

RUTH Postings caused family concern

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"Thank you, Ruth, for being an irreplaceable part of the FNU community; you'll always be in our hearts."

A longtime friend of Elsasser's, Gina Randall-Thornton, said she is "missing my beautiful friend and grieving today."

She had been close to the events following Elsasser's disappearance.

Search and rescue (SAR) teams led by the sheriff's office had been out searching for Elsasser at least three times since her May 24 disappearance, working from at least 11 p.m. Monday night into early Tuesday morning, Randall-Thornton said. They later returned that afternoon and Wednesday, combing through trails, dense forest and water, and using drones to search by air. After several hours and nothing to show for it, she said SAR shut down the search, telling people close to Elsasser that "at this point there is really nothing they can do," she recalled.

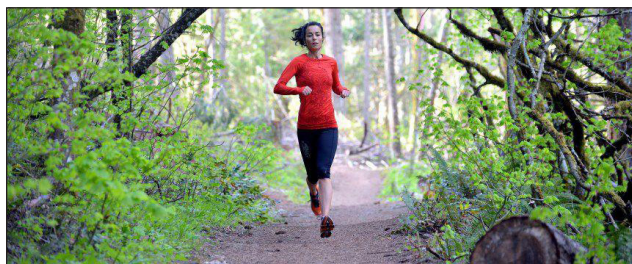
Still that did not stop the community from continuing their efforts — on Sunday, May 30, she joined friends and neighbors in a line search with around 20 people through her property and adjoining areas, but uncovered no information.

Unofficial reports of a discovery were initially shared on Facebook last week, but Randall-Thornton said she removed the early posts "so that Ruth's boys hopefully wouldn't find the information online."

"Certain community members were going by their own interests and posted information that was preliminary and at the time, untrue — and that family hadn't even heard," she said, adding that she felt "deeply wounded and that the family was disgraced" by the postings.

Klickitat County Sheriff's Office has not yet provided comment on the investigation, but civil clerk Angela Hill said the agency is working on an official statement to come shortly.

Randall-Thornton had known Elsasser for approximately the last nine years. She was Elsasser's medical assistant at NorthShore



Ruth Elsasser was an avid runner.

Contributed photo

Medical Group after Elsasser, a family nurse practitioner, moved to the area with her now ex-husband Stephan Coffman.

Elsasser has always been an active person, for as long as she knew her.

"She was on so many trails all the time, all over the Gorge and beyond," she said of Elsasser.

Hood River News, now *Columbia Gorge News*, wrote a profile on Elsasser in 2013. The story describes how she became a marathon runner.

Elsasser was diagnosed with Gaucher's disease at age 4, the article notes, "a chronic, painful condition that forced numerous hospitalizations throughout her life." With the help of cutting-edge gene therapy and the addition of a world-class expert on Gaucher's, Dr. John

Barranger, the disease faced "formidable opponents" in her care team, including her father.

"My father was a college football coach," Elsasser had told *Hood River News*. "He'd call out to me, and have his team stop and yell, 'Don't let those boys beat you!'"

"The discipline and mental toughness paid off; her growing endurance and speed would often leave the team

in the dust," *Hood River News* wrote. She became a lifelong runner, "finding solace and strength in her five weekly runs and daily exercise and nutrition regime."

In September 2012, she was later diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a diagnosis that put her "in total despair," Elsasser told *Hood River News*. Soon she found inspiration in Alex Flynn, a fellow long-distance runner who was also diagnosed with Parkinson's — leading her, then a 34-year-old mother of two, to train for the 2013 Boston Marathon. She finished with a time of 3:41:05, about 20 minutes before the first bomb went off. She had supporters all along the way — "Friends and family joined her in Boston and groups of friends formed prayer circles at home. After the race

ended, Coffman had 37 text messages awaiting her in her hotel room. She felt 'completely surrounded' by love."

Some parting thoughts Elsasser left in the article: "The route of the marathon, all 26.2 miles of it, were lined with thousands of people cheering each other along; great runners, people running for causes, people overcoming something, like me. There wasn't one step of the way that I didn't feel connected to everyone there. It was amazing. The bombs were a terrible, big disconnection for the world, but that wasn't the only story. The other story was the connections — the little kids, the guys in wheelchairs, the hospital patients wheeled out, people everywhere — all there to share in the incredible experience."

HR Parks updates SDC rates

HOOD RIVER — Effective July 1, the rates for System Development Charges (SDC) throughout the entire Hood River County Parks District will increase. They will be \$6,077 for single-family dwellings, \$4,384 for multi-family, \$3,524 for lodging units and \$2,716 for Farm Worker Units. Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District will be collecting SDCs throughout Hood River County, excluding Cascade Locks.

Collections of SDC funds are done by the city and county offices concurrent with collection of other building permit fees applicable to residential development.

The one-time fees are assessed when a landowner seeks to develop or expand on their property, thereby

increasing use of district resources.

In response to community input, the Parks District's Master plan identifies several top priorities:

- Continue to expand a District-wide trail system
- Improve existing parks and to expand capacity & safety
- Partner with other entities to increase sports field use and recreation opportunities.

System Development Charges are fees charged to new residential developments (single family homes, manufactured homes, duplexes, duplex conversions, townhouses, accessory dwelling units and condominiums) to help pay a portion of the costs of capital facilities needed to expand

the capacity of the parks district's facilities. These fees are essential to assist in providing new parks, trails and other open space for the growing community.

SDCs were implemented by the parks district within the City Urban Growth Area (UGA) in 1994. The methodology and rates established in 1994 were updated in 1998, 2005, and 2017 to reflect changes in costs since that time, and to address facility needs identified in the District Master Plan.

For more information about Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District or the System Development Charges call District Director, Mark Hickok at 541-386-5720 or e-mail mark@hoodriverparksandrec.org. Input is welcome.

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