



## Let it Snow!

**A**S THE FLAKES STARTED falling in record amounts in mid-December, I made an end-of-the-year resolution to stay on top of my snow-removal responsibilities. Sure, I wanted to provide a clear walkway for the mailman and those who ventured out to enjoy the beauty of the great outdoors, but if truth be told, I also wanted to be proactive and remove some of the snow from around my car, so that when the plows came by they would not have as much snow to push against my car, plowing me in. I would face the snow like a winter warrior: shovel in hand, a smile on my face.

The next morning, with the wind whipping and the occasional big flakes idly falling to the ground, I got my start shoveling around my car. As I was well into my first hour of shoveling, a neighbor from down the block came walking up the street with his daughters and two snow shovels in tow. "Would you like some help?" they generously offered. They certainly didn't have to do it. The temperature was getting colder; the snow was starting to fall again, and there was a lot left to dig. Wouldn't they rather be nestled inside at home, enjoying the warm view from their living room? They didn't hesitate, though; instead, they stayed for 40 minutes, cheerfully helping me dig all the way around my car.

Later that night, after another round of snow had swooped in and destroyed any evidence of all of our hard work, I went outside ready to shovel again, only to find another of my neighbors from across the

street already hard at work. He had quietly brought his snow blower over and was busy clearing a path around my car before moving on and getting the entire sidewalk, too.

I have found that snow brings out the best in people. These two examples of my thoughtful and kind neighbors—whom I very much appreciate—were just the tip of the iceberg. I saw and heard stories over the following weeks of people helping one another push their cars, shovel, pull others out of ditches and check in on neighbors. There were numerous acts of graciousness and generosity, traits that were catching, causing the recipients of such acts to return the favor. For our community, a blanket of snow was a gift set in motion.

One person who always sees the beauty of the snow, is John Latta. He brings us amazing photos and stories of the great outdoors year-round, and on page 42 of this issue his stunning photos are accompanied by great advice and information for those who are heading to the mountains to ski.

For many, like John, the snow is a welcome sight, blanketing our city in beauty. The snow is a nice visual representation of the new year ahead of us; it is a blank canvas upon which the adventures and experiences of the year ahead will leave their print.

Do you ever wonder if an artist stands before a blank canvas, with no marks or blemishes yet on it, and hesitates before placing that first drop of paint or sketch of a drawing? While there is nothing on the canvas, and a masterpiece has not yet been created, at the same time, the blank canvas doesn't have any mistakes. There is a risk that once the artist digs into the painting, they could make a mistake and ruin the whole thing. Clinging to such hesitation and fear will hold them back, though, from potentially creating something beautiful.

The start of the new year makes me feel like an artist staring at a blank canvas, thinking about all the interesting and exciting things that could happen this year. There is a little bit of hesitation as well, realizing the weight of all the decisions to be made regarding what to do with our lives.

Are there decisions you are wrestling with, and fears holding you back from

digging into the blank canvas of life before you? When you dig in on a flawless canvas you could risk making a mistake, but you could also make something beautiful. Those risks, the uncertain aspects of life, tend to leave the most interesting prints on our lives.

Simon Thompson-Craven knows about taking a risk, which is what he and Becky Templin did when they started Cravens Coffee 15 years ago. The risk paid off with beautiful results and a very successful company. Simon's travels in search of the greatest coffee beans have taken him far and wide and added to the richness of his life. On page 102 you will read about his trip to Rwanda to participate in the 2008 Cup of Excellence, something he never knew he would achieve when he first started. It is a beautiful result and far from the blank canvas with which he started.

We have the option each day of what colors, images and impressions we are going to allow to be part of our life and the lives of others. Are we going to help a neighbor, think of someone else first, give to others and make the world a better place? In this wonderful region that we live, full of kind-hearted and generous people, it is refreshing to see how many people put others first and tirelessly offer up gifts of kindness, generosity and a smile. All of those people together paint a beautiful picture of what life is like in Spokane and Coeur d'Alene.

A few days before New Year's, as I shoveled after yet another storm had come through and blanketed us in snow, I received a text message from one of my college roommates who lives in Los Angeles. "It was 77 and sunny here today," she wrote. "I've been shoveling for two hours and it is 12 degrees," I replied. She quickly wrote back, "Maybe God is trying to tell you to move to L.A.!" Hmm...perhaps. If I lived in L.A., though, I wouldn't be able to wake up and see a great big beautiful blanket of white snow, which I see as God's way of reminding me of the blank canvas I am blessed to have before me each day.

I hope there are many more snowfalls in the season ahead. When we wake up and see an unmarked blanket snow, may we be reminded of the opportunities for new beginnings and unending possibilities that await us. I say let it snow!

*Blythe*