

## CIVILITY: Project has broad support in Sisters

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civil discourse. Of those surveyed, no one stated they felt that SYP would not work in Sisters Country.

Attendees were asked what entities they thought could benefit from SYP. The list included City Council meetings, the school board and Sisters schools, Sisters Voice, homeowners associations at Tollgate, Black Butte Ranch, Crossroads, and Pine Meadow Village, the Forest Service, and Sisters Trails Alliance.

Since that time the Citizens4Community (C4C) steering committee, the group that brought SYP to Sisters, has been meeting weekly to thoughtfully plan the next steps for successfully introducing SYP to the broader community.

C4C has been busy orienting new committee members, fine-tuning their webpage, and creating their own SYP materials to be reflective of local art and culture, including the civility cards listing the nine tenets. They also plan to print larger posters and possibly window decals to identify participating organizations and businesses.

Local artist Kathy Deggendorfer offered the C4C use of her art free of charge. The art captures the spirit of Sisters and will be used on all of their informational materials. They hope to have materials available by the end of the month.

“Of course, we are out seeking donations to help cover the financial costs to print all of our creative materials,” said Robyn Holdman, C4C president.

Although they are a

nonprofit corporation, C4C is not a 501(c)(3), so they cannot apply for grants, and donations are not tax-deductible for the donor. This is a program that will be built by goodwill, good intentions, good partnerships, and a belief in the value of civility throughout Sisters Country.

Four Sisters residents have recently joined the C4C steering committee: Dan Glode, a former district attorney for Lincoln County and a columnist for *The Nugget*; Jack and Jan McGowan, who bring a wealth of experience with nonprofits and community building; and Jeff Campbell, president of the Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) and former Silicon Valley businessman.

The committee is in the final stages of creating a uniquely local presentation that can be made to the numerous “communities” within Sisters Country.

C4C has stayed in contact with groups that expressed immediate interest in adopting the nine tenets as core values for their organizations. Several organizations representing various segments of the community are already up and running, using SYP to establish or improve an atmosphere of civility in day-to-day operations.

On the governmental side, Sisters Ranger District, led by Kristie Miller, has enthusiastically agreed to adopt SYP. All the employees were invited (not required) to attend an informational meeting with Karwath in January. Miller reported that the employee response was positive.

“This is great stuff that we should be doing all the time anyway,” Miller reported them saying.

Miller is hopeful that SYP will go district-wide, following a presentation at a district meeting. She indicated that in

her office, the SYP tenets will guide the conduct of all public meetings and workings of interdisciplinary teams.

“The intent is to have SYP be part of all Sisters Ranger District sessions,” Miller said.

Miller was drawn to investigating the possibility of incorporating SYP at the Forest Service after witnessing the angry letters to the editor in *The Nugget* and the failure of meetings regarding the proposed paved trail between Sisters and Black Butte Ranch.

“I tried to listen and be respectful, but it is hard when someone is screaming in your face,” she recounted.

What appealed to Miller about SYP is how simple it is. “Those are tenets I try to live by on a regular basis.”

Miller modeled several of the tenets when she told *The Nugget*, “I am willing to accept there is a good possibility I might have violated some of them (tenets).”

She believes that people usually resort to yelling at someone when they feel they are not being heard.

“I can apologize,” she offered.

In the nonprofit arena, SPRD Board President Campbell brought SYP to the board of directors last week and they adopted it, incorporating the tenets directly into their board policy. From there it will filter down to staff and those connected to SPRD.

Campbell has become a strong proponent of SYP after attending several of the community meetings with Karwath. His interest turned into action when he

volunteered for the C4C steering committee and to serve as a mentor for other groups that want to adopt SYP.

Mike Mansker, owner of Reed Bros. Coldwell-Banker Realty in Sisters, heard about SYP from C4C steering committee member Bruce Rognien and Holdman, who later attended one of Reed Bros.’ staff meetings and introduced the project office-wide.

Due to Mansker’s experience in his first career in public service, he already had watched passionate people lose interest in helping because of negative energy introduced by vocal minorities.

“No one likes a process dominated by negative energy; almost no one,” he said. “Adopting SYP was automatic because of a lot of work we’d already done to promote helping each other in our office.”

When Mansker became the owner of Reed Bros. in 2012, as a team the office adopted many elements similar to SYP as guiding principles for the business.

“We’ve already seen very positive outcomes. Our office culture is based on mutual support, truthing, listening, and respect for each other even when we disagree. The resulting positive energy and collaboration is like a breath of fresh air.”

As far as Mansker’s hope for the SYP project in the larger community, he shared these thoughts:

“When people treat each (other) right, the community is a brighter place, kind of

like when you turn on a light in a dark room. I expect the people who want to will work together to do a lot less bumping into the furniture.

“And I expect anyone who slips into a self-serving place — as we are all prone to do — will see themselves more clearly, and will either make a positive change or move along,” he concluded.

The Sisters Trails Alliance also just recently adopted SYP. Because the Sisters Library is part of a county-wide system they can’t formally adopt SYP, but they offered to be supportive of the project any way they can.

On the calendar is a training on March 16 for the students at Heart of Oregon in Cloverdale. They are choosing to start with the broad student base, allowing them to introduce it upwards.

The C4C steering committee is following Karwath’s advice to move slowly, and not get ahead of themselves as they introduce SYP to the larger community. Their hope is to encourage the strengthening of the pillars that make for a healthy community: resources; tools; networks; engagement and preparedness.

Before Karwath left Sisters he told the SYP organizers, “You have an amazing community. The level of civic engagement is remarkable. There are no fires to put out. You just need to figure out how to build on your success.”

For more information, visit [citizens4community.com](http://citizens4community.com), or contact Robyn Holdman at 541-815-2088.

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