

Leaders

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city had only one application. A man.

"He's a voice the council doesn't have either though. He's has a young family. There's only seven seats and a lot of voices," Cottage Grove City Manager Richard Meyers said.

It's a nationwide trend with women occupying fewer elected positions than men from Congress to state houses to governorships, mayor offices and city councils. According to Represent Women—a group dedicated to advancing institutional reforms that enable women to run for public office—in 2017, women made up 20 percent of mayors in cities with populations over 30,000, 24 percent of state offices, 19 percent of the House and 22 percent of the Senate. But in Cottage Grove, the absence of women in leadership roles extends beyond elected positions. Currently, the mayor and city council are comprised entirely of men but so are the positions of police and fire chief, city manager, chamber of commerce director, school board president, acting superintendent and nearly every department head in the city other than finance which is headed by Roberta Likens. According to Meyers, the city has just hired two women; one in the planning department and one water treatment plant, two women sit on the planning commission and the current lack of women may just be a fad.

"It's hard when you have people who have been here for 40 years and they haven't retired but when they start leaving, we can hire people on and the city staff is becoming more diverse," he said.

In 1993, the city council had two women on the board and a woman in the mayor's chair. But the number of women in leadership positions in the city has always fallen short of the number of men and has traditionally been concentrated in the education and non-profit fields.

"We have amazing women leaders in this community," Meyers said. "Why they're not volunteering on the city council, I don't know. I know they're phenomenal in the positions they're in now and would hate to rob one for the other," he said. "We were one of the first cities in the state with a woman mayor so yeah, I don't know why."

Neither does Dr. Krista Parent. "Yeah, I wonder what it is. Why?" Parent asked in regards to why women don't seem to rise to leadership positions within the city. Just prior to Slay's resignation, the South Lane School Board announced Parent's retirement from the district and her position as superintendent—a title she had held for nearly two decades, well beyond the average district stay for a superintendent regardless of gender.

Kyle Tucker was named as the acting superintendent through June 30 of this year.

In researching her dissertation, Parent focused on the limited number of female superintendents and the obstacles they faced.

"75 percent of the teaching workforce, K-12, are women. So, why the disproportionate number of female superintendents? You would think that those teaching workforce would serve as a pipeline to that position," she said. "There's got to be something there on why women aren't running or occupying those positions."

According to Dr. Barbara Spencer, chair for the Oregon Commission for Women, several factors contribute to the lack of women in these roles including time and finances.

"There is a confidence gap with women in running the rigors of campaigning," she said. "Asking for money, it's something women often do not like to do. Until they're pushed and asked that they should run, they don't do it."

Women, Spencer said, often don't have access to cash in the same way men do and local governmental positions don't offer competitive salaries.

Cottage Grove city councilor is a volunteer position with a relatively large time commitment. Councilors attend state-wide meetings such as League of Cities conferences and serve on subcommittees in addition to the two regular scheduled councilor meetings a month.

As superintendent, Parent routinely worked 70-hour weeks partly to keep up with the demands of the position and partly, she said, to make sure she was prepared in ways she felt her male colleagues did not have to be.

"Traditionally in school districts males will handle budgets, athletics, transportation and facilities. I felt like I had to know more than a man would about these things because school boards in general, I found when studying this, will challenge a female superintendent in these areas," she said. "I felt I had to prove myself. I had to be better and work harder to be seen as a competent person in my position."

Parent now teaches budget intricacies at the university level but when she started in administration in South Lane as athletic director and vice principal at Cottage Grove High School, she faced challenges.

"My first statewide meeting for athletics, I thought I was in the wrong room," she said, noting that the space was full of men. "I attributed it to it being the field of athletics. There was a sense that you had to be really good to be in that position as a woman."

Prior to her promotion to superintendent, Parent worked under the last female superintendent who left the district in the mid-90s who had stayed in the position for just over a year. In the 33 years

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Parent had worked in the district, Cottage Grove High School has had one female principal. However, all five of the cities elementary schools are headed by women principals.

