

A place at the TABLE

Common Table offers delicious food while promoting mutual understanding among people.

by Kathy Oxborrow, for
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The founders of Common Table, a nonprofit, volunteer-driven café in downtown Bend, believe that the “haves” can learn a lot from the “have-nots,” and vice versa.

When patrons come to partake of food and beverage, they share their meals at a common table.

Opened seven months ago, the vision of the founders was to create a restaurant where everyone was welcome — those who could afford to pay and those who couldn't.

“About five years ago, some people got together and started talking about how the world wasn't necessarily working



in the best ways, and the best models weren't out there,” said Common Table board president, Bob Pearson, a retired computer executive from California's Silicon Valley.

The result of these discussions is Common Table, a nonprofit social entrepreneurship project dedicated to building community by partnering with other nonprofits, busi-



nesses and individuals.

“We want to partner with the business person and the person who doesn't have a dime,” said Zach Hancock, who functions as the executive director.

Pearson said if their only goal was just to make sure people got fed, they would give money to organizations that feed the hungry.

“But you don't see the business person sitting down next to the homeless person in those facilities,” he added.

Common Table has a full bar and is open daily. As much as possible, it tries to serve organic and locally produced food.

On Mondays, folks can pay what they want for a meal.

“You can pay a little, pay a lot or pay nothing,” said Hancock.

One of the ways Common Table partners with community members is to distribute \$10 tokens to businesses and nonprofits as a way to introduce

the community to the delicious and healthy food and promote mutual understanding among all sectors of our society.

It's also a way to reduce the stigma associated with other types of public assistance offerings.

“So many folks who are from that place of disempowerment say, ‘Wow it feels so good to have dignity,’” said Hancock.

One accomplishment Common Table is proud of is providing an opportunity for people to gain marketable employment skills through their jobs at Common Table.

The folks at Common Table have accomplished much in their short seven months at 150 NW Oregon Avenue. Visit them to enjoy a meal, volunteer, listen to music and/or participate in community discussions.

For more information visit
www.commontable.net.



More about COMMON TABLE

- On the third Friday of the month, “Meet the Farmer” is presented. That day, products produced by the farmer are served and the farmer makes a presentation about farm operations.
- Serves 200 to 300 free meals a week.
- 1,300 food tokens with a \$10 value have been redeemed for a total of \$13,000 donated meals to community members.
- Hosts “Home Grown Musicians” every Sunday during the summer at noon.
- Has three full-time employees and nine part-time employees.
- Employees who work 20 hours or more receive free health care.



- Friday mornings from 10 to 11 a.m., Robert Killen from the City Club of Central Oregon facilitates “Table Talk,” an open discussion about a topic that is important to the community
- 400 volunteers have given 8,400 hours of their time since September 24, 2010.
- Needs volunteers who can do a variety of tasks from hosting, bussing tables, serving beverages, preparing food and washing dishes.