

**EDITOR from page 1A**

on nearly seven years of experience with the paper. "It is a big deal," she said. "I'm very excited about it and I acknowledge the huge responsibility behind it."

**Finding Florence**

Meyer has lived in Lane County for most of her life in small communities like Veneta and Fall Creek.

Bitten early by a drive to open her thoughts, she majored in English and minored in communications at Concordia University in Portland, then went on to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree in children's literature at Hollins University in Roanoke, Va.

One day, family friend Cindy Wobbe mentioned Florence's local paper was in need of a writer.

At this time, Meyer was still looking for "her life's purpose," she said. "My big goal was that I wanted a job where I could write."

Meyer had worked with both her high school and college newspapers, so was already versed in skills such as page layout, photography and article writing, so had a sense of what a community paper might require.

Six to eight weeks of newspaper experience also seemed a good way to get the ball rolling on her writing career.

In May 2014, Meyer started as an intern at the *Siuslaw News*, writing a story or two here and there while helping put the paper together each week.

On the last day of her internship, the Siuslaw Public Library was holding its annual summer reading finale event. Because all other reporters were busy, the editor at the time, Theresa Baer, asked Meyer if she could cover the story.

"I was thinking, 'Well, technically, I'm done at noon, but I can go,'" Meyer recalled.

Meyer grabbed her camera and set out to cover the event.

"And it was really my first on-the-ground experience," she said. "Anytime somebody comes into the office and says, 'Hey, I have a story for you. Come with me now,' journalists just hop up and do it. So that was that moment for me."

Despite it being her last day in town, Meyer found herself connecting with the people at the event as she

caught moments of children enjoying face painting, water slides and free books. That day, Meyer typed up the story, handed it in and left Florence.

Back in eastern Lane County, she was staying with her family as her grandmother had been diagnosed with a terminal illness.

Around this time, Baer let Meyer know she was retiring from the editor position and the paper would soon be needing another reporter. Meyer was at the top of the list.

However, Meyer declined in order to support her family and care for her grandmother. Shortly after, her grandmother passed.

In January, the newspaper contacted Meyer again, letting her know that she was still the top pick for the paper's new reporter.

This time, Meyer felt she was ready.

"Nothing was holding me back from walking through, so I took this step," she said. "So, my first and only career after completing my graduate degree has been working at the paper."

**A Reporter in Motion**

Meyer's new chapter started just as the City of Florence, too, was in transition. One of her first assignments was on the city beat, covering the changes to the little municipality.

The same week Meyer started in 2015, Joe Henry was sworn in as mayor; at

her first city council meeting, a new city manager (which would end up being Erin Reynolds) was proposed to be hired; and Florence's now-familiar "A City in Motion" slogan was launched.

Movement and growth were thematic to the time, Meyer recalled.

"We were all starting at the beginning of 2015 around the same time, so it was a really fun energy in Florence at the time, just a really fun forward momentum," she said. "And I got to be part of that and write about it — to the point that they referred to me as the 'good news reporter.'"

Looking back, Meyer attributes the positive response to her reporting partially to being a fresh arrival on the scene.

"There was zero outside knowledge — just what you are observing as a journalist," she said.

Gradually, as she covered more issues, Meyer found that she could even touch on the contentious topics with finesse and tact.

"It became a very big deal to be sure that our coverage was neutral and politics weren't part of it. It's just reporting on the facts," she explained. "Journalistic integrity is huge. You've got to have that and the ethics behind it."

Per her creative writing background, Meyer was naturally drawn to feature writing, though.

Once a month, the *Siu-*

*slaw News* puts out a special section such as its Midcoast Wave Visitors' Guide, Business Profile, School Zone or senior guide.

The editor at the time, Ryan Cronk, was responsible for much of the special section output, but Meyer gradually began taking over these tasks.

"So even though I was a reporter, I started doing more and more of the special sections," she said. "That's when you get to do the fun page layout, the cool font or get to do a feature story, which is different than our feature sections."

**Building Bridges, Cultivating Community**

In 2016, Cronk stepped away from the *Siuslaw News* and Ned Hickson, who had been the sports editor for the past 18 years, stepped up to take over as editor. But he came in with a different plan for the newsroom — part of which was promoting Meyer to features editor and a reliable second-in-command, allowing Hickson to focus more on the newsroom and expand its reporting.

The arrangement played off of each of their strengths, with Meyer managing final proofing and page layout while getting to focus on her love for feature writing.

See **FUTURE** page 7A

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Dear Florence Community,

May 15th is United States Armed Forces day. Next Saturday! As a 20 year resident of Florentine HOA, I have always flown my Air Force flag as a token of respect and remembrance. Recently, residents of Florentine Estates received notification through our monthly newsletter stating that the State of Oregon Flag and all other flags including Armed Services flags, are banned from being displayed and flown. The notification also stated that Residents in violation will be cited, and fined! Resident protest letters, and emails remain unanswered, contributing to much frustration!

This position taken by the board seems ludicrous since Florentine is chartered under Oregon law. In addition, Florence is a Coast Guard City!

And during this covid laden year we read numerous accounts of United States Navy, Army, Marines contributions of help to numerous communities. Too numerous to count! The Florence Community and Paper have always supported our Military in many ways.

The American Flag Act of 2005 Assures that we can fly Old Glory in her present and past forms without intrusion! The purpose of my letter is asking that the Florence Community request Oregon State Lawmakers to pass similar legislation assuring that Oregon Citizens can display and fly the State of Oregon flags as well as Federal Military flags as deemed fit. Florida, which is lush in HOAs has already done so!

I would welcome suggestions and especially!!!!!!!, help from any and all that have the same positive regard for our military branches and their flags of honor and identity! Please feel free to contact me.

Delmer(Del)Neeley  
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Florence, OR 97439 Phone 541-991-0415 dasn7@msn.com

**Safe Shelter for Siuslaw Students and Safe Families for Children brings you...**

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@ Siuslaw Middle School 2525 Oak St, Florence, OR 97439  
Event is Free, Registration Required. Register at  
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Made available through a generous grant from the Western Lane Community Foundation

**Questions? Call Suzanne at (541) 590-0779**