



## Of a certain AGE

Sue Stafford  
Columnist

### Safety in a small town

I remember when I moved to Sisters over 15 years ago, I felt like I was on permanent vacation. The weather that summer was idyllic. The excitement of settling into my new home, freshly updated, provided joy every day. People took time to stop and talk and were welcoming to a newcomer.

Little time was needed to assimilate into this charming little town. Having lived the previous 33 years in Bellevue and Kirkland, Washington, the concept of living in a town of 1,183 citizens (2004 pop.) was welcome relief from the growing congestion and exploding development just getting started in the Puget Sound

area.

Although I never felt unsafe over those 33 years in downtown Bellevue or Kirkland, and certainly not in my own home, I experienced a new sense of freedom and safety living in Sisters. And for the most part, I still feel safe and secure, although I have decided it is prudent to lock my front door and my car in town. Those times I forget, I come back to everything just as I left it.

I remember being pleasantly aware after moving here that the local evening news for Central Oregon contained very little mention of violent or drug-related crimes, serious property crimes, or bodily harm to residents. As the area has experienced rapid growth over the last decade, the news is now more often littered with stories of large drug busts, murder, robbery, sexual abuse, and other sordid activities within the tri-county area.

Here in Sisters, I still feel safe and somewhat immune to crimes plaguing the wider region. We have our occasional law enforcement stop of criminals caught driving through Sisters. There have been spates of car prowls and home burglaries, graffiti, an arson fire, and I can recall one murder of a local

resident committed by a man not from Sisters.

Traffic violations are probably at the top of infractions encountered by the Deschutes County Sheriff's officers patrolling the city. There are reports of domestic disturbances, parole violations, shoplifting, mental health crises, illegal drug activities, and misdemeanor charges. Sisters is inhabited by human beings and wherever we settle, some level of "illegal activity" is bound to occur.

My personal experience with public safety in Sisters is full of stories like the following, pointing to the goodness of Sisters residents and the beauty of living in a small town.

One rodeo weekend a few years back, I drove into town to join friends at the Saturday-morning parade down Cascade Avenue. I parked my car on the south side of town around Larch and Washington and walked up to meet everyone at the corner of Cascade and Larch, where the parade turns north.

I was having everyone to lunch at my house after the parade, before we went to the 1 p.m. rodeo. I left before the parade was totally over in order to pick up the sandwiches I had ordered at Ray's Food Place. As I

pulled into the parking lot at Ray's my cell phone rang.

The woman on the other end asked if I was Susan Stafford, to which I replied in the affirmative. The caller informed me she had found my coin purse lying on the ground on Larch Street and wanted me to know she had it. I hadn't even realized yet I didn't have it on me. It had been in my lap as I drove to town and I must have stepped out of my car without realizing it dropped. It contained my money, bank debit card, driver's license, gas credit card, and several other minor cards. The driver's license provided my name but nowhere was my cell phone number listed, leading me to ask how she found my number.

The caller worked in the dining room at Aspen

Lakes where I had dinner reservations Saturday night. She remembered seeing my name on the reservations sheet and called the restaurant to get my phone number. I was utterly amazed at the synchronicity and even more at the unwavering honesty of this young woman.

After thanking her profusely for calling, I asked how I might retrieve my errant coin purse. She said she was working the dinner shift that evening at Brand 33 and would have it for me then if I didn't need it sooner.

My out-of-town guests who were here from the valley for the rodeo got to see first-hand one of the many reasons I love living in Sisters. It is a safe small town where most people are thoughtful, kind, and honest.

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**Tickets may be purchased at the Furry Friends office or online at [www.furryfriendsfoundation.org](http://www.furryfriendsfoundation.org)**

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**Hurry Drawing Sept. 9th!**

"Bark for Our Parks II" - by Valerie Fercho-Tillery