

**BARK from page 1A**

"I'm hoping that people will start taking ownership of the park, a pride in it," Medeiros said. "I think it's just become run-down — people just go there and they don't really care about it. I'm trying to change the perspective on it."

Medeiros runs her own business, Florence Tech Solutions (FTS) in Old Town, where her two Goldendoodles, Ollie and Sophie, hang out throughout the day.

"They're my babies, and they're the reason I started doing this," she said.

The only local place she can let her dogs run freely is the dog park, which she takes Ollie and Sophie at least three times a day. There, she meets up with a wide variety of people.

"There's an 8 a.m. group, a 10 a.m. group, a 1 p.m. group and a 5 p.m. group," Medeiros said. "Everybody is on their

own schedule, but you see the same people at those times. So you get to know a lot of people. I met a great group of guys that goes there every day on my lunch. We all congregate and sit and talk about stuff that's going on in the community. ... It's just a nice place to meet people, too."

And they also talk about the issues with the park, which are numerous.

"Over the years, because they don't have an irrigation system, the grass kind of died off," Medeiros said. "Some parts are patches, some parts come back. And the middle has eroded from the sand, because it is a wetland that the parks built on. It's just a muddy mess. It floods in the entrance, so really during the winter, nobody goes there because it's so flooded. And then in the morning, because you have the dew from the grass, the dogs run in and get in the sand, and it's completely muddy."

In the past, the Florence Public Works has tried to fix the issues with wood chips, but "the problem with that is they're large," Medeiros said. "It almost looks like little pieces of driftwood. I almost rolled my ankle on it a few times, and the dogs eat it. Plus, it's slippery. So it's just not great for the dog park."

Medeiros posted on Facebook about the problems with the park, and received a lot of responses, including that some people stopped going to the park because of its conditions, but wanted to go back.

"I was sitting on my couch late at night, and I thought, 'I wonder who runs the dog park,'" she said. She decided to go to the city, where she spoke with Public Works Director Mike Miller. "He told me all the problems they had at the dog park."

The problem was city resources.

"We have a ton of parks in



JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

**Jolene Medeiros and her two Goldendoodles Ollie and Sophie founded the Bark in the Park Fundraiser to fix up Florence's Singing Pines Dog Park, 1342-1598 Kingwood St. Events will be held this week in conjunction with Power of Florence.**

this community, and I don't think people realize that," Medeiros said. "People are always like, 'Well, what is the city doing for the park?' Well, the city is pretty busy. They're doing what they can. They don't have unlimited resources. The city is not wiping their hands of it, by any means. We're helping them. And that's what the adopt a park program is about. They can't do it all on their own. Volunteers make a huge difference."

Medeiros said Miller and the city have been "phenomenal" in helping with a plan to rehabilitate the park, "telling us what we need to do and giving us background about the park."

City employees replaced the water dishes and have been working on cleaning up, but the city needed more help to get the park into the condition dog owners needed. That's when Medeiros started a Go Fund Me account to receive general donations.

"Then, people said we should open up an account at Banner Bank, so we did that. And it just took off from there. We've raised almost \$5,000 in less than a month. So yeah, a huge response," Medeiros said. "It was a small idea that blew up into a whole project. I was very pleased with the response we got from the community, because it is a big part of our community. We have so many people who have dogs here that want to be able to take their dogs out to run loose. Not everybody can walk to the beach."

Medeiros was able to use funds to buy a truckload of fiber-based ground cover for the park, which will be placed during the first Bark in the Park Fundraiser and Florence Dog Park Restoration project. This kickoff to the entire campaign will be held during the Power of Florence on Saturday, July 20, at the dog park, starting at 8 a.m. The city will also close the park this Wednesday to help for some major rehabilitation by volunteers.

"We will be helping to dig an irrigation system, spreading groundcover throughout the park, and pruning all the foliage that's in there now," Medeiros said. "And then we'll trim around the perimeter of the fence, too, because we have some stuff that's hanging on the fence. It will make it useable for the time being."

