

Commentary...

What freedom means to me

By Pearl Gregg
Guest Columnist

Editor's note:

Seventh-grader Pearl Gregg read her Patriot's Pen essay, "What Freedom Means to Me," during Veterans Day observances at Sisters Middle School on November 10.

Freedom. To me freedom means everything. Freedom is where I live, go to school, what job I choose and so many other things. Freedom is my future. Without freedom I would not have a future. With freedom I can get an education, drive, get a job, pick my house and where I want to live when I'm older, pursue my dreams and live the life I want.

I appreciate all the American Veterans have done for me and for our country. Without what they did the U.S. would be a very different county. Veterans and their families sacrificed a lot for us. Many had to abandon their families, jobs, and put their lives on hold. With all of my freedom I will live my life to the fullest. I will run with it and make the most of my life. For example I will go on trips and adventures and do lots of exciting things. I will treat it with respect as

well, because these rights can be taken away from me if I don't make the right choices. Also with my freedom I can drive when I'm 16, go to college, build the tiny house I dream of living in, become a teacher, stand up for myself, and be who I am.

I am one who stands out as dorky and sometimes I think it's a bad thing but it's just expressing who I am and that's a good thing. When I'm older I get to vote for who I want to lead this country. I have a choice in what I believe and I can share my voice with the world. These are things I can do with my freedom. I can be so powerful with my freedom I can speak up for what I believe in.

I greatly appreciate my freedom. I love it with all my heart. It is something so important to me. My dreams would not be possible without my freedom. I have so many dreams that I want to make a reality, and with my freedom I can. I thank the veterans that fought and lost so much to make this country what it is today and the life they have created for all of us. My advice to all of you, follow your dreams and be who you are, because this is a FREE country.

Dates set for Sisters Shootout

The Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) has announced the January/February dates for this year's Sisters Shootout basketball tournaments, which serve as a fundraiser for the Sisters High School boys basketball team, and the 7th and 8th grade club program.

"These fantastic sporting showcases are possibly the longest continuously running basketball tournaments in the state," said SPRD Executive Director Liam Hughes. "Last year, between the two tournaments there were around 100 teams, 1,000 participants and 5,000 to 6,000 spectators. Many of these teams came from outside the area to participate, staying in local hotels, eating at local restaurants and visiting local shops.

Sisters High School boys basketball Coach Rand Runco was one of the tournament's founders, and helped explain the history behind the tournaments:

"We started the tournaments for three main reasons: To give our kids the chance to play high-quality opponents from outside of our local area, without having to incur the effort and expense of traveling all over the state; to fundraise for the high school boys basketball program; and to bring business to the town during a slow time of year."

Such tournaments have grown in popularity since Sisters' pioneering efforts.

"In the early days it was just one guy out of Portland and us running tournaments in Oregon," Runco noted. "Now every town has them, and that competition makes it a lot more difficult to make these tournaments profitable. Expenses keep rising, and because of all the competition, it's difficult for us to raise our entry fees. So this has left us trying to be creative, adding contests, charging gate fees, selling concessions, and looking for sponsors, to make these tournaments remain viable."

The tournaments have a significant economic impact in Sisters, during the slow period of winter. Visitors lodge, dine, and shop in Sisters.

"Last year I had a bunch of folks stop me on the street after the tournaments and ask if we can give a little more

advanced notice of the tournaments, because their stock was flying off the shelves, and they wanted to make sure they had time to stock up," Runco said. "So we wanted to make a concerted effort to do that this year, but it also got me thinking about sponsorship opportunities. If you feel that your business benefits from the tournaments every year, and you want to support the event, please get in touch with us. Also if you feel that your business does not currently benefit from the events, please get in touch with us and let's see if we can work together to drive some more business your way."

The tournaments are always held on the Martin Luther King and Presidents' Day holiday weekends. For 2016 that will be January 16-17 and February 13-14.

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