

Share *from A1*

pand to four cities.”

The event is ending its four-city tour tonight in Corvallis.

The project has served as a catalyst for personal growth among participants.

“As I’ve deepened my gratitude practice through these events and through my related forthcoming book ‘Grateful by Nature,’ my gratitude mission and philosophy have distilled into one succinct concept,” said Alan. “For me, being grateful is like being a carpenter: the skills are only fully realized when I use them to build shelter for others.”

The project’s debut event in 2015 seemed ill-timed, however, as the Paris terrorist attacks had just occurred.

“We held our breath and strode into that angst-filled



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Musicians Gentle Thunder (left) and Beth Wood perform a duet during The Nature of Gratitude community event at the Opal Center on Dec. 6.

room, and the spirit in the place began to lift from the beginning,” Titus said. “You could feel it happen. And people were so grateful. So, there it is — decide to have gratitude and embrace the sometimes dark reality of the world. It’s complex, and it’s beautiful.”

Since the first event, Alan and Titus have shared the fundamental duties of organization and creative inspiration to breathe life into the project. Alan draws on his experience in the music industry to connect with artists while

Titus uses his ties to the literary community to find performers.

“The tasks of that have blessedly grown by an order of magnitude as NOG (Nature of Gratitude) has grown from a one-time event intended to give back to our community to a larger annual touring project still focused on community service,” said Alan.

Friday night’s event began with a Native American flute performance by Gentle Thunder, a Grammy-nominated multi-instrumentalist from Mount

Shasta, Calif. A sound healer, teacher and performer by trade, Gentle Thunder set a soothing opening tone for the evening with ethereal woodwind melodies.

Other performances included music from poet and singer-songwriter Beth Wood, songs from jazz-pop singer-songwriter Halie Loren, spoken word poetry from writer-performer Jorah LaFleur of Eugene Poetry Slam and a Trashion Show presentation by Michel Rose, Fyona Rose, Monica Venice and

Charles Mattoon.

Alan and Titus shared their written work through spoken word, sometimes with musical accompaniment.

For each event, one beneficiary in the community is selected to receive proceeds and awareness from the event. Local food pantry Community Sharing was this year’s recipient, bringing in \$378.

“We choose a different cause with each event, always centered in the community in which we’re gathering in gratitude,” said Alan.

To be considered, recipients must be nonprofit, apolitical, non-divisive, community-oriented and fill a universal human need.

Other recent recipients have included Occupy Medical, Hearts for Hospice, Eugene Area Gleaners, Transition Projects, Oregon State University’s “Food for Thought” program, Eugene Poetry Slam and Marys Peak Alliance.

“Even though we focus on a single awareness cause for each event, we believe that our program inspires more widespread gratitude that ripples out to other people and organizations in all kinds of ways,” said Titus. “Our hope is that people will choose to become less divisive.”

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HO-HO-HO, Did You Know?



\$687.87 BILLION
 2017 holiday spending in the U.S.

Christmas Fun Facts



Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25 each year, with the first recorded celebration on this date taking place in 336 during the time of the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine. Over the years, a variety of beloved customs have become associated with the Christmas holiday all over the world.

90% of Americans say they celebrate Christmas

46% of Americans say they celebrate Christmas primarily as a religious holiday

50 U.S. states grow Christmas trees

100 feet

The size of the tallest tree displayed at Rockefeller Center in 1999

40 Million live Christmas trees are sold in North America each year

34 Million

poinsettias are sold annually in the U.S., making it the country’s highest-selling potted plant

30% of Americans will still be shopping on Christmas Eve

Sources: History.com, National Christmas Tree Association, National Retail Federation, CreditCards.com, ING, Pew Research Center, 2013 USDA Floriculture Statistics

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