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Merriment launches holiday season

By Bill Bartlett
Correspondent

Sisters knows how to kick-start Christmas. It all started Friday at 5:30 p.m. at the annual tree lighting ceremony in Fir Street Park. Actually, it began Friday morning with the 4th Friday Art Walk held from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Along the art path, Stitchin' Post displayed ornaments and assorted holiday decorations ranging from mini stockings to bottle toppers.

Shops up and down Cascade, Hood, and Main avenues (and in between) were pulling out all the stops to showcase their Christmas wares. Shoppers — many visiting relatives here for the holiday weekend — obliged by filling stores, often with little tykes in tow. Supply-chain issues nation-wide have put a renewed emphasis on buying local or filling shopping lists with craft and natural items.

The only sadness was the absence of Hal Reitmeier — “Santa Hal” — a beloved and long-time icon for Christmas in Sisters. Hal passed away earlier this month, leaving behind thousands of lives touched by his charm, wit, and characterization of Santa



Santa made his annual appearance on Hood Avenue Saturday afternoon, as Sisters rolled into the Christmas season.

PHOTO BY JACK TURPEN

Claus.

The 21st annual tree lighting came off in pleasant, dry weather. By 5:30 p.m. there were already 300 or more gathered and as the festivities began another 100 or so rushed from the close-by Sisters Saloon and The Barn to join. As in the past, event sponsors and Mayor Michael Preedin spoke briefly in

welcoming tones at which time the stage was turned over to a duo of Victorian Carolers who delivered a half dozen carols.

The songs were a mix of classic Christian hymns and kid favorites, “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” and “Jingle Bells.” The crowd sang along to varying degrees and when the

legendary Leonard Cohen anthem “Hallelujah” was sung with lyrics of the nativity, the somewhat surprised audience gently swayed. Without exception everybody was in a festive mood and eager for the event that took a hiatus last year due to the pandemic.

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Sisters Cold Weather Shelter seeks help

Since 2017, the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter (SCWS) nonprofit has set up in local churches to bring our forest-dwelling neighbors in from the freezing winter weather. Each year the shelter has partnered with churches, local businesses, and volunteers to provide a warm dinner meal and a warm place to sleep.

Last year due to COVID-19, the local churches were unable to provide shelter. Instead, SCWS Board members and other volunteers made the rounds out in the forest, as frequently as possible, to make sure individuals and families had warmth and food.

This year, only two churches are available to host the shelter, one in December and another in January. Other local churches unable to provide

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COVID-19: Oregon drops outdoor mask requirement

By Sara Cline
Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND (AP) — As COVID-19 cases in Oregon continue to decrease health officials announced Tuesday, November 23, they were immediately lifting state-wide mask requirements in crowded outdoor settings.

Oregon was the first state in the U.S. to re-implement an outdoor mask mandate for both vaccinated and unvaccinated residents in August as the delta variant spread.

At the time, Oregon was in the midst of its worst surge during the pandemic. Record daily COVID-19 cases were set day after day and hospitalizations overwhelmed the health system. A majority

of people hospitalized were unvaccinated.

However, over the past six weeks health officials say Oregon’s daily COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have steadily declined. The week of November 15, cases decreased by 12 percent from the previous week.

“We took decisive measures. And, as has been the case over the course of this pandemic, Oregonians resoundingly responded,” Director Patrick Allen of the Oregon Health Authority, said Tuesday, November 23. “Together we have managed to turn back the tsunami of new infections that very nearly swamped our health

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Volunteers get winter trails in shape

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Some of Sisters’ beloved winter trails are ready for winter — whenever it arrives.

Twenty-one volunteers put in 240 hours on Nordic and snowshoeing trails south of Sisters in what Sisters Trails Alliance (STA) Secretary Ann Richardson called “by far our biggest volunteer work effort of 2021.”

Long-time STA volunteer Gary Guttormsen told *The Nugget* that work crews got started in late September getting trails in the area of the Three Creeks Snow Parks in shape. They did maintenance work on the Jefferson shelter and cut firewood for users. A couple of years ago, STA replaced the wood stove in the shelter.



PHOTO PROVIDED

A strong cadre of Sisters Trails Alliance volunteers prepped a warming hut and cleared and marked trails in preparation for the Nordic skiing and snowshoeing season in Sisters Country.

After fall winds died down, volunteers got down to the heavy work of logging out trees that had fallen across trails. They worked on the Snow Creek Trail (known

in summer as the Metolius-Windigo) and Warren’s and Nancy’s Loops.

Kreg Lindberg led a

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