kids of future generations won't ever experience.

But walking into Cloud & Leaf Bookstore at 148 Laneda Ave. in Manzanita lays those fears tidily to rest.

The shop's logo proclaims proudly "We Believe In The Printed Page," a motto that is a reflection of owner Jody Swanson.

Swanson, who celebrated 12 years in business in late February, believes in "little touches" to make customers feel comfortable in her shop: neat book shelves, hand-written recommendation signs, literary gifts, and wide variety of genres, including a healthy selection of Pacific Northwest authors.

There's even a reverent hush about the store, an ambiance that feels like being inside a favorite book.

It's the kind of goodwill and interaction that can't be downloaded.

When Swanson opened her shop, Manzanita didn't have a bookstore, and it seemed like a natural fit: She loves reading and loves talking to people about reading.

"It's just evolved from there," she says.

Cloud & Leaf has become a staple of locals, vacationers and second home-owner,s and Swanson says she enjoys helping people find the perfect read.

Still, she is well aware of the precarious nature of the book selling business: Cloud & Leaf is the last independent bookstore in Tillamook County.

When asked how a brick-and-mortar bookstore is still relevant in today's downloadable world, her answer is simple: "People like talking to other people about books," she says.

Swanson also knows she has to earn every customer, and she spends a significant amount of time researching titles, whether it's for the shops' inventory, a recommendation for a regular customer, or a special order.

"It's hard work keeping up with all of the changes and trends in the book market," she says.

Swanson adds that she feels her patrons have real awareness of independent book sellers and a strong desire to support them. She repays that loyalty by hosting numerous Pacific Northwest



Submitted photo

Cloud & Leaf Bookstore owner Jody Swanson has been at her Manzanita location for 12 years.

author readings, which have recently included Willy Vlautin, Lauren Kessler and Floyd Skloot.

"We get a lot of walk-ins for those," she says, noting that foot traffic is a healthy mix of both locals and visitors.

When not immersed in the day-to-day operations of the shop, Swanson enjoys spending time with her family.

It's quite a literary family, too: her husband works for the Tillamook County Library system and her daughter is a voracious reader.

"She's really into science fiction right now," Swanson says.

When it comes to the state of independent book sellers, Swanson is cautiously optimistic, especially in a spot

with a growing influx of readers with leisure time.

"We've seen more people coming in over the last year or so," she says. "The weather has been nice, and Manzanita has become more popular."

Swanson acknowledges that her location near the beach and a loyal customer base have made it possible to weather the rapid changes to the book selling industry.

"I am so grateful to be in this spot and have a community that is so supportive," she says.

*Cloud & Leaf Bookstore can be reached at 503-368-2665 or by visiting [www.cloudanleaf.wordpress.com](http://www.cloudanleaf.wordpress.com)*



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Young readers outside Cloud & Leaf Bookstore prove there is still plenty of life left in the printed page.

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Story by DAN HAAG