

Commentary...

Understanding Sisters Park & Recreation District

By **Liam Hughes**,
Executive Director of SPRD

What exactly is SPRD? This is one of the most common questions I get asked. Well the first thing I tell them is that SPRD, stands for the Sisters Park & Recreation District, and that we are an Oregon Special District.

Which usually leads to the follow up question: Are you part of the City? Or are you part of the school district? SPRD is its own separate public entity, with a board of directors who are elected by the people to govern the district, just like a school board or city council. This can be somewhat confusing because in Oregon this is not always the case. Parks and Rec services can be frequently delivered as a department of the City, a department of the county, or a special district.

So why have a parks and recreation district in a town like Sisters where the City already provides park services? Well, in Sisters' case it was initially about developing programs, specifically after-school programs for at-risk youth.

However, there are many other reasons why the citizens of a community may vote to form a parks and recreation district.

One of the first and foremost reasons is service region. In small communities like Sisters, where a large percentage of the population lives out of town, you can create a special district that extends far beyond city limits and gives those people

the benefit of parks and recreation services, and allows them to vote on matters of the district, and serve on the district's board of directors.

Another major reason is to permanently specify funding to a given area. In some cities services such as, police, fire, parks and rec, streets, water, and sewer all fall under the city's one tax rate. The money is then internally allocated to each department. Each of these departments can end up competing with each other for funding.

In areas where these services are broken into special districts, the taxpayers vote on a rate of tax funding that service district gets. Therefore you don't get your parks and recreation budget cut in order to fund new police cars.

Another question I am frequently asked is if we are a nonprofit? The simple answer is no, we are not a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, but in a lot of ways we function like one. As an Oregon special district we do receive tax funding; however we are somewhat of an anomaly in that tax funds only cover about 20 percent of the operating costs of the Sisters Park & Recreation District. The rest comes from program

fees, fundraisers, grants and donations.

So, to many casual observers we may operate like a nonprofit organization, but the big difference is that we are required to function under the laws of a government organization — the most important one of those being that our board of directors is elected by the taxpayers to represent the will of the people.

In 2016, SPRD commissioned a research company from Portland to help us answer some questions about what the people of Sisters wanted from parks and recreation services. We found that many people know of us, but don't really know what we do. Lots of people are familiar with our name, but are largely unfamiliar with the full variety of services offered, and where the lines were drawn between services offered by the City, Sisters Parks & Recreation District, Sisters School District.

Two of the main areas of confusion are with parks and

youth programs.

The City operates the following parks: Village Green, Fir Street, Cliff Clemons, Barclay, Creekside Park and Creekside Campground.

Sisters Park & Recreation District operates the Hyzer Pines Disc Golf Course, the Sisters Skatepark, one youth baseball field, and one youth softball field. Sisters Park & Recreation District is also in the process of building a bike skills park. The Sisters School District owns and maintains the other sports fields in town.

As far as youth programs go, the school district obviously operates a large number of great classes and programs and so does SPRD. Some programs are even a joint venture between our two agencies. Programs such as middle school sports and high school lacrosse are both run by SPRD, but play in leagues where they represent the school. Therefore these activities function under the policies of both SPRD and the school district, and utilize shared resources.

Sisters Park & Recreation District manages the majority of sporting activities for kids below ninth grade, with the high school handling ninth through 12th grade and Sisters Little League managing the youth baseball and softball.

A couple of other big programs that SPRD operates that many people don't know about are the community preschool that runs at Sisters Elementary School and the after-school program which used to be at Sisters Elementary and is now back at the Coffield Community Center.

We run more than 100 programs annually, and serve thousands of people with park and recreation services. If you have any questions about anything related to the district, please feel free to give me a call, drop me an email, or stop by and chat.

Liam Hughes is the executive director of SPRD. He can be reached at 541-549-2091 or at Liam@sistersrecreation.com.



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Fences (PG)
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Fri 4:15, 7:15
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Movie times and titles are subject to change. Visit website or call for latest information.

WWW.SISTERSMOVIEHOUSE.COM
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SISTERS ENTERTAINMENT • EVENTS

Wed. ~ Jan. 4
Sisters Saloon Texas Hold 'Em Tournament! 7 p.m. Every Wednesday! For more information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Saturday ~ Jan. 7
Cork Cellars Live Music with Megan Rose 7 to 9 p.m. Enjoy this Americana Project alumna, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Sisters Saloon Live Music with Burnin' Moonlight 8 to 11 p.m. Blues and Bluegrass, no cover! For additional information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Wed. ~ Jan. 11
Sisters Saloon Texas Hold 'Em Tournament! 7 p.m. Every Wednesday! For more information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Saturday ~ Jan. 14
Sisters Saloon Live Music with the Bobby Lindstrom Band 8 p.m. Blues and Rock, no cover! For more information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Sisters Schools Sisters Shootout Basketball Tournament 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. For Oregon boys & girls grades 5-8. Presented by SPRD. 541-549-2091 or go to sistersshootout.com.

Subject to change. Submit by 5 p.m. Fridays to teresa@nuggetnews.com

Sunday ~ Jan. 15
Sisters Schools Sisters Shootout Basketball Tournament 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. For Oregon boys & girls grades 5-8. Presented by SPRD. 541-549-2091 or go to sistersshootout.com.

Wed. ~ Jan. 18
Sisters Saloon Texas Hold 'Em Tournament! 7 p.m. Every Wednesday! For more information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Saturday ~ Jan. 21
Sisters Saloon Live Music with Honey Don't 8 to 11 p.m. Americana, no cover! For info call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.

Monday ~ Jan. 23
Sisters High School BINGO & Community Dinner 5 to 6:30 p.m. for dinner, just \$2 per plate! 6:30 p.m. for BINGO, \$15 for 11 games with great prizes! For info call Tim Roth, 541-549-4050.

Wed. ~ Jan. 25
Sisters High School Sisters Folk Festival Winter Concert: Martin Sexton 7 p.m. Soulful singing and brilliant guitar playing! For more information or tickets call 541-549-4979 or go to sistersfolkfestival.org.

Sisters Saloon Texas Hold 'Em Tournament! 7 p.m. Every Wednesday! For more information call 541-549-7427 or go to sistersaloon.net.