

Announcing **Rogue To Go** -- By Roxane Beigel Coryell & Risa Buck

The idea of offering reusable containers for eating on ‘the go’ is not new and can be found in progressive and urban cities. Some of us in Ashland have been wrestling with how to offer this option for several years. At long last, we have a solution to serve you. It’s called **Rogue To Go** and will launch eminently. Customers will be able to purchase a reusable ‘take out’ container from five participating locations who are part of this pilot project. The concept is simple: 1. Become a **Rogue To Goer** with a one time \$10 buy-in fee. 2. Get your take out in our reusable ‘to go’ container. 3. Rinse it clean after eating. 4. Next time you visit one of the participating eateries, exchange your container for a sanitized one or a token to redeem next time.

Ashland’s Conservation and Climate Outreach Commission (formerly Conservation Commission) has long been addressing opportunities to reduce waste. The catalyst for **Rogue To Go** sprouted from our community. We were inspired by local business owner, Javier Cruz of Simple Cafe. He took the “idea” of reducing the take-out waste from his business and purchased reusable containers for his customers. His forward thinking inspired us to figure out a way for multiple restaurants to team up to eliminate the single use to go containers rather than each business buying inventory and customers tracking which container is returned to which of their favorite eateries. Besides, we don’t need all those containers. While the idea of a broader community program for reusable containers isn’t a novel one, the current programs in urban centers are costly and primarily structured for denser populations, such as Go Box PDX. Instead, we leveraged our amazing local businesses to develop this ground-breaking partnership to reduce waste. The money to seed this program is made possible through a waste prevention grant from the Oregon Department of Environmental

Quality (DEQ). The City of Ashland administers the grant and is helping during the pilot phase to get it off the ground. The DEQ grant funds the first set of **Rogue To Go** containers and tokens. The grant allows us to test the program without asking business owners operating on small margins to make major investments in a concept that has not yet been proven to work in Ashland. The \$10 buy in fee will provide for inventory replacement and future expansion of the program.

We know many of you may be wondering why Ashland is starting a program using a *plastic* container. Believe us, we are with you. The Conservation Commission considered a variety of container options, including stainless steel, glass, and silicone. Feedback from restaurateurs and citizens revealed that, sadly, the product we want does not exist, yet. A non plastic option was a major priority and hurdle we set aside for now to expedite getting the program rolling. The Rogue To Go containers were selected with care to accommodate a variety of meal types. They are slightly different shapes than the containers currently being used at SOU's Hawk Dining Hall for their 'to go' food. SOU has had the reusable to go program for many years, though translating this model to a community program including several businesses is a new feat.

Rogue To Go is a great start that may expand to utensils, coffee cups and the multiplicity of too many other materials we hardly notice anymore except for that moment before we discard them into the trash or mistakenly add them as contamination to recycling. The ultimate goal is to continue to expand the program throughout the Rogue Valley and provide reusable alternatives for ALL single-use disposable items. Hence the name, *ROGUE* To Go. For now, keep your eyes out for the program launch and thank our forward-thinking business partners at Falafel Republic, Pie & Vine, Sesame Kitchen, Simple Cafe and the Ashland Food Coop. One success at a time grows a community that incorporates preparedness and durable

choices that include shopping bags, coffee mugs, water bottles and now on the go eating.

On behalf of the Conservation and Climate Outreach Commission, we want to publicly appreciate Roxane for her years of leadership and service to our community. It's a toss up who misses her more, SOU or the Commission.