

Locals set out on adventure of a lifetime

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

Melissa Stolasz thinks big. That trait likely helped her being chosen as the Central Oregon Teacher of the Year last year. But her latest big idea is one that many consider but never act on because of the preparation, time-commitment, cost, and risks involved: To complete a through-hike of the entire 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail (PCT).

Stolasz, 49, her daughter Sasha, 17, and a family cousin Brittany Terra, 28, from Rhode Island, left Sunday, April 11 for the U.S./ Mexican border to start the through-hike of the PCT with hopes to reach the Canadian border by late August.

Their time frame is a bit shorter than the average through hiker, meaning the trio will have to average around 20 miles each day on the trail.

Explaining her thought process in settling on the PCT hike, Stolasz said, “The plan started last summer after COVID canceled everything. One of my passions is backpacking so I began to ask myself who could join me on a hike during the summer.”

Brittany is also a teacher so she was free to join Melissa and Sasha on a 12-day hike in the Oregon Cascades last August.

The idea of doing the PCT grew out of this trip as the trio discovered how well they got along and found rhythm together on the trail.

“There are so many factors if you are considering a long-distance hike with other people and, because we felt we had such a good vibe together on the 12-day trip, we truly came to believe that doing the PCT together could be a really great thing,” said Melissa.

Preparation included months of planning, purchasing equipment and packaging resupply boxes, and doing physical training.

The trio already have their trail names generated from previous training hikes. Melissa is “Halo,” Sasha

is “Camel,” and Brittany is “Razor.”

Ever the educator, Stolasz has involved students from the get-go in the plan, and not just her own classes. She developed a YouTube channel “HRC on the PCT” which includes videos of their preparation and training along with a “HRC challenge question of the week,” making it interactive. Prior to the start of the hike, Melissa was already getting feedback from teachers about how much students enjoyed the videos, which are designed to be “educational, interactive, and a little zany.”

“Some are using it for differentiation, others as a supplement to their science classes or in homeroom,” said Melissa.

The trio also have Instagram and Facebook groups under the name HRC on the PCT, which link to the YouTube channel.

The videos chronicle their progress, so the earliest ones while they were getting ready have titles like “Gear Shake Down,” “Gear and Hiking Vocab,” “Our Constitution and By-Law.” Now that they are on the hike, they have footage from camp and on the trail.

Her motivation to share the experience along the way stems from her view that it is a way to give back.

“To me, going on a through-hike is a very selfish, privileged thing,” she said. “You are removing yourself from normal life for four or five months and, because of that, someone else is going to be picking up your slack. The family back home is going to be doing the heavy lifting or be without some of what is normal.”

“Plus,” she continued, “some people are pretty stuck



PHOTO PROVIDED

Melissa Stolasz, Brittany Terra, and Sasha Stolasz shown here on a training hike, started their hike northward on the PCT April 12.

at home still due to COVID, but they can come along with us virtually.

“We hope others will follow us,” said Stolasz. “We love the interaction. It will be a bit more challenging once we are on the trail, but I successfully produced a video completely on my phone, which is what we will need to do on the trail. We may not be able to do it on a consistent weekly basis once we are out.”

Fewer people are expected on the trail, especially from other countries, due to COVID-19 restrictions, and the fact that California did not open until February made it very difficult for hikers to fully commit and plan.

Statistically speaking, barring severe mountain snow in the Sierra Nevada range, persistent hikers can complete the trail in about five months, so the trio knows they are pushing it a bit.

“But we all need to be back before September,” said Melissa. “Sasha needs to start her senior year and the two

of us teachers will need to be back at work.”

Truly accurate statistics are hard to come by, but between 40 and 60 percent of hikers attempting the PCT through-hike succeed. Many factors contribute to success including staying injury-free, trail conditions, and weather.

Melissa wanted to

acknowledge some local businesses that helped with gear and other support including Hike-N-Peaks, Level 5 CrossFit Sisters, and Fika Sisters Coffeehouse.

“We’ve had a lot of support along the way and understand how fortunate we are to be able to attempt this adventure,” she said.



SHE SOARS

PSYCHIATRY

Holistic Mental Health Solutions

Medication Management

Counseling • Functional Medicine



Audry

Van Houweling

PMHNP-BC

Quick and Affordable Help

541-595-8337 • www.shesoarspsych.com

204 W. Adams Ave., Ste. 202, Sisters



NOW HIRING

FULL & PART TIME:

Server, Host/Hostess, Line Cook, Production Packaging Lead

Email Resume to:
resumes@threecreeksbrewing.com

721 Desperado Ct. Sisters, OR | threecreeksbrewing.com





STRENGTH BUILT INTO EVERY DETAIL



XT1™ LT46

ENDURO SERIES LAWN TRACTOR

- 22 hp KOHLER 7000 Series twin-cylinder engine
- 46-inch stamped, 12-gauge, twin-blade deck with 12 cutting positions
- 3-year/no-hour-limit warranty and 5-year chassis and front axle

\$1,999



XT2™ LX46 EFI

LAWN TRACTOR WITH FABRICATED DECK

- 679cc Cub Cadet V-twin EFI engine
- 46" heavy-duty fabricated mowing deck delivers the Cub Cadet Signature Cut™
- Spring-assisted deck-lift lever with 12 available positions

\$2,599



SC 300

WITH INTELLIPOWER™

SIGNATURE CUT™

SELF-PROPELLED MOWER

- 159cc Cub Cadet engine with IntelliPower™ Technology.
- 21 in. steel deep-dome deck. Blade system triple cuts grass to mulch.
- Front-wheel drive with MySpeed Premium drive control system
- 11 in. high rear wheels

\$369



SC 500 Z

SIGNATURE CUT™

SELF-PROPELLED MOWER

- 159cc Cub Cadet
- Caster Wheels with locks provide zero-turn maneuverability
- High-performance MySpeed™ Premium Drive Control System offers smooth engagement and superior speed variability
- 3-year limited residential warranty

\$479

FINANCING AVAILABLE

FOR FULL PRODUCT SPECS  VISIT CUBCADET.COM



541-549-9631 | 331 W. Barclay Dr. | SistersRental.com

Mon-Fri: 7 am-5:30 pm | Sat: 8 am-5 pm