

2018 rang in the new in Sisters

By **Jim Cornelius**
Editor in Chief

Sisters welcomed much that is new in 2018 — new principals at Sisters elementary and middle schools; a new blues festival; a new city manager; a new city councilor; a new county commissioner.

Soon there will be a new assisted-living facility in town, and new art to grace the roundabout that marks the entrance to Central Oregon. New housing is on the way, along with new jobs — and there will soon be new restrictions on wilderness access, a symptom of growth across the region.

Local citizens worked to craft a new vision for the community as it moves further into an era of change.

Joan Warburg, a two-year resident of Sisters, took the reins at Sisters Elementary School, while Alison Baglien came from Chicago to take the helm at a newly remodeled Sisters Middle School.

The City of Sisters also has brand new leadership, with Cory Misley having taken on the role of city manager at the end of November.

Sisters Parks and Recreation District, too is working toward new leadership, with Courtney Snead currently serving as interim director. SPRD secured additional funding from Sisters voters through a local option levy in May.

Jeanette Pilak announced her retirement as executive director of the Sister Outdoor Quilt Show, and the board selected Dawn Boyd as the new director, a move that was announced in December.

Michael Preedin was elected to Sisters City Council, the sole newcomer to the governing body in the November election. That election also saw Sisters resident Patti Adair win a seat on the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners.

All of that new leadership will have to navigate significant change in 2019 and on

into the future.

Sisters has long sought to build a traded-sector light manufacturing economy to supplement the tourist economy that supports much of the community’s retail sector. That effort got a significant shot in the arm as the community learned last month that an infusion of \$32 million in private investment capital will allow Laird Superfood to expand its operations significantly in Sisters, eventually employing 500 people.

Several housing developments are moving forward. The City of Sisters provided \$300,000 to support Housing Works’ development of he 48-unit affordable Village Meadows apartment complex on Brooks Camp Road. Hayden Homes is planning to build nearly 200 housing units on McKenzie Meadows, and new apartments are going in on Adams Avenue.

Growth both in the resident population and in tourism has put significant pressure on wilderness areas surrounding Sisters, and the U.S. Forest Service is poised to approve permitting and access restriction on the most heavily used areas, which would be implemented in 2020.

Looking toward the future, the Sisters Vision Action Team has released a draft of their Vision Action Plan, which provides strategies for action in four focus areas: prosperous, livable, connected, and resilient Sisters.

One thing that is not in Sisters’ future — at least for now — is cannabis dispensaries. Voters overwhelmingly rejected the idea of allowing dispensaries in Sisters in the November election.

Sisters continues to host a vibrant arts and music scene. The Sisters Folk Festival returned with a successful event in September after having to cancel in 2017 due to smoke from wildfires. A new Sisters Rhythm and Brews Festival in July brought blues music to Sisters. Organizers are planning to host the event again this summer.

The local recreation industry enjoyed a significant showcase with a visit from representatives of the International Association of Golf Tour Operators.

The threat of fire remained a looming presence in Sisters last summer — though we escaped a major wildfire event. Fast-moving fires on the sage flats east of town burned homes — and reminded residents that fire can be a sudden danger and that defensible space and a prepared home is key to giving firefighters a fighting chance to save homes.

The Forest Service began operations to remove trees along Highway 20 that have been killed by the use of an herbicide along the roadway.

While much was changed and new in 2018, there was also much to celebrate in Sisters’ history. The Camp Sherman Store marked its 100th anniversary over the summer. The Santiam Ski Lodge was named to the National Register of Historic Places. And local citizens inaugurated the Three Sisters Historical Society to preserve and educate about the heritage of Sisters Country.

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Sisters salutes...

• Pamela Haines wrote:
Living in Camp Sherman I always try to get my errands and shopping done in one trip to Sisters.

I made several stops and my last one was to First Interstate Bank to get some cash to have on hand for Christmas.

As I had heard Shuler’s Pizza was very good, I stopped to get pizza to take home. In my rush to get home I didn’t realize I left the bank envelope with the cash at Shuler’s.

The following day I got a call from the bank saying they needed me to come in regarding some money.

I was puzzled as I wasn’t sure what they meant. When I returned to the bank, they gave me the envelope with the cash inside. The bank said Shuler’s had brought the envelope in to see if they could contact me so it could be returned.

It was so heart-warming to realize we have such honest people in our town.

Not only was the pizza very good, I truly felt the warmth of the holidays. Thank you!

• Furry Friends Foundation founder Kiki Dolson thanked those who assisted with the annual pet food distribution in conjunction with the Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire and Ambulance Association’s gift program (*see related story page 6*).

“I want to thank the many volunteers, Sisters Kiwanis and the Sisters-Camp Sherman RFPD volunteers that also helped make the day a success,” she said. “Special thanks go to Jeannie Sandeck who spent two long afternoons with me setting it all up. The pet food was made possible through a huge donation from American Nutrition and with the help from Nylabone, Sisters Feed, Ray’s Food Place, Mudbay pet store and the cash donations from our many supporters.”

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