*"Gratitude turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity...it makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."*Melody Beattie

Living in a world where each week brings about a new uncertainty, I am beyond grateful to be residing in the Tetherow community. Whenever life’s events become a bit too much, all I need to do is step outside and within moments, I find solace. Mother Nature certainly graced this high desert region with incredible vistas, endless trails, bountiful wildlife, and a majestic river. Even when inside, watching graceful deer nibbling on nearby bushes, spying a delicate hummingbird searching for nectar, or enjoying the exquisite glow of a lingering sunset, I’m reminded of how lucky I am to be here.

In fact, it would be easy to solely base this blog on how grateful I am for the high desert land. But there’s more to Bend … and Tetherow … much more. I’ve come to realize the true splendor of this community lies in the people who live here.

Ok, I know it’s not like it used to be … before so many of us moved here. Nevertheless, what I find most unique is the acceptance I’ve felt since our first trip to Bend. Maybe it’s because most residents are transplants, making it natural to reach out to others. After all, isn’t that true of many small towns turned big? But what if Bend were special? Could it be that unique and caring people are drawn to this town? Is it a place where people feel free to shine their light?

As I’ve gotten to know more “Bendites,” I realize a common thread exists which exceeds fitness and love of the outdoors. It’s a commitment to excellence. This is more than achieving personal greatness—it’s a quest for growth in all aspects of life. People in Bend want healthy lifestyles, conservation, respect, freedom, and peace. And they want to feel comfortable in their own skin, uninhibited to be who they are.

I’ve heard it’s our volcanic rock that draws certain people to Bend. If so, that might explain things. The moment I walk off the plane in Redmond or drive into the city limits on Route 20, my body senses something different. It’s hard to explain, but I feel the pull, hear the call to step up and elevate into my higher self. And for that, I am beyond grateful to live in Bend and to be inspired by many in this amazing community.

We each have a unique reason for being here, whether it’s riding epic trails, fishing the Deschutes River, attending concerts at Les Schwab, or enjoying the impressive breweries and restaurant scene. Why are you in Bend? How is Bend special for you? What makes you grateful about this community?

As humans it’s natural to focus on what we don’t have, the injustices in our world, and the pain and sorrows experienced by other or ourselves. While it’s important to honor these emotions and continue to strive to make humanity stronger, safer, and kinder, we cannot stay stuck in the negative. For us to make a change, it must start within, at the individual level. When we find gratitude and appreciate the many gifts bestowed upon us, we take one step closer to rising. And in doing so, we light the way for those around us.

Elevate. Shine your light. Be grateful.

*"At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."*Albert Schweitzer