

Sisters teachers ratify new contract

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

The certified teachers of Sisters School District ratified a new contract Monday, September 9, that was then adopted at the school board meeting two days later.

Following several months of negotiations, certified staff and district officials agreed to a deal that includes a 3 percent cost of living increase for each of the next two years and an additional \$75 per month toward health insurance premiums.

In addition, extra duty stipends for supervision, athletics, and activities saw a 2 percent increase and an additional day was added to the teachers' work calendar that will be used for professional development for this school year.

Michele Hammer, the president of the Sisters Education Association union, said, "I believe we were able to get a better contract than what was originally offered by the district when we started negotiations because the union members and negotiating team worked together and stayed unified."

Hammer continued, "We are still the lowest paid district in the region, compared to similar-sized districts, but we made progress, and more importantly, we believe the district heard that staff are being asked to do more and more with no compensation for all of the extra time put into creating a caring, engaged learning environment."

Superintendent Curtiss Scholl feels satisfied with how things worked out.

"I think the terms of the new contract are very fair," he said. "Our increase in compensation was very consistent with what we have seen in other districts in Central Oregon."

Scholl pointed out that Oregon ranks 39th in the nation for teacher pay, but added that it is hard to compare since Oregon also has a shorter school year than many states.

School board chairman Jay Wilkins said, "I wish we could have done even more, but I am very proud with how the teachers and the administrative side ultimately worked things out. I am glad we could offer them a raise without sacrificing too much in other areas."

When asked about her perspective on teacher pay in Oregon in general, Hammer said, "I truly believe that the state legislature is hearing the failings happening in public education. The governor as well as lawmakers traveled the state having meetings with the teachers, not just district administrators, to really learn what is happening in their

classrooms."

She continued, "Increased funding at the state level and the passing of the SSA (Student Success Act) will go a long way in meeting the needs of the students. We need stronger mental health services, we need to address social/emotional learning and implement further supports within the classrooms to meet the needs of all students, and especially those with special needs."

One area of concern that remains for Hammer and others is the difficulty of Sisters teachers being able to afford living in the school district.

"We can't compare ourselves to Redmond and Bend in many ways, including when it comes to affordable housing," said Hammer. "With the high cost of living in Sisters, it is impacting new teachers. They can't afford to settle in Sisters so we are slowly losing that community connection when teachers were also residents of Sisters. Their low salary often makes it necessary to take on second jobs just to make ends meet."

Hammer, who has been an educator for 35 years, including the last 15 here in Sisters wanted to make clear her appreciation for the Sisters School District.

"Sisters is an amazing district that gives teachers the opportunity to work and collaborate with fellow teachers and work towards what is best for students," she said.

“...the union members and negotiating team worked together and stayed unified.”
— Michele Hammer

Talk focuses on injuries in young athletes

The Center Orthopedic & Neurosurgical Care is offering a free seminar to those within the Central Oregon community working with and caring for young athletes. The seminar will be hosted at OSU-Cascades Campus on Thursday, October 3, from 6 to 7 p.m.

This free lecture brings together two local health-care providers with expert knowledge and experience working with today's active youth. Topics of discussion include common sports injuries, overuse and repetitive trauma injuries, pros and cons of single vs. multisport athletes, and when to see an orthopedic surgeon for pain.

The Center's pediatric orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Justin Roth, will host the seminar alongside The Center Foundation's athletic trainer supervisor, Stuart Schmidt. Dr. Roth treats a full spectrum of orthopedic conditions and injuries. His fellowship training in pediatric orthopedics makes him one of Central Oregon's only experts in treating children with orthopedic conditions of the hip, foot and ankle, and hand, as well as limb and spinal deformity, sports medicine, and neuromuscular disease management.

He recognizes that children's growing bodies require specialized orthopedic care,

whether treating a fracture or a complicated medical condition.

Stuart Schmidt attended Oregon State University for his undergraduate degree, earning a Bachelor of Science in Exercise and Sport Science with an option in athletic training. Stuart attended graduate school at The University of Florida where he received his Master of Science in Applied Physiology and Kinesiology. During his time at UF he served as the head athletic trainer at Santa Fe College in Gainesville, Florida. Stuart spent the next six years as an assistant and later head athletic trainer at Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Schmidt returned to Central Oregon as the athletic trainer supervisor for The Center Foundation. He is excited to contribute to the excellent care and services The Center Foundation provides to the local community, and to support their athletic training team.

The Center provides athletic trainer services for the Sisters Outlaws.

Light refreshments will be provided starting at 5:30 p.m. Those interested in attending the event are asked to RSVP by Monday, September 30 by visiting youngathletheinjuries.eventbrite.com.

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