

Jeff Around Town – December 17th, 2024

Jeff: Time now for another edition of Jeff Around Town. Joining me this morning is longtime friend, Trilety Wade. She's an environmentalist, a writer, passionate about safe streets and walking. Good morning, Trilety.

Trilety: Hi, Jeff.

Jeff: How are you?

Trilety: Good, how are you?

Jeff: And you're on brand, you walked here.

Trilety: I did, I walk here and most of the time that you and I run into each other now is walking.

Jeff: Walking, yep. That's one of the things I've known about you as long as I've known you since maybe the late 90s. You love, you're passionate about pedestrian safety and that's sort of carried over into this passion project that you co-founded called Safe Omaha Streets.

Trilety: Yep, we abbreviate it to SOS. And yeah, I've always loved walking, but it probably wasn't until we started Safe Omaha Streets that I learned more about how much we need to advocate for pedestrians, especially pedestrians who aren't pedestrians by choice, the way that say you and I are, but pedestrians who have to use our sidewalk and infrastructure and bus routes because they have to. And learning about that has made me more of an advocate for pedestrians.

Jeff: So how does this relate to what you do and to say sidewalks and bus benches, for example?

Trilety: One of the things we do with SOS is we like to gather data and use that data to advocate for safety solutions and safety change. And one of the things we noticed beyond the fact that we have a lot of uneducated and unsafe drivers is that we need better infrastructure for pedestrians. And some of that change is taking place like the public works department through Vision Zero at the city of Omaha is starting pedestrian safety zones to have more of a holistic approach rather than just one crosswalk, they layer safety solutions. But we also still have issues where sometimes it'll take 17 months for a sidewalk to be repaired. So, we need to figure out where that gets stalled. And then you might've noticed a lot of the bus stops, new bus stops are being improved and switched out. That's because we have a new contractor in the city. Yeah, so there's some good change that's happening, but still some change that needs to occur.

Jeff: So, in this neighborhood where I just recently moved, there are several sidewalks that are all marked up with spray paint because they're all broken. Is that exactly what the city's identifying those?

Trilety: Yes.

Jeff: To replace?

Trilety: Yeah, and part of the problem is that we're a complaint driven city. And then part of it is that sidewalks are the responsibility of property owners. There are very few sidewalks in town that are the responsibility of the city, but it is on the city to get the property owners to fix them. And sometimes the lag is contractors. It's been interesting. You have to get into the weeds. You think safety advocacy is really simple, but it's not, it's a lot of digging.

Jeff: So, I'm curious for you, I don't know if we've ever talked about this actually, what is it about walking? Because for me, I love it. I will listen to a podcast, I'll listen to KVNO. And I love just, it kind of gets me out of my head and I see things differently by foot. So, your passion for walking, what is it about that for you that you love?

Trilety: Yeah, I think the same thing. It's kind of a creativity stimulus and it does, it lets you talk to people that maybe you wouldn't necessarily talk to. And you do see a different side of the city. You'll notice that if you walk through an intersection, say the intersection of 72nd and Dodge versus drive through it, that you're experiencing a completely different way that the city moves. And then I get to run into people like you. So that's always fun.

Jeff: And there's something about just, I know for me, when I've been walking around, I will have more conversations with folks. I'm just strangers even, at a shop or just on the sidewalk. And maybe it's just exchanging a smile or something like that. But it's very, obviously very personable and sometimes personal thing.

Trilety: Oh yeah, it's very connective. And I also like it just, if you can get your activity in by doing an errand rather than have to do your activity by going to the gym.

Jeff: I love that. And get your steps, do you count your steps?

Trilety: I do sometimes, if I'm a data gatherer, I love data. So yeah, I totally try and keep track of that.

Jeff: I will confess to you, I am obsessed with hitting those 10,000 steps.

Trilety: And that's actually a myth, I think.

Jeff: It is a myth. It was part of a marketing, I know some marketing firm, I think in Japan came up with this years ago. I don't care. I still, I feel like I have failed if I don't hit the 10,000.

Trilety: Well, I always see you walking. So I have no doubt that you reach those steps.

Jeff: Most of the time, most of the time. So you're talking about that. So for me, it is also the creative process. For you, walking the creative process. And you also are a writer. You have a new book out, published. It's called, *I Won't Keep You, Short Essays and Little Fictions*. That's just lovely. So, were you... just briefly, did you get inspiration just from walking?

Trilety: No, I mean, I've always loved to write, but I will say that if you can just get outside and get out of your head, because walking also, I think, de-stresses you. And any time that you're de-stressed and have less anxiety, it opens your mind up to creative thought. So, there's definitely been a lot of that book that was written in my mind while walking.

Jeff: Love it, okay. So, if folks want to find the book and Safe Omaha Streets, how do they find you?

Trilety: Safeomahastreet.com or thecuriousword.com for the book.

Jeff: Awesome. Trilety Wade, thank you so very much...

Trilety: Thank you, Jeff.

Jeff: ... for being on Jeff Roundtown. And we'll see you around town.

Trilety: Sounds good, see you on the streets.

Jeff: Alrighty.