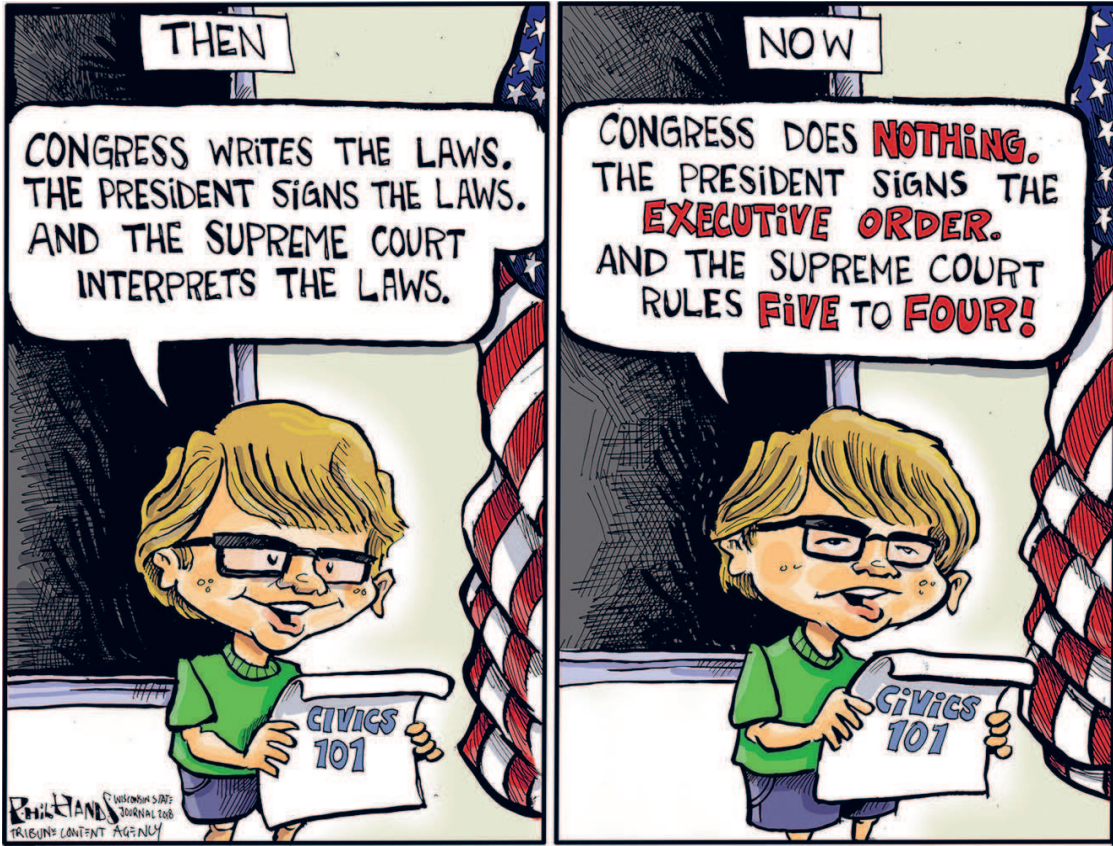


O P I N I O N



## Letters to the Editor...

*The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.*

To the Editor:

Sisters needs a dog park.

The July 11 column by Craig Eisenbeis about Whychus Creek Trail being defiled by dogs emphasizes the need for a community off-leash dog park. About one third of U.S. households have dogs, and here it's probably more, yet there is no place to let dogs play and exercise safely. The local grapevine informed me that Peterson Ridge and Whychus Creek Trails are de facto off-leash areas ("You won't get arrested."). Mr. Eisenbeis points out the downsides with that approach. In addition we have a problem here with dogs running free and attacking wildlife. (See *The Nugget*, September 27, 2016, "Sisters is not a dog park" by Jodi Schneider McNamee.)

Dog parks build social relationships among the widest range of people — cutting across age, ethnicity, economics, and politics.

