

Waites

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“I wanted to provide this great safety net in all areas of life for people of color,” Waites said. “I wanted them to have somewhere they could feel safe and talk openly.”

The group started as a Facebook page in May and grew to a nonprofit organization with more than 500 members seven months later. The response from the community far surpassed Waites’ expectations.

“The level of support we got from senators and the governor who cared enough about people of color in Central Oregon to support us, it’s been amazing and mind blowing,” he said.

Through his organization, Waites has connected with city and school leaders across the region. His group

worked with school districts to review curriculum and ensure that it included the history of people of color in the United States. In the fall, Waites participated in a project about race, power and privilege in Bend at Realms High School.

Waites also focused his group’s resources in Prineville, where several heated protests took place this year between Black Lives Matter protesters and armed counter protesters.

Waites met with city leaders in Prineville to discuss how the protesters’ calls for equality and police accountability could be heard in the small Crook County town.

Through those discussions, Waites was invited to join a committee that oversees how the police department is trained. Part of the training includes identifying racial bias.

Waites plans to continue working with the city and other leaders in Prineville, such as clergy members and school district staff, on issues of equality.

“I think we have already begun to put our footprint on Prineville and it’s only going to get bigger,” Waites said.

Waites has other plans for his organization. He is developing a new program that encourages people of color to consider transferring their careers to Central Oregon to help diversify the predominantly white community.

The program would attract people of color to careers in law enforcement, forestry or business in the region.

“This is definitely something we are going to really dig into in 2021,” Waites said.

■ Reporter: 541-617-7820, kscurr@bendbulletin.com



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin file

Riccardo Waites, founder of Central Oregon Black Leaders Assembly, addresses a crowd during the Walk for Justice rally in Bend in June.



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Lexie Pfister watches as her two children, Jane Pfister, 9, and Lukas Pfister, 6, play with their new puppy, Maisie, at their home in Bend.

Pets

Continued from A1

Would-be pet owners first must fill out an application online, and then make an appointment for a specific animal. That animal is reserved temporarily to give the would-be pet owners time to decide.

“I really do feel that from the dogs’ point of view, 2020 has been pretty fantastic,” said Burns, who has worked at the humane society for 17 years. “Some people question what will happen when everyone has to go back to the office? I don’t want to worry about that before it happens.”

“We anticipate that the demand will be around for a while. It’s been extraordinary.”

Nationwide, 1.9 million animals were brought in to shelters January through November 2020, a 19% decline over the same period in 2019, according to Shelter Animals Count, a nonprofit organization that tracks sheltered animal statistics.

At the Humane Society of Central Oregon, adoptions declined 37% in 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

The decline is partly due to fewer stray animals and that the shelter didn’t import animals from other shelters, except for some cats affected by the wildfires in Phoenix, Oregon.

Pets provide a special kind of social support, said Regan

“Pets are a great source of social support. In times of lockdown, when it is not safe to see others, and even seeing friends and family can be difficult, having a source of support right there in the house with you can be of critical importance to your mental and physical health.”

— **Regan Gurung, an Oregon State University-Corvallis psychology professor**

Gurung, an Oregon State University-Corvallis psychology professor. A social support can help people in times of stress and illness, she said.

“Pets are a great source of social support,” Gurung said in an email. “In times of lockdown, when it is not safe to see others, and even seeing friends and family can be difficult, having a source of support right there in the house with you can be of critical importance to your mental and physical health.”

There’s science to support that. When people tend to others during stress, it provides a release of chemicals in the body that soothe and calm, Gurung said.

Zee Gustafson is familiar with this theory. Gustafson and her husband Eric Oren had been thinking about getting another dog for the past three years. So when the couple moved to Bend nearly three months ago because they could work from home, they began their search.

The couple also received one of the six puppies from the same litter as Pfister’s dog.

Pocket is now two months old and is learning how to adapt to being the baby of the pack at Gustafson’s home and getting used to their 7-year-old dog Delilah.

“Dogs are really hard to come by because everyone is adopting them now,” Gustafson said. “We’re working on training him now. We’re diligent with the training. And when it’s allowed we’ll socialize him.”

When workers go to work, doggie day care is a safe haven for both pets and their owners. But since March when the lockdowns initially occurred, dog day care centers and overnight kennels have not seen the

business they normally see.

