

AWARDS: Dinner celebrates active Sisters citizens

Continued from page 1

Hermans was tearful herself.

“We live in such a great community,” she said. “So many great people. I’m just really humbled. I don’t know what to say.”

Sisters Park & Recreation District was presented with the Chamber’s Pioneering Award for its work serving the community — from youth to seniors — with a variety of programming. Shannon Rackowski, who works at SPRD, was honored individually as Volunteer of the Year.

Jeanette Pilak, executive director of the Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show, presented the award.

“This person gives 600 percent all the time. They give joy; they give passion...”

Rackowski, visibly stunned by the honor, told the assemblage that she often has friends from the Coast ask her when she’s returning home. But she feels at home here.

“I couldn’t have found a better second home than

Sisters,” she said.

Non-Profit of the Year went to the Three Sisters Lions Club for its charitable outreach work in the Sisters community, supported by a holiday bazaar featuring locally made handcrafts and a yard sale that people can spend days perusing.

“**When we work together, incredible things can happen.**”
— Greg Willitts

Paulina Springs Books earned the customer-service award for creating a welcoming space where people can browse books and games and take in cultural events featuring authors from across the region. Owner Brad Smith saluted long-time store manager Sue Tank as “The face of Paulina Springs.”

Citizen of the Year honors went to City of Sisters Public Works Director Paul Bertagna. Chamber Executive Director Judy Trego said she got exhausted just reading out a list of the tasks Bertagna undertakes to make



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Public Works Director Paul Bertagna (center) shared his Citizen of the Year honor with his crew. Pictured here are Josh Stotts and Gus Johnson.

Sisters look good and function smoothly.

Bertagna was quick to spread the credit.

“This is pretty cool,” he said as he was handed his award. “But I’ve got to give it up for our public works crew. They bust their ass and they do a great job.”

Greg Willitts accepted the Business of the Year award for FivePine Lodge & Conference Center, though he, too, was

quick to share credit with his parents, Bill and Zoe Willitts.

“This award is really my parents’,” he said.

The vision for the FivePine campus, which started with Sisters Athletic Club, then grew to include Shibui Spa, Sisters Movie House and Three Creeks Brewing Co., was Bill’s. He was unable to attend due to illness.

Greg Willitts also cited the symbiotic relationship

between his family’s business — which is marking its 10th anniversary — and the Sisters community at large.

“What we sell is the town of Sisters, and it’s an incredible town to sell,” he said.

He noted that the relationship is a model for what can be done when people share goals and efforts.

“When we work together, incredible things can happen,” he said.

Careful out there...

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Everyone walked away OK from this wreck on Highway 126. It’s a reminder that road conditions can still be dicey in Sisters Country.

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~Tracy Foteff, Barefoot in Sisters

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