Everyone is welcome and included. Over the years I've met veterans, new moms, people with disabilities, athletes, long-time residents, first-time visitors, teens, newlyweds with their first dog, people who have had dogs all their lives.

Users police themselves. Poop is scooped; if you don't notice your dog pooping, four or five people will make you aware. Redmond has an excellent off-leash park, well worth a visit for ideas — a public and private co-operative venture.

I've met with the Sisters Parks Advisory Board, SPRD, the Redmond Public Works manager, and the benefactor who funded the Redmond Park. All agree that the critical element here is land. The Master Plan sets aside land for a dog park at the East Portal, but it

See **LETTERS** on page 21

### Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 90/54	Sunny 90/50	Sunny 89/49	Sunny 89/50	Sunny 90/55	Sunny 93/57

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## A special place for community

By T. Lee Brown  
Guest Columnist

There's a special place in my heart for SPRD. Two years ago, my family set out from Portland in a tiny travel trailer, wandering beaches, deserts, and mountains. I'd fallen in love with Sisters during an artist residency at Caldera. Now we set up camp in the forest nearby, hoping this would become home.

Our family had grown close on the road; we needed a little space. My husband went to work. My health improving, I started writing again. As for our 5-year-old: we signed him up online for Adventure Camp at Sisters Park & Recreation District.

We were nervous, walking up to the SPRD building in our battered cowboy hats. Back in Portland, Gusti had loads of friends. Would the children of Sisters welcome him? And would the grownups welcome me? Technically, we were homeless. That might not go over well.

The woman at the front desk was kind. When I mentioned our living situation, she discreetly invited us to use the shower. She no longer works there, but her friendly and gracious attitude still permeates the reception area.

In the classroom, lovely teachers welcomed Gusti and the kids followed suit. Next I met a whip-smart woman named Shannon, who seemed to know every detail about SPRD's programming. I picked up a copy of *The Nugget* on my way out. Breathing the dry, toasty air, I sat in the shade of Hyzer Pines disc golf course for a good read.

This was it, I knew. This was home.

Things have changed since then. Our family showers in the house we bought in the pines. We've made friends, joined organizations, started school. My health improving, I write and work and teach.

SPRD has changed, too. The staff's community-minded generosity of spirit, I came to realize, did not trickle down from a kindly leadership team. When I and other parents reached out to the former director and former youth director with

ideas and offers of help, their responses ran the gamut from tepid to lethargic.

I started asking local folks about SPRD. Some barely knew it existed. Others expressed frustration that it didn't reach out more. Like me, a significant handful greatly appreciated SPRD — including numerous groups that help make Sisters special. SPRD acts as an "umbrella," letting small groups focus on their core mission. Interviewing farmers market managers for an article, I first heard the name Kris Harwell. As SPRD's finance manager, she helped these groups deal with finances and bureaucracy. They deeply appreciated her knowledge and support.

This year, SPRD's Board had the opportunity to infuse the organization's leadership with community spirit. When the director stepped down, Harwell gamely agreed to act as interim director. Suddenly the kids were offered arts, cooking, and Earth Keepers enrichment education. The SAGE Room bustled with seniors. A volunteer fair sprouted up. More than a daycare with some sports added on, more than a Parks and Rec that (weirdly) doesn't manage the city's parks, SPRD began to buzz like a community center.

I met with Kris and found her dedicated, inspiring, and open-minded. She connected people to each other and engaged them with SPRD. Clearly beloved of the front office staff, Kris had already paid her dues at SPRD.

Hiring her as permanent director, even on a trial basis, would show the Board's commitment to people, not just programs. Many folks were rooting for the local mom who'd shown potential as a community leader. Instead, the Board hired a peculiar-acting man from out of state, and a whole lot of drama ensued. He resigned last week.

I don't know Kris well. I don't know whether she'd still consider becoming captain of this rudderless ship. On behalf of those who cherish SPRD, who believe in its potential as a community hub for our growing populace, the Board should ask her.

*Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.*