

When giving becomes too much

DEAR ANNIE: I am struggling with what feels like a small thing, but it weighs on me. I have several great-nieces and great-nephews, and over the years I've tried to remember birthdays with cards, little gifts or even just a phone call. Lately, though, I feel overwhelmed. Between the number of children, the cost of presents and my own busy life, I can't keep up the way I used to.

This year, two of them have birthdays coming up, and I find myself dreading it rather than looking forward to celebrating them. Part of me wonders if I should stop sending gifts altogether and just acknowledge the day with a heartfelt card or call. But then I worry they will think I don't care or that I am playing favorites if some get gifts and others don't.

I don't want to disappoint these kids, but I also don't want to feel resentful or guilty every time another birthday rolls around. Am I a bad great-aunt if I don't keep sending birthday gifts? How do I show them love in a way that doesn't leave me stretched too thin? — Wondering Aunt

DEAR WONDERING AUNT: You are not a bad great-aunt for wanting to set limits. Gifts are nice, but what children remember most is the love and attention behind them. A thoughtful card, a phone call or even a tradition like baking cookies together can mean far more than some-



Annie Lane
DEAR ANNIE

thing from a store.

Do what feels genuine and sustainable for you. If that means sending cards instead of presents, that is perfectly fine. Your consistency and care will speak louder than any gift ever could.

Dear Annie: I am writing to you about something that I suspect many people wrestle with but rarely admit out loud: feeling completely drained by trying to "do it all."

On paper, my life looks fine. I have a steady job, a family I love and friends I try to keep up with. But in reality, I feel like I'm stretched so thin that I'm not fully present anywhere. At work, I'm behind on deadlines. At home, I'm guilty that I don't spend enough quality time with my spouse or children. With friends, I cancel plans at the last minute because I just don't have the energy.

Everywhere I turn, there are messages telling me to "set boundaries," "practice self-care" or "say no more often." I try to follow that advice, but then I feel like I'm letting someone down. If I say no to

my boss, I risk my job. If I say no to my kids, I feel like a bad parent. And if I say no to social invitations, I worry people will stop asking altogether.

The end result is that I'm running on empty. I can't tell if this is just modern life, or if I need to make some big changes. I find myself wondering: Is it normal to feel this exhausted all the time? Or is this a sign that I've taken on too much? How do other people balance responsibility with rest without feeling like they're failing everyone around them?

I'd love your advice, because right now it feels like I'm surviving, not living. — Running on Empty

Dear Running on Empty: What you are describing is more common than you think. Many people feel the same invisible weight of trying to be everything to everyone. The truth is you cannot, and no one can.

Start by taking one small step. Choose one area where you can realistically say no or scale back, and protect that space as if it were an appointment with your health. Over time, those small boundaries build into real breathing room.

You are not failing anyone by resting.

You are giving them a healthier version of you, and that is worth far more than a burned-out version who is running on empty.

FESTIVAL

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"That's what we want (for downtown). I keep on messaging that, for coming downtown and visiting our businesses and I just think that was kind of the extra thing that we needed."

It was all part of another successful outing for Somerset's signature fall festival, held on a day when chilly, windy weather threatened but never really materialized during the 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. window of the event.

"We had a beautiful day," said Ikerd.

"We had several new vendors and of course ... an incredible line-up (of musicians). It's always nice when other people enjoy it and hear new music and fall in love with it too. I've read several different review from people (for whom) it was their first time there and they enjoyed it and loved the music. Seeing so many community members having a good time and positing about it the next day, I think that's what it's all about. ... From all angles I saw, it was a successful day."

The highlight for most attendees was the line-up of artists who performed during the day, headlined by country artist George Birge. Others throughout the day included local talents Aiden Drew and Jadan Tammall, versatile performer Sweet Megg and bluesy J & the Causeways.

But maybe no one captivated the crowd quite like Bee Taylor, the Nashville singer-songwriter who has built a large fan base locally through many visits to Pulaski County, and eastern Kentucky bluegrass act The Creekers, who made a big impression on the Master Musicians Festival crowd this past summer — and brought plenty of fans to town this weekend.

"I think they showed up from far and wide (for The Creekers)," said Ikerd.

"These guys are just amazing guys. They're authentic, they're just very humble. They were great to work with ... just guys that you'd want to be around, and I think that is what makes them so contagious, not only their talent but just who they are."

Tanner Horton, whose authentic Leslie County accent and personality is almost as much an instrument as the guitar he plays,

said it was an easy decision to return to town after MMF this summer.

"We love Somerset," he said. "... They know what good music is, I guess."

Added Horton of the band's growing popularity, including the announcement that they'd signed a record deal with Warner Music Nashville and Warner Records last month, "It's crazy. It's all good but it's crazy. It's running us ragged, but we love it."

Likewise, Taylor gave her Somerset fans a greeting when speaking with the Commonwealth Journal.

"I just want to say it's so great to be back in Somerset again. I feel like it's been a minute since I've seen all y'all and I love you so much," she said.

