

The Register-Guard

Opinion

Our View: Not taking no for an answer

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Two women.

They sought answers for themselves and their children.

Their stories unfolded 10 years apart.

They occurred at opposite ends of the life spectrum yet shared a common theme: the refusal to give up.

Their tenacity will benefit countless people and not only in Lane County.

We salute Dana Tessler and Keelia Carver, and others like them, who persevere through their own pain to create community for others.

A single parent, Tessler had tried to go it alone in handling her daughter's diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes. Finding she needed a community of support, she established one. In 2008, she launched Mama I'm Low, a nonprofit support group for families dealing with Type 1 diabetes. (The disease once was known as **juvenile or insulin-dependent diabetes**.)

The name Mama I'm Low illustrates the commonality and understanding found within the group. "I'm low" is what kids often tell their parents or caregivers when they realize their blood sugar needs adjusting.

When Tessler's life was suddenly turned upside down by her child's diagnosis, she was surrounded by excellent medical professionals. What she lacked was interaction with folks who were in the same situation – a place to share ideas and encouragement, as well as frustration and grief.

“It's a huge blow to normal,” **Tessler told The Register-Guard**. “I was alone and incredibly lonely and scared, so I decided to start a parenting group.”

Eugene and Lane County have long traditions of such grassroots answers. Still going strong, Tessler's Eugene-based nonprofit serves an estimated 250 families, holds events throughout the year and offers a **website** with **resources**.

Keelia Carver's quest was for closure as a family. After their 4-year-old son, Max, drowned last year, they wanted to bury him on the family ranch so he would be close by. They initially were told that wouldn't be possible. They went the traditional route of having the body taken to a funeral home.

“Why would that body not be ours to spend time with?” Carver, who grew up Lane County and now lives in the Maupin area, **said in a Register-Guard story**. “Why would that body spend time with some strangers who were very nice but didn't know him, and because they didn't know (him) they couldn't love him?”

The Carvers persevered. They discovered that Oregon families legally can handle most or all of the tasks handled by a funeral home — except embalming, which is not required by law.

Home burials are allowed if certain conditions are met. However, the Carvers were able [to] use an old cemetery on their ranch property, where they held a meaningful funeral and burial for Max.

Carver has shared her newfound knowledge with Oregonians, working with Holly Pruett and others to create the **Oregon Funeral Resources & Education website**. The goal is to arm people with information “to make decisions about death care, final disposition and funerals based on knowledge, not simply by default.”

Carver and Tessler could have surrendered to the roadblocks. They did not. They broke the roadblocks and created roadmaps for the rest of us.