

GARDEN QUILTS:
Event supports
Sisters Garden Club

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as well as quilts displayed on the surrounding fence.

The tour is the Garden Club's primary fundraising event each year, with 450 tickets sold last year. They have donated thousands of dollars over the years to local programs that promote garden and nature activities and improve the natural habitat. Each year their Christmas brunch includes collecting and donating new unwrapped toys for the Sisters-Camp Sherman RFPD gift drive for Sisters children.

The Garden Club had its beginning in 1988, when 12 local citizens joined with Barbara Warren and Michael Woosley to formally establish the organization. Sisters resident Claudia Grooney was one of the founding members and is still active in the club 28 years later, having been granted lifetime member status.

In the early years most of their activities centered around physical and monetary support of civic plantings and community gardens including the library, Village Green gazebo, and the "point" and "cabin" gardens on the east end of Cascade Avenue (the cabin is no longer standing). In 1992 the members planted 800 daffodil bulbs at the middle school.

In 1998, Jean Wells, founder of the Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show, approached the Garden Club with the idea of having garden tours available to the participants of the Quilter's Affair classes. The first annual Quilt Show Garden Tour was held on the Friday before the Quilt Show. Wells was made a lifetime member of the Garden Club in appreciation of her help and encouragement with

the tour.

That first tour raised \$4,000, half of which was donated to the Sisters High School science department for the purchase of field guides and resource texts to be used in their wetlands restoration project. The other \$2,000 was allocated for the four community gardens maintained by the club.

Homes were added to the tour starting in 2000. From that year forward, generous donations of the proceeds have been made toward student greenhouses and gardening programs at the schools, as well as toward Barclay Memorial Park, the Deschutes Land Trust, Sisters Rotary for planting materials, the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council for work with Sisters students, the Sisters Community Garden, and the Seed-to-Table program.

In recent years, Marsha Lewis, with help from Jackie Wright and other volunteers, has organized and facilitated the annual Quilts in the Garden event, including securing the gardens to be featured on the tour. Imagine convincing a homeowner to allow 450 people to walk through their yard in one day.

Sandy Doman is the member who, over the last decade, has organized the quilt displays in the gardens. She collects the quilts and, two days before the tour, sees that the lines are installed in each garden from which to hang the quilts. Each quilt is carefully matched to a particular garden by size and colors.

Each August the club has a private tour of select members' gardens plus lunch, to which they have several times invited a COCC garden class. In 2006-2008 members of the club marched in the Sisters Rodeo Parade performing as a "drill team" with their rakes-and-shovels routine, winning a ribbon for their efforts.

The club meets the second Saturday of most months

at 9:30 a.m. at City Hall for educational presentations, demonstrations, and panels. From the original 14 members, the club grew to almost 100 members in 2013, when the club celebrated its 25th anniversary. Currently there are over 75 members, one-third of whom are men.

Larry Nelson is serving as president of the club for a fourth year. Kathy Plank served for three years prior to that. In a professionally produced video of the 2011 Quilts in the Garden, Kathy explains why she thinks the tour is such a hit year after year.

"I think something magical happens when you combine quilts and gardens and outdoor landscaping. What people notice most is the sun shining through those quilts and glittering on the plants and flowers, and it's just breathtaking," she said.

Future plans for the club include a three-phase redevelopment over two growing seasons of the gardens at the east entrance to Hood Avenue



PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Quilts and gardens go together in Sisters.

in conjunction with the development of the Hood Avenue Arts District. Now that the City has installed power, water, and drip irrigation in those gardens, many more things are possible, including a proposed kinetic sculpture of some kind.

In its 28-year history, the Sisters Garden Club has

made invaluable contributions to the city through their labors, their knowledge, and their generous financial support – all of which have helped beautify our town while enhancing our natural surroundings and educating our children about the importance of the natural world.

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