

HOT TOPIC #6: March 26th

Not From but *For*: Part II

COVID-19 updates from San Juan County around subjects on the minds of islanders.

This is the second in a series of articles by Nathan Kessler-Jeffrey that aim to take the abstract concept of social distancing and make it real and hopefully more meaningful for islanders. [His first column is HERE.](#)

In my guest column on March 20th, I wrote a bit about how it can be easier to consider social distancing as distancing not *from*, but *for*. I find it anxiety-inducing to think of the thousands of people whose lives can and will be impacted by the pandemic in our country. So, when I think about who I'm distancing *for*, I focus on a couple individuals. One of those people is Becky (not her real name).

Courtney and I made a huge move up to San Juan Island from Seattle in 2018. I met Becky not long after that in the lobby of our Theatre. She has a huge smile and infectious enthusiasm for the performing arts. She's the ideal audience member—someone who not only comes to exuberantly enjoy the show but encourages everyone to do the same. And there are three things I want you to know about Becky.

First, she's a storyteller. A *gifted* storyteller. I've asked her to share her stories periodically because they help me get perspective on our Theatre, living on the island, and simply life in general. I have, on more than one lunch outing, completely lost track of time because her stories are so delightful. Some of the best ones involve her travels to far off places and meeting fascinating people. Becky knows *everyone*. And she doesn't simply tell her *own* stories well. I've heard her speak with eloquence and passion about the organizations she supports—including San Juan Community Theatre. She's got a gift for it—and I say that as someone who's spent a lifetime in the business of telling stories!

The second thing you need to know about Becky is that she gives. She supports others with her words, her attention, her money, and her connections. She's a gifted artist in her own right—a photographer with an eye for capturing amazing photos all over the world—but one of her great joys is to raise up others. She is great at helping people find each other—connecting producers and artists, and artists with audiences. She enthusiastically endorses shows, promotes visual arts, and does a superb job of inspiring generosity.

Finally, Becky is *at risk*. That's difficult for me to even write, but it's true. Every time I hear doctors describing the risk factors for COVID-19, Becky comes to mind. Specifically, her respiratory system is compromised—something I consider each time I wash my hands, cancel an event, or grab a cart at the grocery store.

As I mentioned earlier—I find it hard to consider the thousands who will be impacted by the pandemic. It's helping to keep my focus on the individuals I know—the nurses coming home late, paramedics worried about their stock of protective gear, the ushers at our Theatre whose smiles brighten my day when they take my ticket. There are people in our community struggling with health issues beyond my

understanding even before considering COVID. When I think about who I'm social distancing *for*, I think about them. And I think about Becky—the enthusiastic, generous, warm-hearted storyteller whose insights encourage me every time I see her.

Maybe we'll cover other folks in future articles—I find it helpful and I hope you do as well. We are, after all, engaged in something much bigger than ourselves—an idea as old as the family itself—that we can protect those among us who need it. I wish you well as we keep at it.

I've already received a few pieces of art on this subject, and I'm hoping to put them together in a future article. So if you're creating art during this time, I hope you'll share it—particularly if it's about who you're distancing *for*. We'll get through this together.

All the best,
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