

GEAR SWAP: Donations or consignments are welcome

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buying the required equipment strained the family's finances. Geisen noted that the Gear Swap "will help students find gear they need for our expeditions" at affordable prices, while directly supporting the unique, outdoor-focused educational programs of Sisters Country.

"I love seeing the impact our local outdoor programs have on the kids," Bertagna added. "The programs bring our kids together in an environment where they have to rely and look out for one another in ways that cannot be taught in a normal classroom setting."

Schools are looking for lightly used outdoor and sporting items in good condition. Some ideas include: backpacks, tents, sleeping bags and pads, bikes, ski and snowboard equipment, hiking gear, binoculars, and equipment for sports (cleats, lacrosse sticks, tennis rackets, and volleyballs). Outdoor apparel in good condition is also welcome, such as jackets and gloves.

Those interested in donating gear may bring it to Hike-N-Peaks without a price tag. Gear Swap organizers will price and sell the equipment, with 100 percent of the profit going to the schools. People wishing to sell their lightly used gear on consignment should attach a price tag that includes their name and phone number. Sellers will receive 75 percent of the item's price; schools will receive 25 percent.

All gear should be brought to Hike-N-Peaks by October 5 at 5 p.m. It should be in good, clean condition. Hike-N-Peaks is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For more information, contact the store at 541-904-0778 or email sharri@hikenpeaks.com.

Items that go unsold can be picked up by their owners before October 8 at 5 p.m. The remaining items will be donated directly to the schools or, where appropriate, to Habitat for Humanity.

Shoppers can browse and buy quality used outdoor supplies, equipment, and clothes at Hike-N-Peaks on Saturday, October 6 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Hike-N-Peaks is located at 103 E. Hood Ave. in Sisters. Organizers wish to thank Sisters Rental, which has offered half-price rentals for shade canopies.

"Hike-N-Peaks hopes to help Sisters local families get outside and experience all there is to offer," Bertagna said.

Gear swap will support local programs

By T. Lee Brown
Correspondent

A Gear Swap for outdoor equipment and clothing this Saturday will benefit three public school programs that get kids out in nature, off their phones, and exploring the great outdoors. (*See related article, page 3.*)

In these programs, students observe plants and animals, learn about weather and climate, and conduct scientific experiments. Fieldwork may involve ice-caving, skiing, rafting, or backpacking. Students integrate their new learning into creative projects such as nature journals, hand-bound booklets, paintings, and prints.

Studies show that time spent in nature can increase both academic achievement and emotional well-being. (Conversely, time spent on social media and addictive video games is linked to depression and anxiety.) In local outdoor education programs, students' bodies, minds, and emotions are engaged and challenged by changing weather conditions, feats of physical endurance, and the need for both self-reliance and cooperation.

Earth, Community, Self program (ECoS)

ECoS stands for the "Earth, Community, Self" program at Sisters Middle School. About one-third of the school's eighth-graders are served by this "adventure-based outdoor-focused science community." Science and ECoS teacher Mike Geisen said that students "make 'real-world' connections much more easily when they're outdoors, and they're generally much more excited and focused on exploration. We also take them way out of their comfort zone, whether rappelling off a cliff, exploring the canopy of an old-growth forest, sleeping in a snow cave, surfing in the ocean. The personal and group growth that we see in these kids is unbelievable."

"Parents notice it, too," Geisen continued. "Much of the learning that occurs is not necessarily part of the plan for what we want to teach kids. Outdoors, there are all kinds of unexpected events, discoveries, and teachable moments that happen that we can take advantage of. Kids love that, and so do we!"

Integrated Environmental Education (IEE)

The IEE program at Sisters High School serves a small group of juniors each year. Known for being rigorous and even life-changing, IEE

integrates a wide variety of subjects through an interdisciplinary lens. Subjects covered range from science and environmental stewardship to art, writing, and rock-climbing.

"IEE has taught me a lot about how to appreciate nature more, based on going out and being in nature, appreciating the beauty of it and how kind of self-healing it is," student Abigail Busick told *The Nugget* earlier this year. "How it's pure and fun and stuff."

Black Butte School

Outdoor learning is frequent at the lone school in Camp Sherman's district. Field trips take students to the nearby Metolius River and Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery for field studies. Even on an average day, teachers may walk students out the door and into the woods for an immersive learning experience.

Black Butte School students have gone skiing at

Hoodoo Ski Bowl on winter and spring Fridays since the 1970s. All children who live in Camp Sherman are eligible to enroll. Though the name might suggest otherwise, the school does not serve Black Butte Ranch, which is part of Sisters School District.

“Outdoors, there are all kinds of unexpected events, discoveries, and teachable moments... — Mike Geisen

Inter-district transfers allow children from Sisters, Sweet Home, and elsewhere to enroll. A bus makes the rounds daily from the Sisters schools. However, the school is presently full, with a long waiting list of hopeful transfers.

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