

FivePine celebrates 10th anniversary

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

The inspiration came from Rancho la Puerta, a resort spa in Tecate, Mexico.

Bill and Zoe Willitts thought they could create something special on a 15-acre property at the east end of Sisters that would emulate the qualities of that legendary retreat.

“You disconnect from the world and you reconnect with yourself or your partner,” Zoe reflected. “The concept was a quiet place to find yourself — that was it.”

That concept became a reality called FivePine — a campus centered around Shibui Spa and FivePine Lodge — which has just marked its 10th anniversary.

The dream evolved slowly. Zoe started her massage business in a garage on the property, before Shibui Spa was built.

“I feel like it’s the soul of the property,” Zoe said of Shibui, where locals and visitors alike avail themselves of a variety of massage and spa treatments and special programs.

The campus also features Sisters Athletic Club, Sisters Movie House, Three Creeks Brewing Co. and a suite of professional offices.

“The campus works so well, and all the businesses (are complementary),” Zoe said.

Lodging on the campus is in 36 cabins created with serenity and reconnection in mind. And there is the lodge itself. The lodging concept originated in a post-college hiking excursion by Bill and his son Greg in the Swiss Alps. They appreciated the communal space and the human connection at the



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Bill and Zoe Willitts founded FivePine a decade ago. Their son Greg Willitts operates the 15-acre campus.

center of that European lodging tradition. People talk to each other, share experiences and tips on where to hike or ride.

“The most valuable part of the experience is the human experience,” said Bill. “You’re part of the family for the stay.”

Greg came on board when Bill was going through a health crisis. There wasn’t a plan of succession.

“It was blind to that point,” he said. “There was no intention.”

But Greg has become deeply embedded in the day-to-day operation of the lodge and the construction of new cabins. He manages 40 employees and seeks to inculcate a cardinal rule: the guest experience comes first, last and always.

And, he says, that principle “is actually pretty easy to follow, too.”

The operation itself hasn’t always been easy. FivePine has weathered the Great Recession and battled through the toughest winter in recent memory. And through it, the

family has worked together.

“It keeps getting better, I would say,” Zoe told *The Nugget*. “The relationships just keep getting better and we’re resilient.”

The tough times are offset by the rewards of realizing a dream.

“In the end, whatever happens, you’ve shared some rewards together,” Bill said.

Bill and Zoe have been married for 51 years, and, as Zoe says, they’re “still running, hiking and dreaming.”

Zoe is still doing massage. “I hope to always be doing that,” she said. “Because I love it.”

And Bill is still the visionary, the man with an idea of what could be.

And though Greg would like to see to it that his parent can “enjoy living here as opposed to working here,” it seems likely that any slowdown will be, at most, incremental.

“There’s no pedestal, no finish line, no quite place,” Bill said.

For information visit www.fivepinelodge.com.

Lawmaker may try derailing new tax

By Kristena Hansen
Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Republican Rep. Julie Parrish says she’s launching a state-wide effort to derail a critical \$670 million healthcare tax approved last month to fund Medicaid.

Parrish confirmed her plans this week to challenge House Bill 2391, a tax package on health insurers and providers that was approved by the Oregon Legislature a week ago to sustain health coverage for more than 350,000 local Medicaid expansion recipients.

The bill is supposed

to kick-in within the next three months. But as soon as Democratic Gov. Kate Brown signs it Parrish — one of the bill’s most vocal critics due to its likely cost-shifts to patients during a still-unfolding controversy over Medicaid eligibility at the Oregon Health Authority — says she’ll file initial paperwork to challenge the bill.

If she successfully gathers more than 58,000 signatures within that 90-day window, the fate of some Medicaid recipients’ healthcare could be tossed back into limbo until voters have the final say next year.



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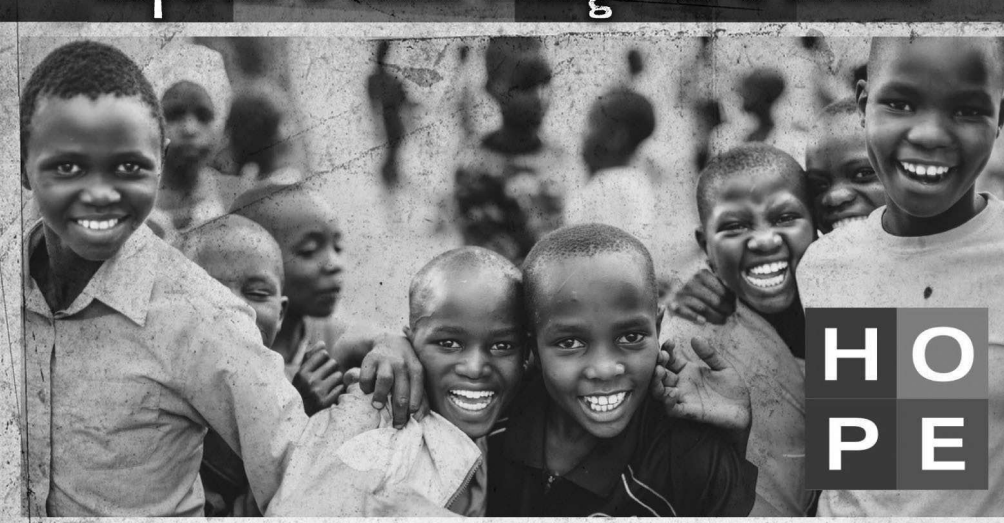
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