"It's such an honor, and I'm so grateful to be with you. I love y'all, you're like family. ... I'll say yes pretty much anytime Somerset calls me."

The two acts actually combined for one of the most memorable moments of the festival when The Creekers brought Taylor on stage during their set to perform a version of the Dolly Parton hit "9 to 5." Birge, meanwhile, appealed in particular to a younger crowd, noted Ikerd.

"When I plan the music set up, I try to do a little bit of something for everybody and I think it's important to have something for our younger folks to look forward to, to get excited about coming downtown and spending time and creating memories with their friends and family," said Ikerd.

In addition to the music, the food trucks, and the vendors; art is and always has been an important part of the Moonlight Festival

experience — specifically live painting by a number of different artists.

One of them was Somerset's Jessica Ruby, who used acrylics to paint her vision of the Fountain Square area — each artist participating was tasked with working with the theme "How do you see downtown Somerset?" according to their own perspective.

"I'm kind of doing it from (the) point of view of the courthouse camera," said Ruby, "of all the decades through downtown, with the parades, the car shows, the trolleys, trains. I'm going to try to get a little bit of everything, of Somerset history."

Ruby said she's been painting since she was only two years old, growing up to study it in college at Spalding University in Louisville. She expressed appreciation for the Moonlight Festival offering the art component to creators in the community such as herself.

"This is amazing," she said. "I do live paintings at weddings, but this is a little different. I get to actually interact and talk to people rather than watch and be a part of the background."

The festival used clickers to try and count the amount of people who attended the event over the course of the day, coming through the gates. A full count was not available on Monday, but based on what information she did have, Ikerd guessed at a ballpark figure of 7,000 people in attendance.

"Typically we start strong and then we just kind of keep building throughout the day," said Ikerd.

"This crowd seemed to come heavy at one time, right about when Bee Taylor got on (stage, around 5 p.m.)."

State emergency officials say new rules and delays for FEMA grants put disaster response at risk

GABRIELA AOUN
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ASSOCIATED PRESS

State officials on the front lines of preparing for natural disasters and responding to emergencies say severe cuts to federal security grants, restrictions on money intended for readiness and funding delays tied to litigation are posing a growing risk to their ability to respond to crises.

It's all causing confusion, frustration and concern. The federal government shut-

down isn't helping.

"Every day we remain in this grant purgatory reduces the time available to responsibly and effectively spend these critical funds," said Kiele Amundson, communications director at the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency.

The uncertainty has led some emergency management agencies to hold off on filling vacant positions and make rushed decisions on important training and purchases.

Experts say the develop-

ments complicate state-led emergency efforts, undermining the Republican administration's stated goals of shifting more responsibility to states and local governments for disaster response.

In an emailed statement, the Department of Homeland Security said the new requirements were necessary because of "recent population shifts" and that changes to security grants were made "to be responsive to new and urgent threats facing our nation."

PUBLIC NOTICE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION COLUMBIA GULF TRANSMISSION LLC, DOCKET NO. CP26-11-000

Columbia Gulf Transmission, LLC ("CGT") has submitted an application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") under Docket No. CP26-11-000, for approval to construct and operate the Pulaski Project ("Project") located in Lincoln and Pulaski Counties, Kentucky.

About Columbia Gulf Transmission:

The Columbia Gulf Transmission System, operated by TC Energy, is a crucial component of the interstate natural gas pipeline system in the United States. It spans approximately 3,340 miles and connects to major pipelines in the U.S. Gulf Coast and additional Midwestern lines. The system is governed by the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and is regulated to ensure the safety and integrity of the pipeline and facilities.

Purpose of the Pulaski Project:

To help meet increasing market demand, Columbia Gulf is proposing the Pulaski Project, which is designed to supply natural gas to support the planned expansion of the East Kentucky Power Cooperative's John Sherman Cooper Power Station. The Project is expected to strengthen the availability and resiliency of the region's energy infrastructure and support southern Kentucky's electric grid, contributing to system stability and reliability for local communities. It will also contribute to regional economic development and growth in the region, including the creation of new job opportunities, increased labor income, and a boost in local spending.

Project overview:

The proposed Project includes the construction of approximately 41 miles of 30-inch diameter pipeline, beginning at Columbia Gulf's existing Main Line System in Lincoln County and continuing through Pulaski County to a new delivery meter station interconnect with the John Sherman Cooper Power Station. Once in service, the Pulaski Project will deliver natural gas to the power station, providing a reliable and cost-effective energy source for the region.



Project map and additional information:

A map indicating the general location of the Project is shown. More information on the Pulaski Project can be found on the project website: www.tcenergy.com/operations/natural-gas/pulaski-project/

For more information:

A copy of the application CGT filed with FERC is available at:

- Pulaski County Public Library - Main Library
304 South Main Street
Somerset, KY 42501
- Lincoln County Public Library - Main Library
201 Lancaster Street
Stanford, KY 40484
- Online: go to www.ferc.gov, click on eLibrary (upper right-hand corner of screen) and perform a search using Docket No. CP26-11-000