"I think that's where you see it," Slay said of women leaders in local schools. "I didn't realize, until you brought it up, that there weren't more women leaders in Cottage Grove," she said. "I know a lot of volunteers that have spearheaded projects, who are women. Projects are being completed because of women."

While the executive director of the Cottage Grove Chamber of Commerce is a man, the president of the board is female. A woman also heads the city's only public transportation service, a non-profit organization dubbed South Lane Wheels.

So, why are women volunteering for organizations but not to serve in governmental positions? Aside from the financial commitment, it may boil down to representation.

"If you don't see women up there, you often don't think of running yourself so it perpetuates itself," Spencer said. "It's hard to develop the idea of 'I want to be a mayor' on your own."

Statewide organizations such as Emerge Oregon and Vote Run Lead help women navigate the obstacles between them and undertaking a campaign but rural areas may have a slower start than their metro counterparts in name recognition for these groups or more localized organizations with the same goal.

Cottage Grove does not have a regular women's group within city limits.

"That probably says something," Spencer said adding that the lack of women in management positions was also not surprising. "Men pick the people they feel more comfortable with and unless it is very much involved in diversity and equity this is what tends to keep happening with organizations and cities," she said.

According to Meyers, the city is eager to include women in the conversations, a sentiment shared by Slay who said her voice was always welcome.

"It's not only the right thing to say, it's actually what's happening, it's actually true," he said, noting that the city has had 10 women on the city council dating back to 1996.

"I think it sends a bad message to young women," Parent said, reflecting on her experience as an educator in a district situated in a city without women in government. "A city's leadership should mirror the community. This tells young women, you can't be leaders."

But if the lack of women leaders is supposed to send a message of exclusion to young women, Chelsea Armstrong hasn't received it.

She serves on the Cottage Grove Youth Advisory Council, a program aimed at engaging young people in the legislative process. Members attend city council meetings, vote with the council and host their own meetings where they map out their approach to issues in Cottage Grove and the state as a whole.

When she heard of Slay's resignation, the 18-year-old contemplated throwing her hat in the ring.

"The only reason I didn't," she said, "is because I'm leaving for college in the fall."

She'll be studying political science with the hopes of finding a position in local or state government in the future but she'll also be leaving Cottage Grove, a city whose culture, she said, could contribute to the lack of women on the city council and local leadership positions and a city that may not hold opportunity for her.

"I feel like one reason there's a lack of women leaders in Cottage Grove is that Cottage Grove is old fashioned in the way it does things. In the past, men have taken on that leadership role and so getting women to take charge is pushing both sides. It's getting women to recognize that they can take those roles and run and it's asking men to recognize that too," she said. "Not seeing women leadership in the city, it's a little like, 'What's actually here for me if I stay?'"

Worship Directory

DRAIN:

HOPE U.M.C.

131 W "A" St. Drain, OR
541-315-1617

Pastor: Lura Kidner-Miesen
Fellowship & Song: 11:30am
Potluck Lunch: 12:00pm
Worship: 12:30pm

COTTAGE GROVE:

6th & Gibbs Church of Christ

195 N. 6th St. • 541-942-3822

Pastor: Aaron Earlywine
Youth & Families Pastor:
Seth Bailey
Service times: 9am & 10:30am
Sunday School: 9am for all ages
Christian Education
Nursery for pre-k - 3rd Grade
www.6thandgibbs.com

Calvary Baptist Church

77873 S 6th St • 541-942-4290

Pastor: Riley Hendricks
Sunday School: 9:45am
Worship: 11:00am
The Journey: Sunday 5:00pm
Praying Thru Life: Wednesday 6:00pm

Calvary Chapel Cottage Grove

1447 Hwy 99 (Village Plaza)
541-942-6842

Pastor: Jeff Smith
Two Services on Sun:
9am & 10:45am
Youth Group Bible Study
Child Care 10:45am Service Only
www.cgcalvary.org

Center for Spiritual Living

Cottage Grove
700 Gibbs Ave.