At the 10,000-square-foot Dig Dog Hotel on Ninth Street and Wilson Avenue in Bend, business is way down, said owner Robin Miller. Currently the dog day care is at 10% capacity.

“I wish more people would realize that day care is a good for a dog’s socializing with other dogs,” Miller said. “The pandemic hit us hard. People are not coming to us because they’re not going off to work.”

People are spending more time with their pets and not surrendering them, said Pat Bowling of Brightside Animal Shelter in Redmond.

“People are home. They’re watching their animals and taking better care of them,” Bowling said. “All these pets with separation anxiety have their owners at home. They’re walking their dogs more and playing with them.”

“They’re getting the needed attention.”

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Berm

Continued from A1

Crews rebuilt the berm but left it low enough for large vehicles, like the Mosaic Medical mobile clinic van, which services people in the area, to gain access, said Whitney Hale, spokesperson for the county.

Hale said county staffers are working to find a balance between addressing safety concerns and providing access for the homeless people at Juniper Ridge.

“Staff is working with our homeless outreach coordinator and other service providers to assess the best path forward,” Hale said.

Colleen Thomas, homeless outreach coordinator for Deschutes County, said she is working to educate county staff and raise the awareness of how berms may affect the homeless population living in the area. Thomas wants to ensure they feel safe.

“We are coordinating as a team and as an entity to ensure all those in that area have access to the basic needs they need including access in and out of that property,” Thomas said.

The berm was put up Dec. 23 to block an unofficial access point along U.S. Highway 97 into Juniper Ridge, an area with about 1,500 acres of undeveloped land in northeast Bend that is home to roughly 75 to 100 homeless campers, according to recent city estimates.

The unofficial access point was one of three to be closed on county-owned property along Highway 97 and state Highway 126 due to significant public safety concerns, Hale said.

County officials are concerned about having multiple access points to get on

and off Highway 97 in an area where the posted speed limit is 65 mph. Vehicles can still access the Juniper Ridge area through one legal access point along Highway 97, Hale said.

At a Deschutes County Commission board meeting Wednesday, Commissioner Phil Henderson questioned why the commission was not made aware of the county crew’s work to block the three access points.

“I wouldn’t have decided this at this point,” Henderson said at the meeting. “My point has always been that as the governing body, decisions like this that affect the public should be run by the commissioners as much as possible.”

Henderson said Thursday he would have preferred to keep the area open, especially since the county had previously worked to establish access for services like Central Oregon Veterans Outreach.

“We had been actively working to make sure there was access for service providers,” Henderson said.

Henderson said it was also poor timing doing the work just before Christmas.

“If you’re going to make changes, you don’t want to do this in the dead of winter,” he said.

After the berm went up, a small group of people, led by the activist group Central Oregon Peacekeepers, gathered in the area Dec. 23 to flatten it.

The Central Oregon Peacekeepers encouraged people to bring shovels to dig up the berm, which blocked a regularly used entry and exit point for homeless people who camp on the north end of Juniper Ridge.

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MIKE M MYERS

Mike M Myers passed away on his 64th Birthday, Monday, December 28, 2020, at home surrounded by family. Mike was born in Albany, Oregon on December 28th, 1956 to Don and Lucille Myers. He grew up in Albany, spending summers in the logging camps of The Cascades with his family. He graduated from SAHS in 1975, where he was a member of the newspaper staff and the Rebel’s Football Team.

Mike married Marlene Klein in September of 1978 in Albany. He spent his professional career working for PacifiCorp in a variety of positions and locations in Oregon. He loved his work and the friendships he acquired over the years. Mike and Marlene raised two children in Central Oregon and he looked back on his time in the High Desert fondly.

Mike was always a champion for the underdog, he loved people and spending time with his extensive family. His unique outlook on the world, gentle spirit and sense of humor will be dearly missed by many. Mike is survived by his wife Marlene, children Blaine and Bethany, along with their spouses Neesa and Christopher. He is also survived by his two sisters, Sandra Roth and Roxy Rios. Mike is preceded in death by his parents.

A memorial service will take place at a TBD date when those who knew and loved him can gather in remembrance. Memorial donations can be made in Mike’s name to BEW 125 Brotherhood Fund, or Parkinson’s Resources of Oregon.

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