

Many hands boost shop project for retired Sisters fire captain

By Eileen Chambers
Correspondent

For nine years now, Webfoot Painting, Bend’s 2015 Large Business of the Year, has, in lieu of pouring money into advertising, donated \$15,000 in painting and carpentry services each year to a local nonprofit or needy resident who has made a big difference in the lives of others.

This year, Webfoot, founded by University of Oregon graduates Gavin Hepp and Travis Ulrich, focused the company’s 2018 Project Serious Award on local heroes, specifically military veterans and retired first responders in Central Oregon.

As a result, much to his surprise, long-time Sisters resident and retired Sisters Fire Captain Gary Lovegren found his aging three-bay shop and adjacent greenhouse in the middle of a major makeover.

It all started when Gary’s sister, Pamela, heard about Webfoot’s Project Serious.

“Gary would never think about an award like this for himself,” she said, “but to me and so many others, he is truly a hero. For example, what is not well known is that Gary volunteered with the Sisters fire department for 12 years

before working there as a paid firefighter and EMT for the next 20. Then, after he retired, he volunteered again for another three years! The firefighters and EMTs still call him for advice and help.

“Whether it is going into burning buildings,” Pamela continued, “bringing heart attack victims back to life, supplying truckloads of firewood to needy families so that they can stay warm in the winter or traveling to the other side of the planet to rebuild homes for earthquake victims, my brother is one of the most self-sacrificing individuals I have ever met. Just ask anyone who knows him. Whenever Gary sees a need, he figures out a way to fix, restore, build, repair, help, heal, and encourage. He is the kind of honest, trustworthy person that you call in an emergency, knowing he will respond.

“Knowing that Gary’s workshop, built in 1996, was in dire need of repair and painting, when I heard about Webfoot’s Project Serious, I nominated Gary and rallied friends and family on his behalf.”

When the Lovegrens learned that Gary ended up being the contest’s runner-up and not the winner, Gary

felt that Webfoot had made the right choice with Margie Anderson, an Army veteran whose home’s exterior was deteriorating right out from under her.

“I was fine with the news,” Gary said. “Margie served our country, even sustained injury. She couldn’t do this kind of work herself. I could. I would figure it out.”

The last thing Gary expected was a call from Webfoot’s owner, Gavin Hepp.

“The number of individual stories we received about Gary was amazing,” Gavin explained. “Given all that he had done over the decades for others, we simply wanted to see if there was something we could do to help him.”

After driving from Bend to Gary’s home near Suttle Lake and looking over the shop himself, Gavin went to bat with Sherman Williams, one of the company’s key suppliers and ongoing supporters of Project Serious.

“Gary’s was a high-materials project, one that would require a ton of paint,” Hepp



PHOTO BY EILEEN CHAMBERS

A work party pitched in to restore a shop and greenhouse as a way of saying thank you to retired Sisters Fire Captain Gary Lovegren.

said. “Very much to their credit, Sherman Williams ended up donating 60 out of the 82 gallons of paint and primer needed to do Gary’s project. That was in addition to the paint that Sherman Williams had already donated

to Margie, the recipient of this year’s Project Serious Award.”

It wasn’t long before — hearing what was going on for Gary — others jumped

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