

PUN INTENDED



Amy Jordan, 32, started the Joke of the Day on March 22, 2020, in hopes of connecting with her south Eugene neighborhood. She and her fiancé moved just a few months before the pandemic started from rural Tennessee.

DANA SPARKS/THE REGISTER-GUARD

Eugene resident brings laughs to neighbors with 'Joke of the Day'

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Laughter and camaraderie can be hard to foster during the COVID-19 pandemic, but south Eugene's Amy Jordan found a way.

Every morning since March 22, 2020, Jordan has placed a small whiteboard in her front yard with a joke on it. She readily admits that her material falls into the category of corny "dad jokes."

"A recent one I really liked was, 'Why don't ants ever get sick? Because they have little *antibodies*,'" the 32-year-old

Jordan said in an interview outside her house Tuesday.

Jordan has kept up posting a new pun for more than 365 days, with only a handful of days missed. The joke board has become a hit with her neighbors who go on regular walks, and touched some in ways she didn't expect.

Finding her jokes

Jordan and her fiancé moved into their house at the intersection of Donald Street and 47th Avenue in November 2019, several months before the pandemic hit. When it did, Jordan said she

wanted to find a way to bring some lightheartedness and joy to her neighborhood at a time when most were feeling isolated and stressed.

"I felt like I wanted to hug everybody and comfort people during the pandemic; I thought about giving out treats, but there's no touching," she said. "So, 'Joke of the Day,' it just came to my mind, and I had a spare whiteboard."

She also was inspired by her work as a director of the nonprofit Smart Living, Learning and Earning with Au-

See JORDAN, Page 4A

Jordan

Continued from Page 1A

tism. Jordan works with a variety of adult students with autism, and she said several of them are excellent at coming up with new puns.

Since starting the board, Jordan has received pun suggestions from family members, friends, and recently neighbors who will leave lists of possible jokes to add to her repertoire.

"In the summer, while I was working in the garden, people would come by and just give me some one-liners," she said. "I have told neighbors that if they have a joke, let me know, and I'll give you credit."

She finds punspiration by Googling "50 puns of the day," or by asking her Alexa device to tell her a joke.

And one neighbor gave her a book of jokes, which she has been steadily going through and now calls her holy grail. She hopes to never repeat a pun, and her only requirements for jokes are that they be "kid friendly, short, and the cornier the better."

"The first one I ever did was: 'I was trying to figure out how to catch the ball, then it hit me,'" she said.

Another recent joke she enjoyed was: "How much did the pirate pay for corn? A buccaneer."

Laughter and tears

Jordan started the joke of the day board as a way to meet neighbors and offer something fun for the community. But for some, it has become more than that.

"One neighbor came up to me and said, 'You know, I'm going through chemotherapy, and your joke is what gets me up and going to move around each day,'" Jordan recalled. "I was like, 'Oh wow, that's great.' I was trying not to cry."

Over the past year, Jordan has gotten to meet more than 20 people by maintaining the board.

During the interview with The Register-Guard, neighbor Richard Sulkes stopped by while walking his dog to make sure Jordan had received a list of jokes he dropped off a week ago.

Sulkes said he makes a regular



The "Donald Street walkers" offered a pun on the back of their homemade thank-you card for Amy Jordan. Jordan says she enjoys sitting on her porch, drinking her coffee and watching people react to the joke board in the early mornings. DANA SPARKS/THE REGISTER-GUARD

6%-mile loop each day, sometimes with his wife who posts photos of the joke board on social media.

"Sometimes, the reaction to the jokes is 'Eh,' but a lot of times it's a chuckle," said Sulkes, a 13-year resident of south Eugene. "We walk by every day, and we're always wondering, 'What will it say today?'"

Asked to explain the appeal of Jordan's joke board, Sulkes said it's been helpful for clearing his mind and resetting his mood.

"It gets me out of that funk that people might have and walk around with so

often," he said. "It makes you smile. It's the kind of thing you only get in Eugene where something unexpectedly hits you and makes you go, 'Man, those people are so nice.'"

Like many during COVID-19, a lot of Jordan's work is now online from home. But that's allowed her to watch as kids and families walk by, check out the board and laugh.

"People will wave, and I like having my window cracked so I can hear the kids laugh," she said.

They also leave thank-you cards at her front door, including one with hand-

painted images of the trees in her yard and the joke board.

Now that the board has been a success, Jordan said her one hope would be that after everyone is vaccinated, all the neighbors could get together in-person to bond over the corny jokes.

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