

Cottage Grove yurts travel worldwide

By Zach Silva
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Like many kids, Alan Bair loved building forts. The joy of creating a unique space and having his own area was something he valued above all else.

"Since I was a child I always enjoyed building things," says present-day Bair as he sits in his office adorned with pictures of the adult version of a childhood fort: yurts. "But when I was a kid I would build tree houses and underground forts and all kinds of different shacks and things and played with the neighborhood kids. You know at one point I thought at one point I would enjoy being an architect."

Now a businessman in Cottage Grove, Bair is the founder, owner and president of Pacific Yurts. While the company is in its 40th year didn't invent yurts, they at least gave them quite the upgrade as some now include kitchenettes, bathrooms and air conditioning.

By some reports, the first versions of these circular tents that feature a wooden circular frame first originated in Central Asia up to three thousand years ago. But it was in the 70s when Bair stumbled across the Mongolian version of the yurt as he was looking through National Geographic. Inspired by

the structure and its simplicity, Bair made his own yurt and began living in it with his wife and his child as they built their home. The yurt garnered attention from a local publication and soon people wanted one of Bair's yurts. The former English major realized he had a business opportunity on his hands and decided to make the most of it.

"Without knowing what it was I became an entrepreneur and then... I took the small business management three years and various night classes through the community college," said Bair.

"The business after several years started to really grow and the product and the information about it spread through word of mouth through the United States and then subsequently throughout the world. People traveled and talked about it and Pacific Yurts was born."

As the son of two park rangers, Bair was often outdoors. He grew up in Northern California but when he visited Cottage Grove with his wife, they found that this is where they belonged.

"We felt like there were opportunities here but it was still open and it was a place where you could almost create things and where it wasn't all signed, sealed and delivered," said Bair. "Obviously, it's not the big city but there were opportuni-

ties where you could pursue a dream or do something and so it seemed like fertile ground to create a business and a good fit for Oregon."

But it wasn't just what he saw in one place, it was the entire state that stood out to Bair.

"Just the natural beauty of it, the coast, the mountains, the rivers you know all of that made me feel like I was at home," he said.

As he had found his home, he was then working to find a home for his business. The initial start in 1978 led him to an old dairy barn.

"Starting out we didn't have a lot of resources. I didn't have a Harvard MBA in business and a lot of venture capital behind me. We started out as you said, very organically and just developing the company as we went along and then needing to take those classes and keep learning," said Bair. "And it's an ongoing process of course but now with the great staff we have and 40 years of experience we definitely have a lot of knowledge base in our, on our team."

Spending time with Bair, he is deeply aware of the details of the company. The specifics of the fabric, the quality of wood and the delivery of the yurt. All of this matters but what makes it work for him are the employees behind these jobs.

"It's the people here who care about the quality and the business and care about our customers and shipping on time and the rest of it... It's exciting to continue to develop and innovate and to listen not just to the customers but our employees as they have good ideas and we continue to move forward with the products," he said.

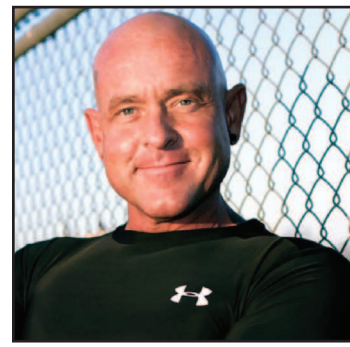
As the business took off, the company grew and yurts from Cottage Grove started spreading across the globe. When the company filed for the domain yurts.com, there were no other references to yurts online and now a simple search on Google and you are presented with "about 15,200,000" results.

There are now yurts across the nation. From national parks to beaches in Hawaii. But it doesn't stop in the United States. There are yurts placed along a river in Patagonia, Chile where they are used for fly-fishing. And then there is one at the US Embassy in Mongolia and seemingly everywhere in between. What started as Bair's temporary home in Cottage Grove, has turned into an international success.

"Maybe we'll see a yurt on the moon someday," said Bair.

Local family in need of help

By Caitlyn May
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Bret Munk

Layla Munk and her husband Bret found Cottage Grove by accident. Within a week they had bought a house in the community Munk says has defied her expectations after Bret unexpectedly passed away earlier this month.

"The community has done more than I would have ever imagined," she said. "We haven't even been here two years and the support I have received is why we chose this place."

A meal train was set up for Munk and her daughter hours after news of her husband's death had been made public.

"I'm a vegetarian," she said. "Everyone just stepped up but not just with, 'here's a casserole,' they have happily done it with our dietary beliefs."

