

Certainly a fieldhouse in the south area would be considered an extra plus, but Kidsports has the breadth and depth to make sure it was accessible to everyone in Kidsports, and in the community whether you live in south Eugene, Churchill, Bethel; even our Springfield registrants would have an opportunity to use that facility.

How would they get there?

The other appealing part of that site is that it's on a major LTD [Lane Transit District] bus route and accessible to people from all over the city. Our families travel from the Bethel area and Eugene area to go to tournaments at Willamalane but they also go to the Lane County Fairgrounds. People within a certain radius are used to travel.

Would LTD help?

I'm not sure that's specifically what we've talked about, but I do know LTD is very generous in that regard. I know they have a lot of relationships with Willamalane, and I'm

certain they would be more than willing to have a discussion with the city of Eugene in regards to that and our organization. That's a great possibility and something we would be hopeful for because of the [bus] line that it is on.

It's been discussed that the Y might not have tennis at its proposed new facility. Is that something that has been discussed in the plan for Civic?

It would be very difficult to include in the plan for the gymnasium, but I believe tennis is an activity that is great to teach when you're young because it's a lifetime activity. There is some talk to put a tennis facility on the northern parcel that is available. There's about an acre on the site that right now Kidsports and the other entities are involved — Eugene Civic Alliance — don't really have a use for, so there's some discussion with the Y and the tennis-playing community that this might be an option for them.

Is there any duplication in what the Y offers kids and what Kidsports would offer at Civic?

From where I sit, I can say no, I don't think there would be duplication. And in fact, I think having a Y facility and the couple gyms they've proposed to add to their facility and the four we're hoping to add would almost accommodate everything we are hoping to do in this community. Instead of duplication, it would facilitate helping our kids and adults be active.

The Y does an outstanding job in serving the community, but they are still a membership-based organization, and some families that are part of Kidsports aren't able to manage those types of expenditures. So I think we would be able serve the community much better in collaborating.

Our fieldhouse would certainly be accessible not only to our children but to adults. We've had several discussions with elder groups interested in having a space to move their bodies because, in the rain and the dark, they don't have a place to walk. They have to go out to the mall. They could walk around the courts and be dry and we would have the opportunity to provide them with some age-appropriate activity as well.

Discussion of fundraising has been centered on getting the land. What about funds for the building?

Certainly that is one of reasons I began looking for some property a number of years ago, is that Kidsports has the opportunity to be eligible for a Community Sports Development Council grant. That is a nonprofit out of Salem that helps physical activity nonprofits to serve their communities. A grant that we would be eligible for could pay 40 to 50 percent of cost of the facility. We would like to see how they might be able help us, but that is something we can't submit until we have land. It's a bit of a catch-22.

How would the professional use of the soccer field by Lane United intersect with Kidsports?

The soccer field would be accessible for Kidsports activities; the soccer professional team uses the field for training up to two hours a day and for games. We have had a standing verbal agreement that Kidsports would have access to the field for activities which would really, really help because there is a little bit of shortage of facility space. And with Roosevelt now moving and becoming a new school and taking some facilities and some field space away, certainly a new field would help offset that loss of space. There is also a lot of high school and small college interest in using that field as well.

