

Chad Rush is a linchpin of Sisters Park & Recreation District

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

Chad Rush, recreation programs manager at Sisters Park and Recreation District for the past two years, has spent most of his adult life working with children and teens as a private school administrator, athletic director, and youth athletic coach.

He spent 15 years at Portland Lutheran School, which was originally part of Concordia College until it was split off from the college in 1977 as a high school. In 1986, pre-K through eighth-grade classes were added.

After leaving Portland Lutheran when it closed, Rush then took a similar position for three years with Western Christian School (formerly Western Mennonite School starting in 1945) which occupies a 45-acre campus in Salem. When reorganization eliminated his position, Rush, his wife, Rory, and their children took "a leap of faith," as Rush said, and moved to Sisters where Rory became the girls volleyball coach at Sisters High School. They had often vacationed in Central Oregon and were happy to make the move over the mountains.

While Rush looked for a job locally, the position became available at SPRD and he applied. His years as a school athletic director and coach, dealing with different teams and sports as well

as seasons, provided some crossover. He has coached boys volleyball and baseball, and his son worked with him when he coached basketball. His work as a school administrator provided plenty of experience working with personnel and clientele. His skillset made him well-suited for the program manager position.

He admits that all the public sector rules and regulations involved with a recreation district have provided a steep learning curve. Rush credits both Courtney Snead, former interim executive director, and Jen Holland, the current executive, with being a tremendous help in his learning.

Rush believes that through the efforts of Snead and Holland, the SPRD staff, and the board, the organization is "in a much better spot" than when he was hired. He appreciates the fact he has been well-received by the parents and coaches.

"It was a good decision to come to Sisters," Rush told *The Nugget*. "I have enjoyed the adjustments and changes. I am able to use my skills and strengths to have a positive impact on the kids. I get to see them grow and develop."

Rush works closely with Jason Huber, who is the adult and youth programs coordinator. According to Rush, Huber helps with everything. They share responsibilities for some of the youth athletics because one of them can't

be in two places at once. As an example, Huber organizes the football and basketball programs while Rush sees to soccer. Huber's main responsibilities involve the athletic programs for all ages.

The recreation programs Rush oversees include all the league activities, summer camps, special vacation camps during the school year, enrichment classes, and the SAGE program (senior activities).

Rush's ideas for the future include providing more programs for teens, building his relationship with the high school coaches, and educating the public to realize that SPRD is much more than just preschool programs and youth athletics, an impression that surfaced during the recent needs assessment. Rush looks forward to building new programs and growing existing ones. He indicated there is capacity for more use of the SPRD building in the afternoons and evenings.

SPRD has forged a number of partnerships with other Sisters organizations in order to broaden and strengthen their program offerings. They are currently handling registrations for jujitsu classes at Outlaw Martial Arts and leagues at Cascade Laser Tag. They provide umbrella coverage for a number of committees including the new pickleball club, the lacrosse program, the astronomy club, Sisters labyrinth, and others.

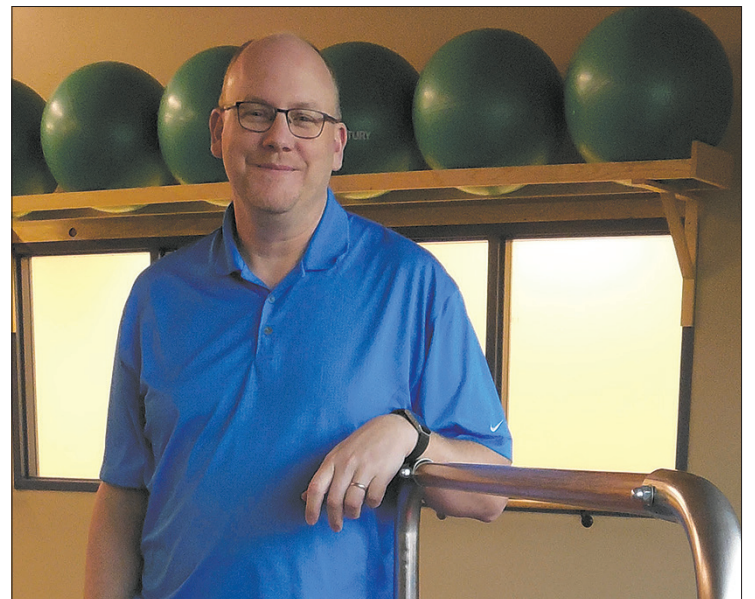


PHOTO BY SUE STAFFORD

Chad Rush is the recreation programs manager at Sisters Park & Recreation District.

They rent gym space from the Sisters School District for their basketball program and the District provides them with two classrooms at the elementary school for the Dragonfly preschool program.

Rush was raised in Portland and, after finishing his freshman year in high school at Portland's Grant High, he boarded for three years at Western Mennonite. He attended Concordia College where he met his wife. Rory was born in Minnesota and her family moved to Portland when she was in middle school.

Chad and Rory have four children; three girls and a boy. Their oldest daughter, 22, lives in Woodburn. Their 20-year old son graduated from Sisters High School

where he played basketball. He is now in his second year at COCC. Their 17-year-old daughter is a junior at Sisters High School where she enjoys playing volleyball, basketball, and tennis. Their youngest daughter is a seventh-grader at Sisters Middle School.

Rush and his wife have been involved coaching youth sports for years, starting with their own children.

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