

GUTTORMSEN: Local has logged hundreds of volunteer hours

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age when he recalls his father taking him backpacking. For many summers, he would spend his time in the Oregon National Forests canoeing, hiking, backpacking, and camping. His taste for adventure and respect for nature remained steady throughout his adult years as he worked as a school teacher in Springfield, Oregon.

During the summers, he would seek out his old experiences within nature and continue his traditions of enjoying its offerings. What developed was a love for the land and dedication of being a good steward.

During his final 10 years teaching high school, Guttormsen took his love for the outdoors to the next step. He spent those summers as a resident volunteer guard at Taylor Burn, Waldo Lake.

"I saw it as a good idea to volunteer and give back," Gary said, as he looked back on his early volunteer years. "It's an opportunity to stay physically active, to meet people, and teach people the importance of the outdoors and Leave-No-Trace principles."

After retiring from teaching in 2000, Guttormsen spent many summers visiting the Central Oregon region. And in the early 2000s he stayed true to his love for trails by helping map the original Pacific Crest Skyline Trail route with Willamette archeologist Carol Winkler.

“ [Gary is] the most active, responsible, and devoted volunteer within STA. — Patrick Eckford

It wasn't until early August of 2009, when he and his wife were camping locally, that they decided to make the move to Central Oregon. By September, they were new residents of Sisters' Crossroads neighborhood, and Gary immediately took to looking for opportunities to serve.

A Sisters Trails Alliance trail marker caught his eye shortly after settling in. He immediately pursued to learn more about them, and began what would become a dedicated and passionate service with the Forest Service.

In a letter of recommendation from colleague and

fellow volunteer Patrick Eckford, Gary is described as "... the most active, responsible, and devoted volunteer within STA." Designated as the "go-to" guy for all things trail and volunteer related, he wears many hats.

As a leader, he currently holds the position of chairperson for the Trails Committee, and has served as the chairman of the board, co-chair, and deputy chair in recent years. From large tasks — such as liaising between multiple agencies and managing project-related contracts — to the small, like digging a post-hole and updating spreadsheets, Guttormsen is credited with doing it all.

He is crosscut-saw certified and a Forest Service chainsaw operator, and the on-call volunteer who removes felled trees obstructing the trails. Gary is also an educator and a teacher of good stewardship. In the summer, he volunteers as an instructor at the Allingham Trails Skills College, where he teaches students the art of trails and works as a co-instructor for the chain saw certification courses.

Guttormsen also led the collaboration between the STA, the Forest Service, and the National Forest Service Foundation for the Whychus Creek Trail and Whychus

Overlook projects, managing grants and funds over \$150,000 — one of the largest projects to date.

With a legacy of hundreds of hours volunteering his time on the trails and within the community, Guttormsen has seen and done it all. But what remains closest and true to him is the spirit of a good volunteer.

"Volunteers are essential to have. Without them, the trail system wouldn't work," he said. "And without volunteers, the trails would be in bad shape."

The Paulsmeyer Award is only given to one recipient a year, and Gary was the first awardee in its history. The list of criteria to be considered for nomination is extensive, but Guttormsen exceeded the minimum requirements. Lead volunteers in the Deschutes National Forest Interpretive Program and the Trail's Program nominated candidates, with Discover Your Forest making the final selection.

Receiving the prestigious award caught Guttormsen by surprise, though.

"I had no idea at the event," he said. "It was really an honor to receive the award. It means a lot to me."

In the closing sentence of his letter, Eckford wrote, "He


is a remarkable volunteer, leader, mentor, and teacher... one who continues to contribute immeasurably to our community, the Deschutes National Forest and Sisters Trails Alliance."

As a lead volunteer and educator for local forests, Guttormsen doesn't plan on slowing down anytime soon. He has already begun the work to plot the new Black Crater Trail in replacement of the old — wiped out by the Milli Fire this summer. He continues his dedication as the personal trail adopter of the Chush Falls and Black Crater trails, with prospects of extending the Chush Falls trail to the upper falls in the future.

“ It was really an honor to receive the award. It means a lot to me. — Gary Guttormsen

Trail projects and opportunities to educate will continue in the future with Gary and the most dedicated volunteers at the helm — ensuring miles of maintained trails and recreation for the community to enjoy.

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