

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE
For the Siuslaw News

Kat Cunningham

Symbologie clothing line of wearable art and fashion accessories available at her shop inside Resto-Arts on Bay Street, a spiritual ministry called Circle 4 Oneness, an online TV show and a magazine called "BLISS" (Beautiful Living in Sacred Space). But that's still not enough for a creative powerhouse with a mercurial mindset.

Last year Kat submitted her design and won the contest to create the first piece of public art sponsored by the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. She painstakingly hand-painted each tile of the three-sided Florence Scenic Column, unveiled last fall at the Port of Siuslaw boardwalk.

But there's even more to Kat than meets the eye. Behind all the artwork is a visionary who always thought outside the box, often generating ideas 10 years ahead of their time. Whenever faced with business or economic setbacks, that's when Kat generated her most alchemical ideas, weaving proverbial straw into gold.

"My ideas come to me when everything hits the wall," she said. "I'll get a sudden download of information, but the cup has to be emptied first in order to fill it."

"All of my life choices have allowed me to become a bridge to show how everything is connected."

—KAT CUNNINGHAM

Like spontaneous combustion, Kat possesses a magical wizardry to build a magnificent bonfire from scratch, using her versatile skills as kindling to ignite the spark.

"I bring all of who I am to the table with everything I do," Kat said. "Having been raised in the hospitality industry, I also understand marketing and communications."

Such skills proved handy in all of Kat's "nine lives." Born in Miami, raised in Illinois and educated in California, Kat was the daughter of a widely respected hotelier. After receiving her bachelor's in advertising art, she embarked on a series of diverse professional adventures all interwoven with her creative needle and thread.

"Everything we need is already inside us," she said. "And nature holds all of our answers. It grows, depletes itself and returns in a completely new form."

A master of metamorphosis, Kat looks to nature for her inspiration, not just for her art but for every aspect of existence.

"Winter doesn't just occur once in a lifetime," she said. "It returns annually, along with spring. That's how we need to view our work and our lives."

Kat should know. One of her worst "winters" came in the '90s when she was diagnosed with Trigeminal Neuralgia, a debilitating condition that causes severe facial pain. Kat also faced another kind of pain as she lost her magazine business, her savings and a long-term relationship. By "letting go and learning to trust," she found a surgeon who eventually relieved her pain and a new springtime returned to her life.

Kat moved to Florence 11 years ago to care for her now deceased father and later her mom, who just turned 106. She turned to teaching and cultivating the arts for all ages, establishing the first local arts organization as well as a youth art gallery.

"What keeps me here is friends, fellowship, a caring community and a simpler life," she said. "Florence helped me to come into my own vision for how I could make a difference in this world. I found the answer lies in 'Oneness.'"

Kat now runs a spiritual ministry

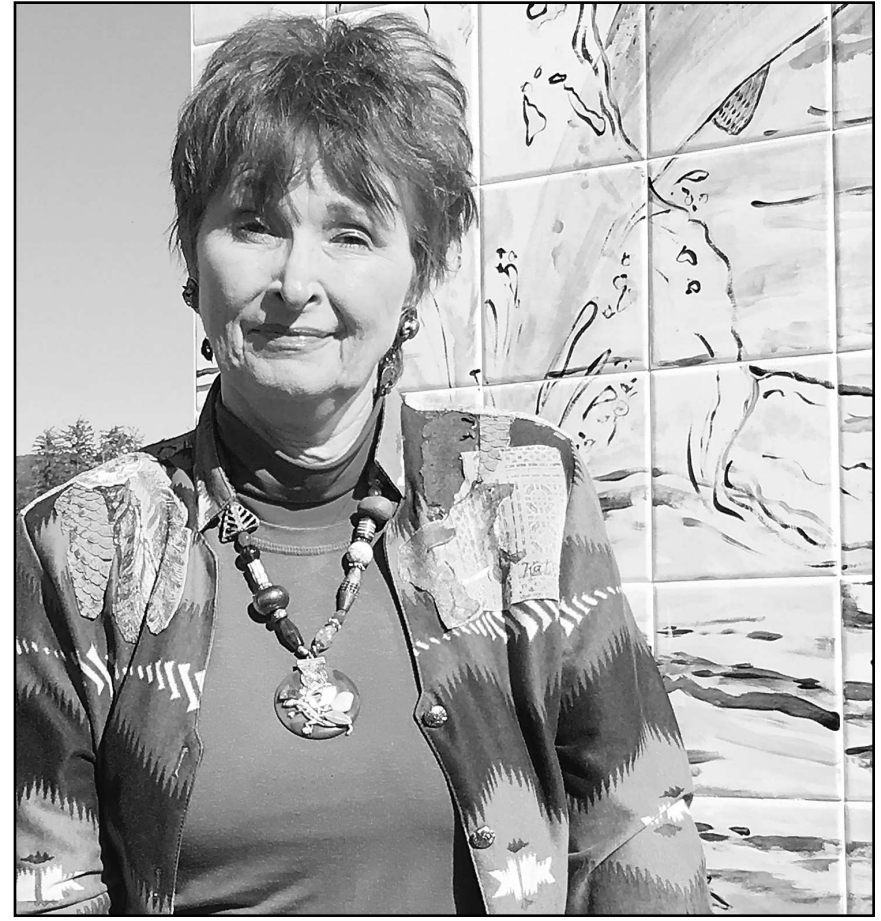


PHOTO BY CATHERINE ROURKE

Kat Cunningham designed and painted the Florence Scenic Column at the Port of Siuslaw boardwalk in Old Town.

called "Circle 4 Oneness," a center where "people of all faiths can come together to explore who they are and what they want in their lives."

"All of my life choices have allowed me to become a bridge to show how everything is connected," she said. "I want to help people discover how to make heart-based decisions based on their passions."

This philosophy forms the foundation for "BLISS," her new online magazine, and an online TV program called "LivingBLISS.TV." Set to broadcast in September, Kat describes it as "a lifestyle show with a conscious living twist."

"Finally, technology has caught up with my dream," she said. We

need this type of heart-based content on a global scale to show how nature functions in all of our four spaces: personal, home, work and the world. We have so many vibrant people here looking for what's next. I want to help them see the potential of unseen miracles around them — and have some fun."

Stay tuned for the next episode of Kat's many lives.

Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning writer, journalist and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. She may be contacted at CJReditor@gmail.com.

LETTERS

Food for thought

With prayer and our flag being such controversial items these days, I thought perhaps a few words from some fellows that we should all remember might be in order.

James Madison, primary author of our Constitution and fourth President: "We have staked the whole future of American civilization not on the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all of our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."

John Adams, America's second President: "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

George Washington, America's first President: "While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion. To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian."

Thomas Jefferson, "God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that



these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

Some pretty good food for thought.

Tony Cavarno
Florence

Finding serenity

The first time I voted, I voted for Kennedy. Since then, I have always known who was elected for president before my vote was ever counted.

I don't think I will move to the East Coast, so my vote will be counted before I know who is elected as president.

I still vote because of bills and people who have an effect on Oregon.

I went to a Lutheran college. I had to take Christianity because it was required. There were some things that didn't rub off on me. I never turned the other cheek, but I never looked for trouble. I never was a person to envy what anyone else had.

I have learned over the 80 years of my life that religion has killed more people than anything else. I don't understand why people can't believe what they want to and not force it on others.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference." —Serenity Prayer

Virgle Bechtold
Florence

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The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County. Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed.

All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received. Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published.

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