

Personal Stories

2021 has been a rough year, for everyone. Our community has not only been dealing with the stress of a global pandemic but also the wildfire disaster in Otis. This year has forced each and every one of us to become resilient and find new ways to cope with the trials and tribulations of everyday living. We have conducted interviews with 5 wildfire survivors to receive insight on how they have remained resilient, when faced with losing their homes, jobs and even loved ones.

Jason:

Jason lost everything in the wildfires. After the fires, he became depressed and felt abandoned. He was forced to stay in a hotel room due to the loss of his home. He stated to have stayed resilient by “helping others before I help myself”. A way that Jason has been coping is by listening to music at the beach in his free time. Jason explained that the Grange and other community resources help has been overwhelming through this time. Jason said that he is able to meet many different people and it “opened his eyes” to the sense of community this tragedy has created.

Volunteer at The Grange:

This volunteer was evacuated from the wildfires for 5 days and it “made me grateful”. This volunteer explained that the wildfires helped to “bring out the need to help others less fortunate”. They stated to have stayed resilient throughout the wildfires by helping others in their community. In their free time, they have found that “walking to the beauty that is still on Earth” has helped them cope. Lastly, the provider stated that the community has helped them through the situation by “helping to make me feel included, as I am part of the solution”.

Mary:

Mary explained that the wildfires took many of her precious memories away. She has stayed resilient by “being an optimist, making others happy”. One way that she has been coping with the loss of the wildfires is by using humor to keep her happy. A new hobby that she has been using to distract herself from the trauma has been working at The Grange. Mary stated that “the bond the women (at the Grange) made me heal. They provided me with desire.”

Cynthia:

Cynthia lost everything in the wildfires. She stated it was like “a never ending horror movie”. After the fires, she was left feeling numb and empty. Cynthia has stayed resilient by finding happiness with her boyfriend who “keeps her in check” when she begins to feel sad. She is coping by playing with her puppy, sleeping and beginning therapy. Cynthia has begun working again and in her free time she enjoys doing crafts to help pass the time.

Maggie:

Maggie is from New Hampshire, but would come to Oregon for the winters. When the wildfires took place she lost her home here. She was staying in a hotel room with her husband, while looking for a permanent place to live. She reached out to as many people as she could and nearly everyone offered her a place to live. Maggie has stayed resilient by remembering that you can always “replace stuff, but can not replace loved ones”. She explained that “there is always someone worse off than you” and therefore you can not take anything for granted. She has been coping by fixing up her new home and spending time with her neighbors and husband. Maggie describes the community's help as “fabulous”. She stated that “although she may have never met them before they are eager to introduce themselves and help”.