

# Fire district launches senior program

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

In an effort to decrease the number of seniors in Sisters Country who are injured or die as a result of falls and fire, the Fire Corps senior safety committee, headed by prevention volunteers Heather Miller and Phil Drew, launched a new Senior Home Safety Program on September 11 at the Senior Lunch program.

“We hope we can make it safer for our seniors in their homes, mitigating the possibility of falls, rather than our needing to go out to pick them up and take them to the hospital,” said Drew.

The program is the result of Chief Roger Johnson’s initiative several years ago to increase the department’s outreach to the seniors of Sisters Country. A review of the response data indicated that for the past six years, traumatic injuries have been the leading call for service to the Sisters-Camp Sherman Rural Fire District for patients 60 and over. Falls at home are the leading cause of those traumatic injuries, over two times more than motor vehicle traffic accidents. Chest pain/discomfort accounts for less than half as many calls.

Falls are the leading cause of injury death among adults age 65 and older. As many as 30 percent of older adults who fall suffer significant injuries which may limit their ability to live independently.

After the age of 50, a person’s risk of dying in a fire increases. Between the ages of 65 and 85 the risk is three times higher and after 85 it is four times higher. The issue of fire in the home is a real threat for someone with mobility issues, cognitive decline, or drowsiness due to medication or alcohol. Working smoke alarms can make the difference in whether or not someone escapes a fire.

For people with hearing deficits, an alarm displaying

a strobe light can provide visual warning. A vibrating alarm for people with sensory deficits can be placed under a pillow or mattress to alert a resident of fire.

The fire department currently will install, for free, smoke detectors and replace batteries for those who need assistance. The service is designed to keep older people off ladders, thus reducing fall risks. The alarm program is being incorporated into the safety program.

The Senior Home Safety Program will involve Fire Corps volunteers making in-home visits to identify safety and fire hazards as well as ways to mitigate those hazards. Their visits will provide an opportunity to make connections with older Sisters residents, increase their safety, and leave important educational and resource materials with them.

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— Phil Drew

People may call the fire station to schedule a visit to their home (541-549-0771), or family, care providers, neighbors, and friends can make a referral to the station. There is no charge for the program.

Any time a person needs assistance, Miller reminds them to call 911 and not the fire department, as their call may go to voice mail during non-office hours and help could be significantly delayed or not dispatched.

## CANDIDATE: Candidate seeks to unseat long-time incumbent

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program, hoping to flip seats in Republican-controlled districts.

McLeod-Skinner’s campaign isn’t one of them. If the Red to Blue’s 73 candidates are long shots, ones like McLeod-Skinner — running in very conservative districts — are real Hail Marys.

Walden, who typically wins around 70 percent of the vote, had a war chest currently totaling around \$3.2 million in late June — 31 times bigger than McLeod-Skinner’s.

“The biggest issue is the disparity in fundraising,” said Jeff Dense, professor of political science at Eastern Oregon University. Without money, she can’t afford a media campaign, Dense said, noting that eastern Oregon is peppered with Walden campaign signs.

“I just drove by one in east nowhere,” he said in a telephone interview.

In an interview at a coffee shop in Redmond — the town near where McLeod-Skinner and her wife live — the candidate said she felt compelled to run because “our current representative is not focused on the issues that folks in my district care about: health care, education, economic development.”

She downplayed the funding factor.

“It’s not about a TV spot or sending out fliers,” McLeod-Skinner said, wearing faded

jeans, red work shirt and scuffed cowboy boots. “It’s about showing up. It’s about listening to folks with respect and hearing the issues that people are concerned about.”

She accuses Walden of not speaking out for his constituents, including failing to oppose President Trump’s trade war that risks increasing tariffs on Oregon wheat. Walden last year also advocated the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

“His attack on healthcare would hurt one in five people in our district,” McLeod-Skinner said.

McLeod-Skinner, who has degrees in engineering, regional planning and in law, distances herself from city Democrats, often derided here as liberal elites from Portland, uninformed about challenges in this sparsely populated, agricultural-ranching region. She calls herself a rural Democrat, with loyalty to constituents outweighing party loyalty. She’s not big on gun control, for example.

“Some Democrats felt I was not far enough to the left in the primary,” said the former Santa Clara, California, city councilor. Her stance resonated. She beat six other candidates in the Democratic primary for Oregon’s 2nd District, taking 43 percent of the vote.

Only registered Democrats and Republicans can vote in their own party’s primaries. In the Republican one, Walden got more votes than all seven Democrats combined.

Walden did not respond to requests for an interview.

His spokesman, Justin Discigil, said in an email that Walden has raised concerns directly with the administration about the impact of tariffs on Oregon agriculture. Discigil also defended Walden on health care, saying he extended the Children’s Health Insurance Program and responded to the opioid crisis.

McLeod-Skinner’s role models are Cheri Bustos, a Democrat who beat a Republican by 20 points in an Illinois district that narrowly chose Trump in 2016; and Connor Lamb, a Pennsylvania Democrat who won a House seat in Trump territory in a special election in March.

“I think we have an opportunity to absolutely shock people,” McLeod-Skinner said. “Eastern Oregon’s not blue and I’m not looking to turn eastern Oregon blue. I’m looking to represent the folks in my district who are not represented.”

She’s crisscrossed the high desert, forests and mountains of the 70,000-square-mile district — the second-biggest in America among states with multiple districts. She’s heard voters’ concerns about lack of economic development, healthcare and educational opportunities. She supports exchanging public service for college or trade school educations.

On the campaign trail, she sleeps in a teardrop trailer outfitted with a mattress, sometimes taking it onto the wide, empty spaces of Bureau of Land Management land.

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