



Itching to Get Away?
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Enhancing & Promoting the Economic Vitality of Central Oregon Since 1994

Accomplished Under 40

by JEFF MARTIN — CBN President/CEO

As CBN celebrates our 14th year of honoring young business leaders in Central Oregon, we — along with our sponsor, U.S. Bank — thought it would be fun to take a look at some of our past award winners and ask...

Where Are They Now?



STEPHANIE SENNER

We continue this series with Stephanie Senner, marketing director at Suterra, who received this award in 2014.

1. What advice would you give to your former self at the time you received the Accomplished Under 40 Award?

Make a point to meet the other award recipients one-on-one. Personal relationships will make the difference between Central Oregon becoming a larger community or losing that community feel all together. I'd also tell my former self to have a milkshake at Pilot Butte Drive-In while she still can!

2. What has changed the most about Central Oregon since you received the award?

One discouraging change is increasing skepticism about growth. The community was emerging from a traumatic recession back then, so people were hungry for economic development. Now that we're on the other end of a growth curve, people seem reluctant to invest in smart growth like event infrastructure or subsidized childcare.

One awesome change is increasing emphasis on equity and inclusion. We have a long way to go, but it's encouraging to see community leaders at least acknowledge the systemic problems and try to build a future *with* others instead of *for* others.

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Local Business Owners Share Trials & Tribulations of Reopening

by RONNI WILDE — CBN Reporter

As businesses in Central Oregon slowly reopen, owners are working diligently to keep up with the new rules required of them resulting from the pandemic. While most are delighted to open their doors and be back in the business of live, face-to-face interactions with customers, the new way of doing things is not easy. The mandated and suggested protocols are time-consuming, and the necessity of having to tell customers what they can and cannot do has created some awkwardness.

Cabin 22 restaurant reopened on May 15, and owner Mitch Cole said the eatery has been buzzing with activity every day since. "Business has been fantastic," he said. "We have been full every minute of every day since we reopened. Every single employee has come back. We have the luxury of a very large patio, so people feel safer with that." He added, "I've been absolutely blown away by the community support; Bend is that community."

The biggest challenge with reopening, however, has been enforcing the new rules, Cole said. "It's difficult to



ISRAEL LOVE, OWNER OF XCEL FITNESS | PHOTO BY RONNI WILDE

tell people what to do. I don't want to tell people not to sit here or walk there. And it's awkward for staff. I have been here bell to bell every day, and it's a constant thing, telling people what they can't do. It's tough," he said. "When you tell them, they are awesome, but they don't necessarily know the rules. We are constantly educating clientele. We have tape on the ground, signs, etc., but they are used to the way we have done things in the past."

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Pets Filling a Void Like Never Before

by RONNI WILDE — CBN Reporter



TRALAIN BENNER AND BLU | PHOTO COURTESY OF TRALAIN BENNER

In a world gone awry, our furry, four-legged friends can make the difference between a good day and a bad day. They love us unconditionally, greet us with unbounding enthusiasm and sit dutifully by our sides while we work from home or do our chores. Our pets may not know there is a pandemic going on, but they do know when we are upset or anxious, and there is nothing they'd rather do than offer us comfort.

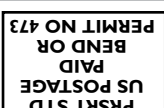
"Affection from my dog and cat are easing my soul. These have been challenging times emotionally, mentally and physically, and the animals have been my unconditional support," said Tralain Benner, owner, president

and CEO of Mama T's Pet Products. "I have always worked from home, but the challenging part now is the extra activity in the house." Benner is married and has two teenage sons, a dog named Blu and a cat named Charley, all of whom are home together throughout the day during this season of COVID. When the pressure gets to be too much, Benner said Blu has been her escape. "When I need a break, we go for a walk. Everyone in my neighborhood is out. Animals are definitely getting more attention."

Benner said her pets have also picked up on the added stress in the house. "Blu requires more attention, maintenance and needs to go out more," she said. "Before everyone was home, not so much. They sense things and pick up on our stress. They are out of their norm and this is not what they've known."

