

# Phyllis Lewis receives BPAC award

By Craig F. Eisenbeis  
Correspondent

For the second year in a row, a Sisters-area resident is the recipient of the Big Chaining Award. Phyllis Lewis was honored last week with the 2015 award. The Deschutes County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) selected her for the honor in recognition of her volunteer contributions to pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments in Deschutes County.

Last year's award went to Patrick Eckford, also of Sisters.

Started in 1996, the Big Chaining Awards are presented annually. The awards were conceived to honor individuals, businesses, and public agencies that have made significant contributions in support of better bicycling and walking in Central Oregon, and in encouraging children and adults to walk and ride their bikes, thereby making Deschutes County communities healthier and happier.

A chaining is the main pedal-driven gear ring that moves the bike chain to provide energy and propulsion to a bicycle. In a similar manner, Big Chaining Award recipients are seen as a driving force in the community.

Lewis received the award at last week's county commission meeting. "Honestly," Lewis said, "I was totally stunned when I got the letter telling me that I had received the award. It had never entered my mind that I would even be nominated."

The formal name of the award conferred on Lewis by BPAC is the Peter Hanson Memorial Award. Peter Hanson was a BPAC member who died of cancer in 2005. BPAC noted that Hanson's contributions were in such

areas as trail building and environmental and outdoor community projects. BPAC members determined that Lewis's contributions to the community have been in the same spirit as those engendered by Hanson's work.

A BPAC news release for last week's award ceremony said, "Phyllis Lewis has provided tireless dedication as a volunteer promoting bicycle and pedestrian improvements through service as a member of the Sisters Trails Alliance Board of Directors, City of Sisters Parks Advisory Board, and the Deschutes County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. In these roles she has been instrumental in development of many projects that have improved bicycling and pedestrian facilities in Sisters Country and throughout Deschutes County. She also led efforts that received national recognition of Sisters as a cycling and pedestrian friendly community. Phyllis exemplifies how that dedication will lead to a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment to benefit all members of the community."

For her part, Lewis insisted that there are many deserving candidates for the award.

"This particular award is supposed to go to someone who has made great contributions, and I feel that I am just one of the many people who volunteer. So I was very, very honored; and I still don't even know who nominated me!"

Chuck Humphreys, chairman of the Sisters Trails Alliance, had plenty to say about Lewis and the role she has played in the community.

"I've had the pleasure of working with Phyllis for years on trail issues," he said. "Of course, she is tenacious, and smart, and committed, and capable of getting things

done — while being disarmingly unassuming. But most importantly, she is simply wise, with a heart of gold. She embodies all that is good about Sisters Country."

Humphreys went on to say, "This BPAC award is the highest commendation of a volunteer, because it reflects the values of Peter Hansen. Before he died of cancer, Peter worked hard to get things done, not to be recognized. He gave himself to his volunteer work — setting a standard that this award tries to recognize in others. Phyllis is an incredibly deserving recipient of this award — almost as if this award was designed, years ago, with her in mind."

The Sisters Trails Alliance was not alone in singing Lewis's praise. Sisters City Councilor Wendy Holzman had this to say: "I am very fortunate to have gotten to



PHOTO PROVIDED

Phyllis Lewis, second from left, receives BPAC award from Deschutes County Commissioners.

know Phyllis and worked with her. The fact that the BPAC committee chose to elevate her award from the 'individual' category to the Peter Hanson Award speaks volumes about her. She is committed, tenacious, and does the work of two, while at the same time being one of the most genuine and caring people I know. It is a privilege to know her."

While obviously pleased with the award, Lewis seemed even more pleased that all the fuss stirred up by her award was bringing attention to the important role of volunteerism in the community.

"I'm really happy that folks in the community can see that there are volunteers who are looking out for their best interests; and I am very happy just to be a part of it."

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