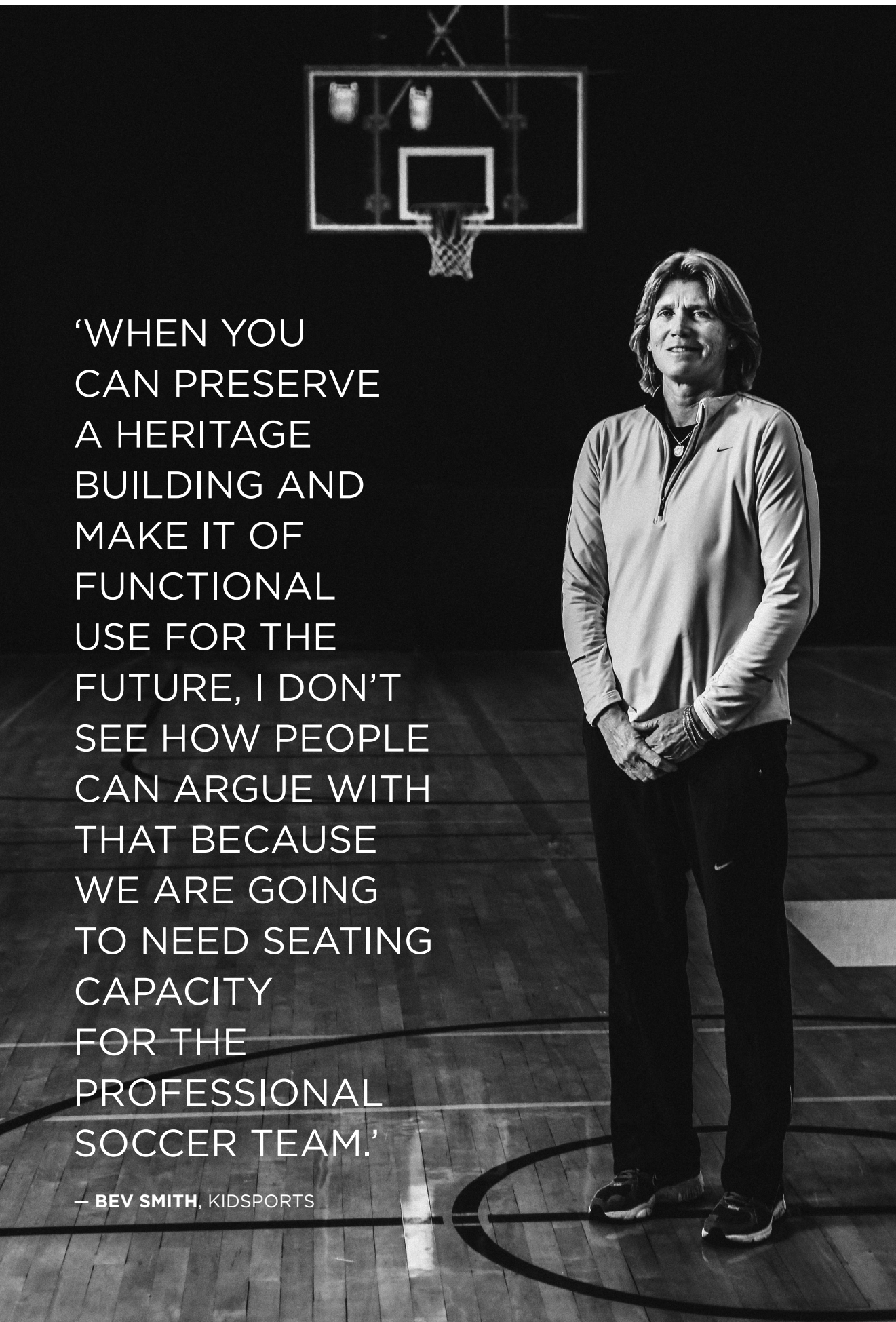
I think the community has an opportunity to be shoulder-to-shoulder with professional athletes who not only provide an example of how they arrived at a certain level of soccer, but a lot of them, particularly on the Lane United team, have pursued and maintained their education because they know they probably won't be making millions. It's kind of a neat way for kids to see that you can do both, and one aspect is not more important than another. There's a time and place for both. It's a great opportunity for young children to be close to that.

Is there anything else you'd like people to know about Kidsports and Civic Stadium?

There's a lot of confusion over who we are versus who the Save Civic organization is. What we are trying to portray is that we are really trying to transform that area rather than "save" the stadium. We are trying to transform it into a 21st-century grandstand that could help with the initial desire of the community that it be a recreational area.

The stadium is important, but it is only acting in my mind as seating capacity for the soccer [team]. And when you can preserve a heritage building and make it of functional use for the future, I don't see how people can argue with that because we are going to need seating capacity for the professional soccer team.

We've looked at research in terms of getting rid of the grandstand, and building new seats would cost more than refurbishing the stadium. Past articles haven't really focused on this. There is a lot of polarization when it comes to putting money into that old, decrepit stadium, and I understand that. However, it does serve a great purpose, and it's fiscally and financially responsible to do it this way. ■



‘WHEN YOU CAN PRESERVE A HERITAGE BUILDING AND MAKE IT OF FUNCTIONAL USE FOR THE FUTURE, I DON’T SEE HOW PEOPLE CAN ARGUE WITH THAT BECAUSE WE ARE GOING TO NEED SEATING CAPACITY FOR THE PROFESSIONAL SOCCER TEAM.’

— BEV SMITH, KIDSPORTS