

Commentary... Of a certain age...

By Sue Stafford
Columnist

My first real venture into volunteering, other than projects with my grade school or my Camp Fire Girls group, was as a “candy-striper” at Good Samaritan Hospital in Portland when I was 13 years old.

I loved taking the library cart around to patients’ rooms to offer books and magazines for them to borrow. My curiosity about the medical world and meeting all kinds of people were partially what motivated me.

The biggest source of motivation, however, was the wonderful warm feeling I got every time I put on my crisp green and white striped pinafore and walked down the long sterile halls of the hospital, with their shiny wax finish. The up-close-and-personal interaction with the patients, and knowing I was bringing just a little youthful sunshine into their day, more with my conversation than any literature, kept me eagerly coming back every week.

Those days at Good Sam were the beginning of a lifetime of volunteering. As a busy young mother, I was the Cub Scout den mother, elementary school room mother, and Sunday school teacher. In later years, I spent three gratifying years at the Washington State Prison in Monroe facilitating personal-growth groups for inmates, who confirmed for me that when you scratch the surface, we are all more similar than we are different.

I have canvassed my neighborhoods for the March of Dimes and the American Cancer Society. I have organized fundraising auctions and served as a children’s advocate in the court system. When my children were young, we used to sponsor an inner-city family at Christmastime, with the children accompanying

me as we made the delivery. I’ve always known I couldn’t volunteer at an animal shelter. I know my limits — I would want to bring them all home with me.

I like to believe that by the time most of us have reached “a certain age,” we have contributed to the welfare of our communities, our neighbors, our environment, and causes close to home and around the world.

For me, it’s never been about financial support as much as donations of time and talent. The word volunteer comes from the Latin — voluntarius — for “willing.” For some, it’s easy to write a check while for others, the gift of money can be an actual hardship.

Being willing to give my time and talent to an organization, a cause, or an individual produces a much deeper personal connection to whatever it is I am supporting with my efforts. It is the personal gift of myself that still produces that sense of purpose and a warm heart that began in my candy-striper days in Portland.

As I interviewed the people in Sisters for *The Nugget* series on mentoring, I heard from all of them a consistent refrain stated in a number of ways — “I think I get more out of mentoring than I give.” It is that often-unintentional reciprocity between a volunteer and the recipient of their service that makes volunteering so satisfying.

The most recent example in our community of a huge volunteer effort with great rewards for everyone involved, is the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter. Individuals, organizations, and businesses have opened their hearts, their hands, and their wallets to create this badly needed resource for those among us lacking secure housing this winter.

Many of us “of a certain age” are retired from gainful employment, and we have the time to give back in a

myriad of ways. The Sisters (and Central Oregon) community is full of opportunities to share our talents, skills, experience — and money.

Get involved in city government by volunteering to serve on a committee or board. Support the schools and children through ASPIRE, the Science Club, SMART, or mentoring for one of the nonprofits. Provide support for the arts and literacy through the Sisters Folk Festival, volunteer at the Sisters library, or try your hand (and voice) at community theater or choir.

Offer your assistance with one of the “big three” events — Rodeo, Quilt Show, and Folk Festival. Join the Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, VFW or American Legion. The Sisters Garden Club and the Sisters Community Garden are great ways to meet new people and learn that gardening IS possible in Sisters.

Work for the environment with the Deschutes Land Trust. For you bike enthusiasts, join the Sisters Trails Alliance or help with the many biking events held in Sisters. Faith communities are always looking for volunteers to further their community outreach. Help promote civility in our community by volunteering with Citizens4Community. The opportunities are endless.

Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose. Be sure that the mission of the organization or effort matters to you or you won’t last long. Do your skills match their needs? If you need flexibility in your schedule, is that a possibility? The right match is what you are looking for. Make that match, and you can be of service for which you will be rewarded.

Volunteering doesn’t come with monetary rewards but, for me, the rewards of the heart are much more important and satisfying.



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Artist Laura Waltosz (center) shows a copy of the 2017 yearbook cover. She received a \$150 award presented by Outlaws Photography.

SHS student receives yearbook scholarship

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Sisters High School student Laura Waltosz received a \$150 scholarship from Outlaws Photography for designing and painting this year’s SHS yearbook cover.

The yearbook staff approached Waltosz, a senior art student, early in the year to design a cover for the yearbook that captures SHS and the beauty that surrounds us.

Waltosz has been in ceramics classes and advanced art classes since her freshman year. Laura plans to attend community

college and pursue ceramics as a career.

“I was thinking it would be a great way to make my mark on the school by doing this cover. I wanted to give back to the school because of the amount of support I’ve gotten from it, particularly the art department,” Waltosz said.

The cover is a watercolor painting of the Three Sisters at sunset. It will be the header of this year’s book. Yearbooks are now on sale for \$45. To order or for more information call Sisters High School at 541-549-4045 or order in person at the office.

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