

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE
 For the Siuslaw News

Meg Spencer



Libraries hold a magnetic attraction for Meg Spencer. In fact, the Siuslaw Public Library District director traces a connection with them back to her earlier life in Salt Lake City.

"I've always been a big lover of libraries," she said, recalling how she would ride her bike to that city's downtown library and admire its architectural splendor. "They are magical places where ideas are born. I always visit libraries wherever I go."

But Meg never entertained the notion of working at one. During her college years, she became more enthralled with the stage than the stacks.

While pursuing her BFA in theatre from the University of Utah's Actor Training Program, Meg needed a part-time job. She laughed when her mother suggested she work at a library because she loved them so much.

Meg eventually took her mother's advice one step further by obtaining a master's in library and information science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Attending one of the most innovative library science programs in the nation gave her the opportunity to work as an associate librarian at the Orem Public Library in Utah.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the chance to work with professionals in the field," she said. "The university's hybrid model provided an excellent hands-on education."

Meg spent nearly 10 years at the Orem library as a division manager

supervising collection development, online services and database cataloging. She also managed the library's transition to radio frequency identification (RFID), an automated system using microchips for book circulation.

"One thing I really enjoy about library work is upholding the art of storytelling," she said, referring to favorite raconteurs like Mark Twain and Garrison Keillor. "It's important to continue that tradition in the digital era."

Meg's passion led her to become city liaison to the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival, the largest event of its kind in the West held in Orem each year. There, in collaboration with the Orem Public Library, she helped to promote language and literacy in schools and storytelling for the next generation.

Meg has some storytelling of her own to share about her move to Oregon in 2013. While she had visited Florence as a teen with her grandparents, Meg never planned to leave her Utah library job when her parents decided to retire here. Then one day she stumbled upon a vacancy for the Siuslaw Public Library District.

"I was always interested in rural librarianship," she said. "The more I learned about this library district and the quality of its collection, the more impressed I became. People actually move here because of this library."

"Libraries are such central institutions for communities. ... It's the only place where people of all ages and walks of life come for so many different needs."

—MEG SPENCER,
 SIUSLAW PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Meg would join them, also drawn by the area's natural beauty.

"I love everything about this place — the dunes, the coast, all of it," she said.

For Meg and her husband, Jared Anderson, the move to Florence represented "a blind leap" and, ironical-

ly, they arrived two years before her parents. The couple met in college at an audition in which they shared a reading together, fell in love and decided to share their lives together. For them, the blind leap turned into a clear career path. Jared now teaches film at Lane Community College and previously served as a relief postmaster for the USPS.

With a new book published in the U.S. every 30 seconds, library directors like Meg have their work cut out for them. But Meg notes that there's so much more to libraries than just stacks of books. Instead of making way for technology, she sees libraries as integrating it with e-books, audio books, DVDs, CDs, free computer use and high-speed Internet access. They also represent centers for public discourse and engagement.

"It's an exciting time for libraries and there's a positive future for them," Meg said. "Libraries are dedicated to lifelong learning through the dissemination of information in all formats for all ages and walks of life."

As "hybrid" sources of print and electronic data, libraries bridge people with information through new tools and technologies to facilitate knowledge creation in their communities. With more content being published than ever before in history, the role of librarians as curators and reference maestros becomes even more essential with all the information users have to plow through. Who else is going to catalog it all and help us sort through the heap to find what we need?

"Libraries are such central institutions for communities," Meg said. "Other than grocery stores, we have more people walk through our doors than any other establishment. It's the only place where people of all ages and walks of life come for so many different needs. Literacy is the heart of libraries, but we're also a community center that is outward-looking and innovative."

Under Meg's direction the library



PHOTO BY JO BEAUDREAU

Ex Libris: Bibliophile and Siuslaw Public Library Director Meg Spencer loves "connecting people with their next favorite book."

has outlined a new strategic plan to expand its services for nearly 8,000 members with a collection of 225,000 items. Another project underway is a heritage grant from the Lane County Cultural Coalition to preserve and document the history of Mapleton.

Meg is no stereotypical librarian with her nose buried in the tomes. Instead she can be found out in nature on her time off exploring beaches and old logging roads.

"We live in such an amazing place where nature energizes us in everything we do," she said. "There's no better place to contemplate how to serve our community than out in the wild itself."

Meg supports many community

organizations as a member of the city's Economic Development Committee, the Siuslaw Vision Keepers, Rotary, the Soroptimists, Food Share and the Lane County Cultural Coalition. She chairs the Oregon Digital Library Consortium and the annual Florence Festival of Books.

"To me it's all about service," she said. "When we all work together we can make our community better."

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

Thank you, Florence

I would like to thank everyone for the flowers and cards we received after the passing of Kimberly Huff.

I would also like to thank everyone who donated money to the Ada Grange Harley Huff Sr. Scholarship Fund in memory of Kimberly Huff, and the Ada Grange for the use of its hall.

The city of Florence has grown so big in the last few years, but at times like this, the old small town of Florence shows its heart and soul. It's a very comforting feeling to know that we live in such a wonderful community.

Thanks again to everyone.

Richard Huff and Family
 Florence

Clinton doesn't 'have our backs'

"I am going to bring the best of minds together and there will be a decent jobs bill." — We heard Hillary Clinton tell a crowd in Michigan, and the crowd cheers.

Well Mrs. Clinton, the president you want to replace has done that several times. Where are all the jobs? Now Mrs. Clinton wants to do the same. Was it not Barack Obama who told us in 2008 "to keep doing the same thing expecting a different outcome is insanity?"

Here is a clue from history. A reduction in

taxes will bring untold wealth to the treasury. A higher tax reduces the wealth to the treasury. The facts are out there, compare them, all you have to do is research.

I would like to know how she is looking out for the middle class when she wants to raise taxes on the middle class. How does "I got your

back" work? How does increasing your income tax sound?

Oh yes, she wants more of your income. She wants it, and should she get it, she will take 28 percent of your itemized deductions. A hike in corporate tax, a hike in inheritance tax and she wants to institute a tax on stock trade. That is a tax on the trading of stock, and the increase of capital gains tax.

Sounds to me like "I got your back" is the same way the slave masters had the backs of their slaves. Trump wants to reduce them.

Jim Selby
 Florence

Our rights

The initiative process is a tool that the people can use when the government/corporate alliance gets too cozy — a solid argument in favor of not allowing the Lane County Commissioners to hamper our rights to vote on the initiatives put forward by fellow citizens.

Tchanan Ross
 Deadwood

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

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. All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

Write to: Editor@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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 Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$71; 10-weeks subscription, \$18; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$94; 10-weeks subscription, \$24; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$120; Out of United States — 1-year subscription, \$200; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

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