(Community Center)
Rev. Bobby Lee
Meets Sunday 3:00 p.m.
cslcottagrove@gmail.com

Church of Christ

420 Monroe St • 541-942-8565

Sunday Service: 10:30am

Cottage Grove Bible Church

1200 East Quincy Avenue
541-942-4771

Pastor: Bob Singer
Worship 11am
Sunday School: 9:45am
AWANA age 3-8th Grade,
Wednesdays Sept-May, 6:30pm
www.cgbible.org

Cottage Grove Faith Center

33761 Row River Rd.
541-942-4851

Lead Pastor: Kevin Prueff
www.cg4.tv
Full Children's Ministry available
Service: 10:00am

Delight Valley

Church of Christ
33087 Saginaw Rd. East

541-942-7711
Pastor: Bob Friend
Two Services:
9am - Classic in the Chapel
10:30am - Contemporary in the
Auditorium

First Presbyterian Church

3rd and Adams St
541-942-4479

Pastor: Karen Hill
Worship: 10:00am
Sunday School: 10:00am
www.cgpresbynews.com

Hope In The Grove

700 E. Gibbs • 401-855-5668

Pastor: Wayne Husk
Sunday services:
Worship: 9am
Coffee Fellowship: 10:15am
Bible Study: 10:30am

Hope Fellowship

United Pentecostal Church
100 S. Gateway Blvd.

541-942-2061
Pastor: Dave Bragg
Worship: 11:00am Sunday
Bible Study: 7:00pm Wednesday
www.hopefellowshippupc.com
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Living Faith Assembly

467 S. 10th St. • 541-942-2612

Pastor Rulon Combs
Worship & Children's
Church 10:00 am
Youth 180 Mondays 5:30-8pm

Non-Denominational Church of Christ

1041 Pennoyer Ave
541-942-8928

Preacher: Tony Martin
Sunday Bible Study: 10:00am
Sunday Worship: 10:50am & 5:30pm
www.pennoyervecoc.com

Old Time Gospel Fellowship

103 S. 5th St. • 541-942-4999

Pastor: Jim Edwards
Sunday Service: 10:00am
Join in Traditional Christian Worship

Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Philip Benizi

Catholic Churches
1025 N. 19th St.

541-942-3420
Father: Joseph Hung Nguyen
Holy Mass:

Tue-Thu: 8:30am; Sat: 5:30pm
Sun: 10:30am

Confession: After daily mass,
Sat. 4-5pm or by appointment
St. Philip Benizi, Creswell
552 Holbrook Lane

541-895-8686, Sunday: 8:30am

St. Andrews Episcopal Church

1301 W. Main • 541-767-9050

Rev. Lawrence Crumb
"Church with the flags."
Worship: Sunday 10:30am
All Welcome

Seventh-day Adventist Church

820 South 10th Street
541-942-5213

Pastor: Kevin Miller
Bible Study: Saturday, 9:15 am
Worship Service: Saturday, 10:40
Mid-week Service: Wednesday, 1:00

Trinity Lutheran Church

6th & Quincy • 541-942-2373

Pastor: James L. Markus
Sunday School & Adult Education
9:15am

Sunday Worship 10:30 am
Comm. Kitchen Free Meal Tue & Thur
5:00pm TLC Groups
tlccg.com

United Methodist Church

334 Washington • 541-942-3033

Pastor: Lura Kidner-Miesen
Worship: 10:30am
Comm. Dinner (Adults \$5,
Kids Free)

1st & 3rd Monday 5-6:00pm
umcgrove.org

"VICTORY" Country Church

913 S. 6th Street • 541-942-5913

Pastor: Barbara Dockery
Worship Service: 10:00am
Message: "WE BELIEVE IN
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- Illegal Dumping and Nuisance Abatement with Dan Wood
- Current state of Recycling and Waste Prevention programs with Sarah Grimm



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