

O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Re: "SDC waivers approved for housing," *The Nugget*, March 16, pg. 3).

That is affordable housing? So you get to buy a house that sits on land you don't own and have to stay poor for 50 years or lose your home? Who is this helping? Thanks, but no thanks.

Bobby Christensen

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

The liberal, socialistic democrats infesting the current Oregon legislature have once again slapped the voters of Oregon in the face. They have declared the recently passed minimum-wage increase as an "emergency," thereby making it impossible for the legally registered voters in Oregon to have any say in the matter.

Is the entire economy of Oregon in such bad shape that the state needs an "emergency" increase to the minimum wage? If the state economy was in really bad shape and on the verge of collapse, why not make the increase,

a real increase to \$50 per hour for the entire state and not just for certain districts or areas, or dare I say favored political zones.

This half-baked and totally ill-conceived idea of three zones will only serve to draw workers from the lower-paid zones to the higher-paid zones, thus creating a worker shortages in the lower-paid zones.

If, as the legislature says increasing the minimum wage to \$15 is an "emergency" why not raise it to \$50 per hour and do it right NOW for the entire state.

The truth of the matter is that this proposal is a hoax and a scam intended to make some political figures look good for the coming elections.

The "emergency" declaration is simply a ploy to remove voter control from the process. This "emergency" tactic is shameful and worthy of some third-world dictator, not our citizen legislators.

Any alleged "think tank" could find a

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Financial assistance: Bridging the gap

By Liam Hughes

Guest Columnist

At Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) we have long had the philosophy that nobody should be denied access to community programs because of an inability to pay.

In recent years we have awarded up to \$39,000 per year in financial assistance though our scholarship program to allow children from low-income families to participate in programs including preschool, high school sports, youth sports and after-school programs.

The great challenge is always finding the money to do this. Many people assume we simply waive fees for individuals who qualify, but that is not really possible. We price all of our programs at or below what it costs to actually run the program. Therefore if we were to waive fees, that program would run at a loss, which would involuntarily pull money from other district activities, and whole programs might not run.

In practice, we actually have an account that holds all the money earmarked for scholarships. Then as families come in and are awarded financial assistance, money is transferred from that account to the program the child just enrolled for. Where does the money in this account come from? Because SPRD has possibly the lowest tax rate of any full-service parks and recreation district in the state, there are no tax dollars available for the scholarship program. The money all comes from a combination of private donations and grants.

And this is where the beauty of Sisters really shines.

Many people think the beauty of Sisters lies in the scenery beyond its borders, but I think it lies within the people who inhabit it. Last year we received a total of over \$19,000 in donations from the community to

our scholarship program. I think it's wonderful to live in a community where the people are willing to come up with \$19,000 so our children can all participate. In addition to this, grants and community partnerships contribute another \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually to the scholarship fund.

As I alluded to earlier, many of the fees parents pay for their child to participate do not cover the full cost of running a program. Currently, we are heading into lacrosse season, and this program is a great example. The K-12 lacrosse program is budgeted to cost \$53,765 to operate. Of this, \$24,000 is budgeted to come from participation fees paid by families of the 128 players. The deficit is left to be made up through fundraising events such as the Sisters Annual Lacrosse Invitational Tournament, Celebrate Sisters Day, and through sponsorships and donations. In addition, there are hundreds of unpaid hours donated by coaches and supporters to make a season come together.

This type of funding challenge isn't limited to youth sports. Our after-school programs and our programs for senior citizens both rely heavily on grants and donations to be viable.

Sisters is a small community, and our donors and volunteers are people that walk these same streets, shop at the same stores, and eat at the same restaurants. So when you are walking into the post office or the bank tomorrow, maybe think about stopping for an extra few seconds to hold that door open for someone. Because they may have just paid your kid's pay-to-play fees, sponsored the uniforms your child plays in, or donated to make sure the program you love stays afloat.

Liam Hughes is the executive director of Sisters Park & Recreation District.

Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Partly sunny 50/33	Chance showers 48/30	Chance rain/snow 45/25	Mostly sunny 52/32	Mostly cloudy 49/27	Partly sunny 44/na

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