The first major fundraiser for the park will be Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Grocery Outlet and City Lights Cinemas parking lot.

"It's called the Bark in the Park, and we're going to have facepainting for kids, where we'll be doing dog paws and noses with whiskers. We have a 'smooch the pooch' booth that somebody built," Medeiros said. "We're going to have some dogs out there giving kisses. And then we're going to have some raffle items. We've got a bunch of donations from businesses in town like Mini-Pet Mart and K-9 Genius. We've got a ton of great stuff donated at \$800

in value as one of our grand prizes."

But that won't be the end of the work on the park, as Medeiros is working on creating a committee for the Florence's Adopt a Park program, which is currently seeking members. The committee will hold park clean ups at least once a month, picking up dog waste, trash and other debris in the area. It will also include cleaning out the water dishes and general yard work.

"We'll just keep it up continuously. I want this to stay clean all year around for people," Medeiros said.

And she will also be continuously working on fundraising, as the park still needs an additional \$60,000 for fencing and grass for the small dog area.

"The fence that's there now, it's rusted and kind of falling apart," Medeiros said. "The city does patch it, but what we want to do is install a six-foot, vinyl coated chain link fence that's weather resistant, like a lot of the dog parks on the coast. It has a 15-year guarantee, but it costs almost \$50,000 for that."

An additional \$10,000 will be needed for grass and other amenities, including an additional bag station in the park.

Medeiros plans to hold specific monthly fundraisers, such as holding a car wash with dogs and a "yoga on the beach" event with proceeds going to the park.

"But our biggest thing, which was an idea from Mike Miller, is the 'buy a brick' campaign," Medeiros added. "Almost everybody does it in town. You buy a brick and put what you want on it. Businesses can sponsor a brick and get a 12-by-12 brick, they can have whatever they want on it. Individuals can buy a 4-by-8 or 8-by-8 brick. It can be for a dog that passed, it can be for their current family. All those funds will go toward the park."

After doing the program for just a few weeks, Medeiros has already sold 20 bricks, but she plans on selling 500, which will end up being a large part of the fence that is built in the park.

She hopes that within time, the dog park will be a place that both the community and tourists will view as a destination.

"I meet so many people that come through now with their RVs, and the first place they look for is, 'Where can we take my dog, where can they run,'" Medeiros said. "I have some people who say, 'I was in Astoria, and they have a beautiful dog park.' I want people to talk about our dog park that way. I want people to feel like they can come to Florence with their dogs because they have places they can take their dogs."

And for the community as well.

"If we can get involved and make it nice, it's like our home away from home," Medeiros said.

For questions regarding fundraising or to volunteer, contact Medeiros at 541-590-2474, or email dogparkrestoration@gmail.com.

The Power of Florence clean-up will start on July 20 at 8 a.m., and the Bark in the Park fundraiser booth will be in the Grocery Outlet Parking lot from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., located at 2066 Highway 101.

**Habitat for Humanity**

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**Helping Hands Coalition**

We are in need of volunteers on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. We need volunteers to serve food, set up for meals and also prepare meals beginning at 11:00 am and finishing at 2:00pm. New Location: Community Baptist Church, 4590 Hwy. 101, Florence (Across from Fred Meyer)

**Senior Services Advisory Council Needs New Members**

Are you a senior? Have a passion for working with seniors? If yes, please consider applying for the Senior & Disability Services (S&DS) Senior Services Advisory Council. S&DS serves all of Lane County with a wide range of publicly funded services for older adults and persons with disabilities. The council advises S&DS on services and advocates on senior topics. Contact us at: sdsadvisorycouncil@lco.org or download an application from: http://www.lco.org/827/SSAC-Council-Membership Application deadline: April 26, 2019.

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**Oregon Coast Humane Society**

relies heavily on volunteers. There are many opportunities to volunteer and a variety of skills and talents are always in need. Volunteer interest forms may be found online, at the shelter and at our Thrift Shop on Bay Street. www.oregoncoasthumane.org/volunteer/

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**To include your organization in this directory, please call us @ 541-997-3441**

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