



PHOTO PROVIDED

A pair of week-old river otter pups get a checkup at the Oregon Zoo. Photo by Michael Durham, courtesy of the Oregon Zoo.

## Oregon Zoo welcomes two new otter pups

Tilly, a North American river otter, is raising two tiny pups, born February 26 at the Oregon Zoo. The new arrivals — one male and one female — weighed around 4 ounces each at birth and have already doubled that thanks to their mother's naturally high-fat milk.

"Young river otters are extremely dependent on their moms, and Tilly has been very nurturing," said Julie Christie, senior keeper for the zoo's North America area. "She did a great job raising her first two pups, Mo and Ziggy, both born in 2013. And she was a terrific adoptive mom to Little Pudding, the orphan pup who was rescued from a roadside in 2015. We expect she'll do well with her new babies as well."

Tilly and her pups are currently in a private maternity den, and it will likely be another month or two before

visitors can see them in their Cascade Stream and Pond habitat. Young river otters usually open their eyes after three to six weeks, and begin walking at about five weeks.

Surprisingly, swimming does not come naturally to river otters — pups must be taught to swim by their moms. Tilly's first pup, Mo, made a big splash with otter fans a few years ago when a video of his rough-and-tumble swim lessons went viral, logging more than 890,000 views on the zoo's YouTube channel.

Keepers have yet to decide on names for the two new pups, though it is likely they will be named after local rivers or waterways. Mo was named for the Molalla River, Ziggy for the ZigZag. Little Pudding bears the name of a Pudding River tributary in Marion County.

### Commentary...

## Helping our neighbors

By Katy Yoder  
Columnist

Gary and I volunteered as monitors at the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter last month. I was a bit reticent about doing it, but the orientation that was given before our shift alleviated my concerns and I became excited to help. Having spent five years working in the financial district of San Francisco, I had shared the sidewalks with those less fortunate than me.

I kept my distance.

During my time in the city, I gave some money and others food but never stopped long enough to carry on a conversation. I was afraid of them. Especially those who were obviously suffering from mental illness or severe addiction. I didn't know how to connect, and so I didn't. The people I saw in the city were strangers, and except for the several seconds that we shared the same space, I had no other way to know their story.

Volunteering at the warming shelter was a completely different experience. These people were my neighbors. They share Sisters with me. They work in town, shop at Ray's or Melvin's and go to the

library, just like me. Their children go to the same school my child went to. The only difference is when they go home at night they're going to a car, a tent or a sleeping bag laid out under a tree.

I talked to these people and didn't know they were homeless. They are not strangers. They are my neighbors. I'm so grateful for the chance to get to know them and briefly share their struggles and better understand their circumstances. We shared a table and ate dinner together, we talked about the weather and a myriad of other topics. I watched their children play and eat a warm, healthy meal. I began to know them.

Their circumstances are varied, but one common denominator remains: they need a place to call home. They long for a place they can afford in Sisters where they work and their children go to school. But low-income houses or apartments are hard to find. So they survive in the woods, walking into town each day to join the ranks of the working poor.

The warming shelter has been life-saving. We've all had our troubles this winter. Some of our roofs have leaked or caved in — but we

had a roof over our heads. For many of our homeless neighbors, the snow was too deep for them to get back to their camps. For many their camps were crushed under the weight of the snow. It sure put my complaints into perspective!

One thing I learned through my cancer experience is to deal with this moment and do what I can to make it better. Keeping that in mind, our community can help by volunteering our time as a monitor or by providing food for dinner and breakfast. There are so many aspects of our town to be proud of. Up until this month, that has proven true for the warming shelter, too. But as folks begin to feel the thawing of spring, they forget that there are still families living outside who need our help.

I invite you to join the dedicated people who have been managing this much-needed resource in Sisters. You can go to [signup.com](http://signup.com) and search for the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter. The location is now at the Episcopal church at 68825 Brooks Camp Rd. You can call 541-639-7321 for more information about what's needed for the final month of service to our neighbors.

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