June will mark the second anniversary of the Munks' move to Cottage Grove and after her husband's death, Munk said she wasn't sure if she would stay.

"I wasn't sure what I was going to do but this community, it makes me cry as much as losing my husband with the way they have stepped up to help," she said.

Now, Munk is dealing with the every-day details of a household. "Life goes on, you know. I'm going to try and get to the store soon," she said. Until she can, however, the family is in need of help. Dog food, toilet paper and other daily necessities have fallen off the radar amid the tragedy but are still needed and the family has set up an online donation site for community members who have asked how they can help.

"It hasn't just been friends of ours helping," Munk said. "It's been strangers. Bret wanted to live here for the rest of his life and he did."

Residents can donate at gofundme.com/layla-and-cheville-recovery.

Cottage Grove's Beds for Freezing Nights is open to adults and accompanied minors when the weather drops below freezing. The warming center, located at First Presbyterian Church at 216 South 3rd St. in Cottage Grove, opens at 7 p.m. Visitors must check-in by 10 p.m. and check out by 7 a.m. the next day. Dogs and cats are allowed at this location. No unaccompanied minors. The shelter activates when the temperature averages 29 degrees and enough volunteers are on staff. To stay up-to-date on when the center is open, follow The Sentinel on Twitter @cgsentinel or visit freezingnights.com. Hotline: (458) 209-9744

Scholarship application deadline looming

Each year, Oregon Community Foundation offers opportunity to Oregon students by awarding nearly \$10 million in scholarships for higher education and training. With more than 500 funds that make a bright future more accessible, OCF has one of the largest scholarship programs of its kind in the U.S.

The deadline for students to apply for funding for their higher education and training in the 2018-19 school year is March 1.

OCF has partnered with the Office of Student Access and

Completion for nearly 30 years. This state agency makes the scholarship process especially simple for students, who can complete a single application form to be eligible for scholarships from OCF, as well as from many other public and private sources.

The challenges that Oregon students face include the high cost of post-secondary education, OCF found in a 2015 research paper. Oregon is the seventh least-affordable state for low-income families attending four-year institutions. Our community

colleges are third least-affordable in 15 western states. Even modest awards influence enrollment and completion, and larger awards have even greater impact, the research showed.

"We know for many students cost is a major road block to achieving post-secondary education," said Max Williams, OCF President and CEO. "At Oregon Community Foundation, we want to break down the barriers that keep students from achieving their dreams. Scholarships provide opportunity for students

who are proving themselves with hard work."

OCF awards about 3,200 scholarships to a wide range of students each year. Available scholarships include those for people interested in varying subjects, from a variety of schools and with an extensive range of backgrounds.

See the complete list of available scholarships at <http://oregonstudentaid.gov>. An electronic application form and instructions on how to apply are also available there.



How to encourage kids to take care of their teeth

Parents of young children know that getting kids to brush their teeth can sometimes feel like pulling teeth. Kids have a long history of disliking dental care, which can frustrate parents who know the importance and long-lasting benefits of proper dental hygiene.

While many youngsters may never excitedly run to the bathroom to brush their teeth, parents can try various approaches to get kids to embrace proper dental care.

- Start early. Parents should not hesitate to begin cleaning kids' teeth once the first tooth appears. The earlier dental care is part of a child's routine, the more likely he or she is to accept it as part of everyday life. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends using a soft-bristled brush with a small head. Ideally, use a toothbrush designed for infants, brushing teeth once per day at bedtime. The AAPD advises taking kids to visit a pediatric dentist when the first tooth appears, or no later than the child's first birthday.

- Make it a group effort. Young children love to imitate their parents' actions and behaviors, and moms and dads can use that adoration to their advantage when trying to get kids to brush their teeth. Brush teeth together as a family, making it seem like an enjoyable twice-daily activity. Get down on kids' level and show them how to brush. If kids are resistant, engage them in conversation while brushing so they don't even realize they're cleaning away.

- Involve kids in choosing their dental care products. While parents should be mindful of the type of toothbrush their children use, always sticking with products recommended by their child's pediatric dentist, let youngsters choose their toothbrush and toothpaste. Kids might prefer a particular flavor of toothpaste, and a colorful toothbrush with a favorite film or television character might make kids more enthusiastic and less fussy about brushing.

- Compliment kids after positive dental appointments. When pediatric dentist appointments go well, compliment children and express your pride in them for taking dental hygiene as seriously as they do.



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