Mama T's is an e-commerce and wholesale product line of Pet Therapy CBD Oil (mamatspetproducts.com) that Benner created in 2018, and she runs the business from home. In the

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Itching to Get Away?

Pet-Friendly Hotel Chains with Low Rates & No (or Low) Pet Fees



PHOTO | BY JOSH SORENSON

When times are “tough” — and even when they’re not, it’s always nice when you can save a dime or two. While many of us are itching to get away with our pet, others may have to due to a move, family matter or other obligation. Whatever the reason for travel, it doesn’t have to break the bank if you plan ahead and find the right accommodations for your budget.

There are some hotel chains that not only welcome pets chain-wide, but they also have low room rates and either no or low pet fees. This makes it much easier on the pocketbook as well as a simpler trip to plan.

Red Roof Inn

This pet-friendly chain offers reliable accommodations at over 550 convenient locations. They are known for great, reliable service. Spacious guest rooms include plush bedding, a desk workspace and chairs to lounge in. Even though it’s budget-friendly, Red Roof Inn offers some really nice amenities — including extended

cable package and free WiFi. Starting room rates come in at about \$60 per night and pets stay free of charge.

Motel 6

If you’re looking for clean, comfortable, reliable and no-frills pet-friendly accommodations, then Motel 6 may just be the ticket! They are America’s original pet-friendly chain and are located along major travel routes — making it super convenient for you and your pet to find a place to “hang your hat” no matter where your travels take you. Starting room rates land at about \$55 per night and pets stay for free.

My Place Hotels

Great value, comfort and convenience is what you will find at My Place Hotels. Their rooms and amenities are perfect for both long- and short-term stays. One of their more unique amenities is that you are able to customize your breakfast order upon check-in — they call it My Place Breakfast in Bed! This fast-growing pet-friendly hotel chain has locations across the United States — many of which boast nearby pet-friendly shops, hiking trails and other places to explore. My Place Hotels goes the extra mile for pet travelers by providing outdoor pet potty areas, complete with waste bags. Nightly room rates start at about \$70 and the pet fee is \$10/night.

La Quinta by Wyndham

This popular chain is a fan favorite of pet travelers and their people! One of the reasons is that La Quinta has a non-restrictive policy regarding four-legged guests, allowing up to two large pets (up to 80 lbs) at all but a handful of their locations. In addition, their thoughtful amenities keep their guests coming back. A stand-out is their free Bright Side Breakfast. Although pets are not allowed in the dining area, you can make him a plate of bacon and eggs to bring back to the room! La Quinta offers economical room rates starting at approximately \$70 and pets stay free at the majority of their locations — others charge a pet fee of \$10-\$20/night.

Studio 6

Extend your stay, not your budget at Studio 6. This extended-stay hotel chain is designed for travelers looking for a home away from home. Still, many guests book for short-term stays as well. You’ll find locations along highways, major business sectors and popular vacation destinations. So if you’re planning to roadtrip with your furkid, Studio 6 is a great option. Room rates start at around \$55/night and the pet fee is \$10/night with a maximum of \$50 per stay.

TripsWithPets.com

Our Pets

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new scenario with everyone in the house, she said her pets rely on her for comfort, and vice-versa. “Blu had no interest in me before. He would maybe nudge me one or two times a day to go out, but that has changed. They are behaving very differently. I am having to stay more attentive to my dog. When we all leave the house, he seems to get anxiety and gets diarrhea.”

Benner said her cat has been overly sensitive during the past two months as well, and has changed his routines. “Formerly, Charley would sit in my chair or on the table next to my keyboard. He was always with me, up in my business, but he doesn’t do that anymore.” Now, Benner said her cat has started sitting with her 14-year-old son when he does his homework. “The emotional support for my son has been great. Charley is his best friend.”

