

MENTORS: Children benefit from relationship with adult

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young folks in need of a hand by providing mentors with a long-term commitment to provide positive experiences for youth in the Sisters community. Mentors meet with their child on a weekly basis, spending quality time and creating a bond to support the child moving toward success.

Maboll has been a volunteer mentor since last spring, working with a middle-school-aged boy in Sisters.

He is a retired school teacher and he thought "it was about time that I gave back to some kids who really, really need it."

Maboll and his young friend went hiking, fishing and kayaking, went to church and played games. The youth even helped Maboll train his dog, who is learning to scent-track for the Forest Service.

But one activity was more important than any other: listening.

"We had some long talks about things," Maboll said. "You name it, it came up...

I think the most important thing is to listen to the kid and let them lead you."

The youth Maboll was mentoring has moved out of the area — a good step for him, his mentor says. Maboll will take up mentoring another youth soon.

Sydney Harrison has been mentoring for over two years, starting when her young friend was a 6-year-old girl.

She heard about the program at work.

"I work part-time at Metolius Property Sales, and (principal) Jeff Jones was on the board and told me about it."

Harrison met with Beth Hanson, program director for Circle of Friends.

"I thought, well, this is something I could do," Harrison said.

"It was immediately rewarding... What happened was, I fell in love with this little girl. She's part of my family now."

The need for mentoring comes out of difficult circumstances, so the effort can be a challenge, Harrison notes.

"Making sure that we get to have our time together is probably the biggest

challenge," Harrison says, though she emphasizes that "her family has been very welcoming to me."

Harrison loves being able to see the world afresh, through a child's perspective.

“The best times we have are just sitting together, playing games, reading, doing her homework.”
— Sydney Harrison

"The best times we have are just sitting together, playing games, reading, doing her homework," Harrison says. "She loves going to the coffee shop — and she had never seen it before."

Maboll and Harrison are just two of several dedicated mentors — but there is a need for more mentors to step up.

"We have a great group of people," said Hanson, who

recently left the position. "We're just looking for great adults to meet with a child on a regular basis."

Hanson noted that some prospective volunteers have a misconception that they are being asked to commit to 12 years of service. That is not the case. Once involved in the program, Sisters kids can participate as long as they live in the Sisters School District, through 12th grade. But they may have several mentors through that period.

"We ask that (mentors) volunteer a year at a time," Hanson said.

Hanson also noted that some mentors are obliged to travel to meet with their friend. The organization does not want that to be a stumbling block and will work with a mentor to make that travel viable.

The opportunity to have a positive impact on a child who really needs you in their life is beyond price to the volunteers.

"We never know when that one thing we do will make a big difference," Harrison says.

She's grateful to have the possibility here in Sisters.

"I'm very grateful to (founder) Duncan Campbell for starting this program in Sisters," she says. "We are so blessed to have this program in our little town."

“...I fell in love with this little girl. She's part of my family now.”
— Sydney Harrison

It is remarkable that a Sisters resident can do so much. As Mark Maboll says, it really boils down something very simple:

"Be their friend and be non-judgmental with them. Just be their buddy."

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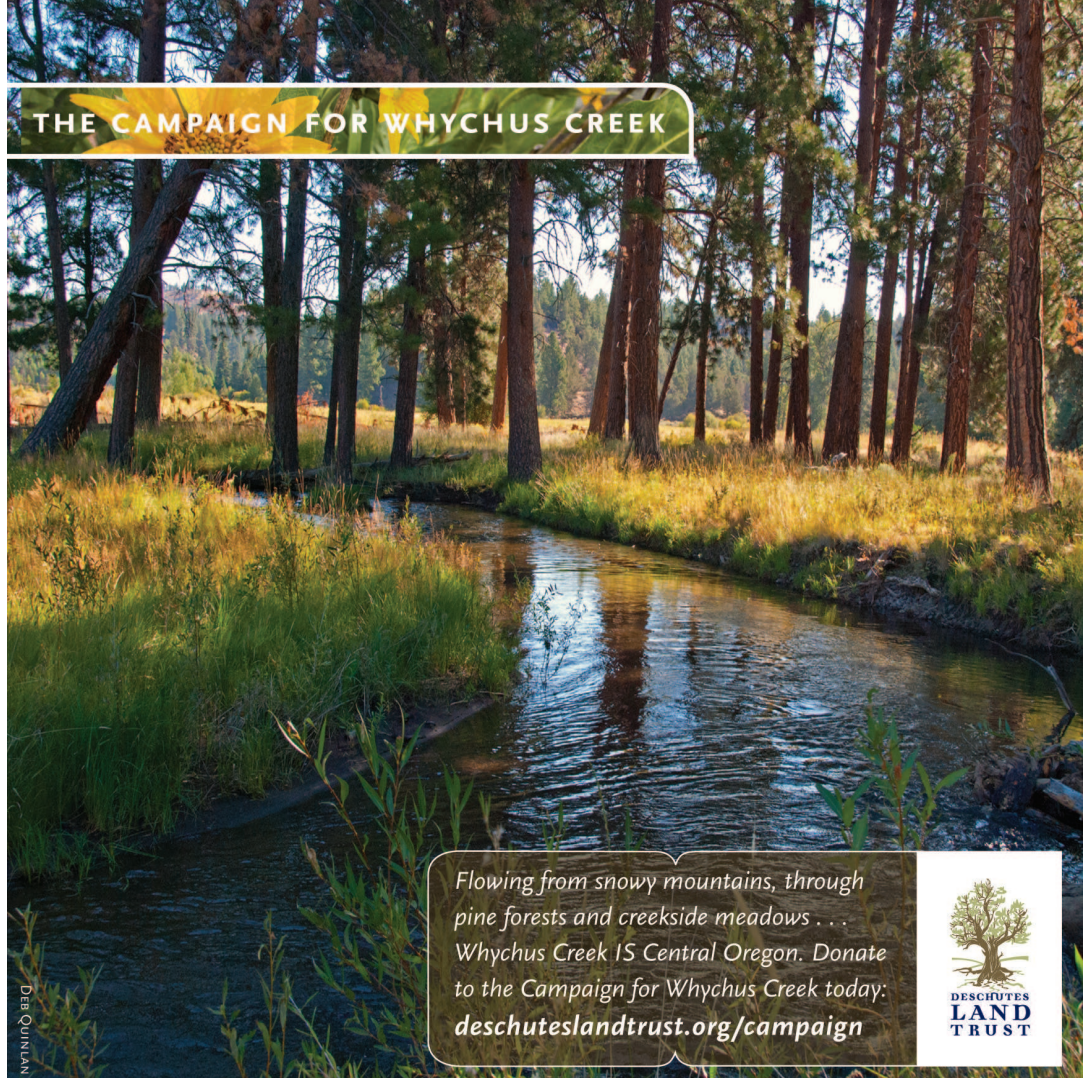
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