

CLARK,

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the nature of volunteering in the city. While she still believes volunteering is a “deeply embedded” trait in city residents, it is changing. Several of the city’s largest projects in recent years from erecting The Big Toy in Keizer Rapids Park to 2017’s Eclipse Festival fell short of the hopes for volunteer involvement. That led to human resources being stretched paper thin over days and sometimes weeks.

“We have to be honest about what volunteers can and can’t do. Volunteerism isn’t suited to long-term sustained operations. Volunteerism works well for specific duties with defined timelines and positive outcomes,” she said.

Like many in the community, Clark has been regaled with tales of how the community banded together to build Keizer Little League Park in the 1980s, but times are changed and continue to morph.

Clark’s family is a prime example. None of her three adult children participated in Little League offerings but all three are athletes who chose different outlets.

“Even back then when the choices were fewer, they chose other things,” she said. “People are now volunteering in more varied spaces like the food bank or sitting with an elder.”

The key, she added, is respecting those choices even when they don’t line up with the goals of the city.

“The real key for us to maintain the small town feeling is to stay connected and

get involved in something outside your norm,” Clark said.

Where Keizer once defined itself as “not Salem,” Clark said the city is now at a different stage in its development.

“We have established ourselves as a community with its own distinct personality and own distinct destiny and we are in the process of discovering that. That’s where I believe my experience will be important,” she said.

On the regional level, she said her experience will be key as Keizer discusses the potential expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary it shares with Salem. She advocates for expansion of both residential and employment areas if it ever comes to fruition.

On the local level, she is eager to dig into new visions for River Road North and Wheatland Road North, the latter is on a list of projects set to be tackled in the coming years.

“For so many people, the answer on Wheatland is reducing the speed, but design works better than signs. I’m excited to be a part of for long-term, safe and sustainable solutions on Wheatland,” Clark said. “The key elements of River Road Renaissance got worked into the (development) code, but it’s always good to look at a long-term plan mid-stream. What does the next generation value and how do we build to that vision?”

She would also like to engage the community in a broad conversation about completing the network of sidewalks throughout the city.

Currently, the city can estab-

lish local improvement districts for neighborhoods to band together and pay for improvements, but she said the city can prepare to tackle all of the gaps if that’s what the residents decide to do.

“The most underserved area are the oldest neighborhoods. It’s an equity issue, a livability issue and I think we need to talk about it,” Clark said.

While any change comes with a cost, Clark said setting the goals will allow the city to work toward it.

Among the projects she was glad to have had a hand in are the fees for police and parks, implementation of the roundabout, the Eclipse Festival, and shepherding in recent changes at the Keizer Heritage Center with the addition of Keizer Homegrown Theater.

Despite having served for a number of years already, Clark isn’t putting an expiration date of her time in Keizer’s elected offices.

“It’s not the time it’s the quality, that has to be the deciding factor. That’s the way my family has treated it each time we’ve made this decision,” she said.

When the time arrives that the decision goes another way, she’s hoping that she’ll have done all she can to facilitate a clean transition.

“I am looking for future mayors and doing what I can to encourage them. I would love to do for them what Lore (Christopher) did for me to put them in a position to learn and develop the relationships that are essential. I want to be prepared for the good hand-off and keep it going,” she said.

BAN,

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“Statistically, we find that self-regulation is enough to get by along with signage that is clear, consistent and visible,” she said.

One of the most steadfast arguments against a ban from several on the parks board has been the city’s inability to afford enforcing another ordinance, but board member Jim Taylor wanted to move forward and let the Keizer City Council and the Keizer Police Department (KPD) administration hash out the specifics.

Taylor said he’d had a conversation with KPD Chief John Teague about enforcing a cigarette ban and Teague didn’t want officers to become the smoking ban enforcers.

Bouska also echoed Flores Marin’s sentiments regarding a cultural shift.

“There are great opportunities to send the message that the parks and recreation are about health,” Bouska said. She then switched chairs and spoke on the issue as a resident of the city, continuing, “When we as Keizer citizens say we care about health, we can send a stronger message.”

By the end of the night, two of the board’s longest holdouts against an outright ban, Cat Gaynor and Dylan Juran, had moved to the other side of the issue.

Juran ended up being the one who initiated ban recommendation.

“I was maybe the most against this change, and I’ve slowly been slipping to the

other side,” Juran said.

Gaynor said she once sided with those against the ban because of the difficulty in “legislating behavior,” but that her position on the issue shifted as a result of testimony.

“I was very against the idea of more regulation but, after hearing the testimony, I’m for a ban. If we start now, maybe in 20 years nobody will be

smoking in parks any more,” she said.

Lawyer remained firmly opposed to the ban, but said he would be among the first to ask violators to snuff out cigarettes.

“If this is a real, functional solution needs to be a conversation rather than throwing up perfunctory signs,” Lawyer said.



KEIZERTIMES/ERIC A. HOWALD
The Ramos-Gasca family, Arturo, Sara, Jessica and Brianna, with Habitat construction manager Dave Connell.

HOME,

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Heather Wilson, Habitat’s director of programs and volunteer engagement, was brought to tears as she talked about how involved the family was in construction of the home and how they were there in spirit when they couldn’t be there physically.

“When I think of this family, the single word that comes to mind is gratitude. They said thank you time and time again to donors, volunteers, made homemade salsa and chips and cookies and delivered it to the job site,” Wilson said. “The girls are old enough and crafty enough and had it in their heart to make cards and posters with messages with candy bars in them. There is no family more deserving than the

Ramos-Gascas.”

The family had been paying \$900 a month for a residence in which one room was completely uninhabitable because of a severe mold problem. When colder weather arrived, it pushed the family’s utility bills into the hundreds of dollars.

“As a mom, you want to give your children a stable foundation. You want to be that foundation and you want the doors to forever be open. I want this to be (our daughters’) home and because of you guys we get to have those memories,” Sara said.

Ron Mohr, a representative with Thrivent Financial, said that someone asked him a while ago how big the home was, but Mohr said that missed the point.

“What’s more important is the memories that they’ll have with all who enter,” he said.

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