



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

▲ Madeline Drescher and her two older children Hanna and Max watch as her daughter Mae attempts to take a few steps while spending time together outside of their Bend home Thursday.

◀ Leslie Neugebauer and her partner the day their daughter, Lyla, was born in 2020. Submitted photo

Continued from previous page that one month than he did in his entire life," Neugebauer said. "And I felt terrible, but it also felt like I had no other option."

But the pandemic did bring some positives. Working from home meant not having to pump breast milk in the office during the day, which was a relief, she said. Neugebauer is also grateful for how working from home allowed her to get extra time to bond with Lyla.

"Every time I imagined how hard it was for me, I imagined how much harder it could have been," she said.

The first time Kite took her daughter Olive to a grocery store, someone there called her "one of those pandemic babies."

At first, Kite found the comment rude — a reminder of the negative marker her daughter will always have when someone asks for her birth date.

But it is also a reminder of something positive: Even in a year as awful as 2020, something good came out of it.

"It was such a tough year and so many bad things hap-

"Every time I imagined how hard it was for me, I imagined how much harder it could have been."

— Leslie Neugebauer, who said raising a newborn in the pandemic felt like every decision she made had higher stakes than decisions she had previously made

pened, but we ended up with this beautiful baby girl," Kite said.

With her unemployment payments delayed, Kite and her husband survived on receiving government issued food assistance and financial assistance from Neighbor Impact to help pay their medical bills. The mortgage of their La Pine home was deferred due to COVID-19. The well that ran dry the week Olive was born was fixed thanks to an emergency loan from Neighbor Impact.

Despite the challenges, her family never went without basic necessities, Kite said.

"All in all, I think we were re-

ally fortunate," she said.

The greatest lesson of the pandemic involved perspective, Kite said. Obligations that used to matter, just seem silly now after a year of quarantine.

Instead, Kite remembers doing things like getting dressed up in overalls, turning on music and having a dance party in the living room.

"It's not ideal it took a pandemic to force that, but it definitely made us appreciate having a family," Kite said.

Nearly a year after being fired, Kite finally got her unemployment checks from the state.

The pandemic slowed down life enough for Kite and her partner to do something they had wanted to do for the past 10 years, but never found the time to do: get married.

The week she received her check, Kite used the money to take her family to Lincoln City, where they decided to have an impromptu beach wedding — just the four of them.

"It felt like the right time," Kite said.

Reporter: 541-633-2160, bvissler@bendbulletin.com

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