

**BLUES:** Organizers hope to return next year with festival

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The festival supported Sisters Habitat for Humanity and the Heart of Oregon YouthBuild and helped demonstrate their positive impact upon our community. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the two nonprofit organizations. Both Habitat and YouthBuild had booths during the festival.

Heart of Oregon YouthBuild is a Central Oregon nonprofit that engages local opportunities for youth, ages 16-24. The youth are working toward completing their GED, high school diploma, or college credits while also learning work readiness skills through construction.

Laura Handy, executive director for the YouthBuild Program, was helping man their booth that was brimming with educational material for folks to pick up and learn about the Heart of Oregon Corps. Mentoring coordinator John Griffith and program director Kara Johnson were also on hand.

Johnson had been enjoying the festival and was listening to the lineup perform on Friday evening.

"I am really impressed with the quality of the acts that they were able to book for the first year of the festival," she said.

Board member and volunteer for Habitat for Humanity Jack McDonnell was stationed at the booth.

McDonnell leads international trips to Habitat builds all over the world.

"The most rewarding thing about volunteering in other countries is that we don't know the people we are

building the house for, and they don't know us, but they really appreciate the fact that we've come halfway around the world and helped build the house," McDonnell said.

"This works great for us being here at the festival because we are getting donations to help build the new home for the Islas family," he added.

Habitat had a unit of lumber at the festival and asked people to pay \$5 a stud to help build the home of Roberto and Nancy Islas. Folks could write a message of encouragement on the wood.

Habitat for Humanity also had the Wheel of Fortune wheel for anyone to spin for \$5 dollars. There was a prize for everyone who tried.

"Local businesses donated the gifts and gift certificates," McDonnell said. "And you can also win a \$75 gift certificate to a local restaurant in Sisters by taking a free chance and guess the number of nails in the jar."

Rob Corrigan, past physics teacher for Sisters High School, noted that this festival was an opportunity to introduce new faces to the community.

"I think this Sisters Rhythm and Brews Festival is putting Sisters on the map in one more way as a music venue," Corrigan said. "And it's bringing in people that are going to have that association with Sisters for years to come."

The park was packed by the first act at Village Green. Shemekia Copeland, dubbed "an American electric blues vocalist," sang with passion. She was capable of being sultry, assertive and roaring, delivering every song with honesty and passion.

Copeland won the "Rising Star - Blues Artist" in *Down Beat* magazine's critics poll announced in the December



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Los Lobos closed out the Sisters Rhythm and Brews Festival at Village Green Saturday night.

2009 issue. And in October 2015, her album "Outskirts of Love" peaked at number 6 in the Billboard Top Blues Albums chart.

By the time Castro Coleman, aka Mr. Sipp "The Mississippi Blues Child," grabbed the microphone and belted the blues in his soulful voice, folks were up dancing.

Mr. Sipp is a native of McComb, Mississippi, and in 2014 was the winner of the International Blues Challenge (Band), the Albert King Gibson award, BMA Best New Artist Album winner 2016, and The Spirit of Little Walter Award 2016.

Mr. Sipp is an extraordinary vocalist, songwriter,

musician, composer, producer and entertainer and tries to make every audience feel special.

And that included Sisters Arts Association founder, Helen Schmidling. While she was relaxing in her chair on the Village Green Park lawn, she looked up to see the crowd parting in front of her.

"I got up and walked forward to see what was happening," Schmidling said. "And before I knew it, Mr. Sipp was going through the crowd crooning and ended up right in my face singing to me!"

Over on the other side of town at Sisters Art Works, Nikki Hill, a crowd favorite and a powerful Southern soul

singer, a spunky rocker with a thrilling voice, belted out songs so that you couldn't help but move to her beat.

The powerhouse line-up also featured headliner Los Lobos, a rock band from East Los Angeles, California that mastered the "blues" Friday and Saturday night.

"I feel like the festival went really well. The fans were happy, the bands were happy, and we're thrilled," Jennifer Rambo told *The Nugget* on Saturday night near the close of the festival. "We want to do this again next year. We were a little nervous to begin with, but sometimes you've got to get out on that limb and take some risks."



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Nikki Hill thrilled the Sisters Art Works crowd.



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