

**PALLIATIVE:** End of life issues to be discussed

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specifically for people who are at the end-stages of life, palliative care is appropriate at any stage of progressive illness and is often provided with curative treatments.

Barss is a family nurse-practitioner and has been working at Partners in Care (PIC) with hospice and home health patients since 2003. She works in the community, meeting with patients and families in the comfort and convenience of their home, wherever that may be — assisted-living facilities, foster homes, private residences, or skilled nursing facilities — traveling from Christmas Valley to Black Butte Ranch to Madras.

Barss collaborates closely with Dr. Jennifer Blechman and the PIC palliative-care team to provide an extra layer of support to those facing the challenges that come toward the end of life.

“While our medical system is generally very good at testing, diagnosing, and planning for the care of seriously ill people,” Barss said, “often the patient needs a space where they can sort out their options for continued treatment, or stop to consider what is important and what makes life worthwhile.”

Palliative care provides the opportunity for that space, at a time when a patient’s perspective may be changing. When they are faced with multiple options and opinions, a palliative-care consult can help clarify goals of the patient and family as well as expertly address symptoms such as nausea, fatigue, pain, or anxiety.

“We help families talk with each other so that ultimately the patient’s goals are understood and honored,” Barss explained.



PHOTO PROVIDED

**Stephanie Barss.**

Whatever the patient’s goals, whether to seek curative treatment to the very end, or be well enough to enjoy their family, have their pain better managed, or not spend their last days in a hospital, the palliative care team will advocate for that choice.

“Palliative care does not mean ‘giving up’ but rather letting go of some things that are no longer working well, in favor of a focused approach to managing symptoms in a way that improves quality of life and provides comfort,” Barss remarked.

A native of Port Huron, Michigan, Barss received her Bachelor of Science from Lewis and Clark College, her Master of Science from Western Washington University, her nursing degree (RN) from Central Oregon Community College, and her FNP (nurse practitioner) from Gonzaga University.

She and her husband, Mark Bernahl, are the parents of two boys, 9-year-old Quincy, and Nash, who is 8 years old. They enjoy spending family time together, traveling and adventuring outside — running, biking, hiking, skiing, and climbing.

The free program runs from 1:30 to 3 p.m. in the Community Room at the Sisters Library. It is sponsored by Friends of the Sisters Library. Seating is limited.

# Students develop dramatic skills

By Erin Borla  
Correspondent

The third- and fourth-graders at Sisters Elementary School had an opportunity to work on their drama skills through the Studio to School program over the past few weeks. Miss Lovely, an artist-in-residence, worked with each class for a period of 4-4.5 hours throughout the last four weeks.

“It was a great opportunity for the students to build comradery and teamwork,” said Miss Lovely. Lovley has been in Central Oregon since 1999. After studying theater at the University of California at Santa Cruz, she began teaching. She has been teaching the dramatic arts to young people throughout her life and now primarily at West Side Magnet School in Bend.

Students in Sisters have been working on their acting skills and learning basic skills of acting on a stage.

“Through each workshop the students get to learn about themselves,” said fourth-grade teacher Clay Warburton. “It gives them the confidence to start taking some positive risks.”

While the students learned acting skills there were additional goals of the program. Goals included helping students focus their energy, improve their writing and communication skills, expand their imagination, help problem-solve, manage



PHOTO BY CLAY WARBURTON

**Sisters students practiced some dramatic skills.**

their public-speaking skills, and encourage cooperation.

Teachers tied the drama lesson into their math and social studies programs.

“I would ask what country they were studying,” said Miss Lovely, “and have them act it out. It really made them use their critical-thinking skills. How do you create a map of North America onstage? How can you show places like Alaska to the audience without it being blocked by the students playing Canada and other states?”

“She’s (Miss Lovely) really nice and sorta funny too,” said fourth-grader Phillip Komar. “She makes it really clear what she wants for us to do. I love the big group activities and when I get to interact with other people in my class.”

The final event allowed for students to perform a mini-play for the kindergarten students using the skills they learned in their classes.

“My favorite part was creating a family portrait on the stage,” said Cooper Alport, one of Warburton’s students. “We made a lazy family, a sport family — I got to be the mom.”

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