On the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) website (nami.org), the organization reports that dogs can reduce stress, anxiety and depression, ease loneliness, encourage exercise and improve all-around health. The website states, “People with dogs have lower blood pressure and are less likely to develop heart disease — just playing with dogs has been shown to elevate oxytocin and dopamine, creating positive feelings and bonding for both the person and their pet.” Because dogs need exercise, pet owners are more likely to exercise on a regular basis, and socialization can be heightened by greeting others while on walks or at the dog park. The NAMI site goes on to say, “Dogs can be a lot to handle, but research shows that responsibility helps your mental health. Some psychologists say that you build self-esteem by taking ownership and applying skills to a specific task. Taking care of a dog offers reassurance that you can care for another creature and for yourself.”

Dr. Alan Kelley, DVM, owner of Alpine Veterinary Clinic in Bend, said he and his colleagues have noticed an uptick in people getting puppies right now. “It’s immeasurable the quality of life you get from pets, especially if you are single and cooped up. Dogs and cats are really helping a lot of people right now. With

dogs, the only emotions they seem to know are love and fear. They are always there for you.”

Kelley, who has a cat named Chirp and also shares a home with his girlfriend’s hound dog, Walter, said he has been seeing more anxiety in pets since the COVID outbreak began. “They pick up on our anxiety. This is more of an unknown for people than pets.” To help ease stress for both humans and canines, Kelley recommends getting outside in open spaces together. “Find a place outside of a dog park that is more isolated, like on BLM land, and get out with your dog. Even a short walk in the neighborhood can relieve anxiety for both a pet and the owner.” He also recommends lots of interaction with pets, including regular brushings for dogs. “Brush your dog, and learn how to brush your dog’s teeth while you are stuck at home. It will save you lots of money in the long run. Pick up a book on how to train your dog and do it



MAUREEN HARRIS AND SOONER | PHOTO COURTESY OF MAUREEN HARRIS

while at home. Come up with fun things to do outside of your norm; that’s always good.”

For those who notice issues with their pets, Kelley said his clinic is currently giving discounts for those who are laid off, unemployed or are front-line workers. “If anxiety in your pet becomes a problem, we can help.” (alpinevetbend.com)

Maureen Harris, a reservation sales associate for Navis Technologies, is single and lives alone, and said her pets help her get through her days. “This is my first experience working from my home. Having

my animals with me provides a level of comfort that I wouldn’t have if they weren’t here,” said Harris, whose work involves providing vacation experiences for leisure travelers at hotels, resorts and vacation rentals throughout the U.S. and beyond. “Both are so well-behaved that most of the time I don’t even know they’re here, but all I have to do is look over at them and it warms my heart.”

Harris took in her Golden Retriever, Sooner, seven years ago. “He came to me from Heaven! I had just put down my 13-year-old Golden and was completely lost. A vet in Wyoming said to call this breeder and see if they had a dog that wasn’t quite as expensive, and it turns out that they had a 3-year-old neutered dog that wouldn’t bring in as much revenue.” She added, “He was trained as an Orvis hunting dog, and I soon found out that he was terribly gun shy and badly treated. I fell in love right away, and he’s been with me ever since. He’s my constant companion and best friend, and he’s filled my life with such joy.”

Harris also has a cat, Layder, who came to her as a kitten about three years ago. “Just like a cat, he could take me or leave me,” said Harris with a laugh. “There was, however, an instant connection to Sooner, and they’ve been best friends since day one. My cat is a hunter, no doubt, and isn’t shy of anything! Having my animals has made the difference between loneliness and contentment. I’m single, so sometimes I wish I had someone in my life to share my experiences with, but I never feel afraid or alone because my boys are here with me. I do have two wonderful children, but they are grown and have lives of their own.”

As is the case with many pet owners, Harris has a routine with her furry friends. “I interact with my boys all day. I work a split shift, so I start every morning with meditation in bed, and the kids have their daily wrestling match. Then I go to work until around noon, when the dog and I go for a long walk. I finish the afternoon/evening at work, and then it’s relaxing time. Every evening, the dog and I wrestle for a bit before heading to bed.” She added, “The thing that gets the most attention is when the cat joins us for a walk around the neighborhood. Sooner’s on a leash, and Layder just trots along behind us. He wouldn’t miss those neighborhood walks for anything. Life is a whole lot fuller with my four-legged kids, and I can’t imagine life without them!”