

December 17, 2019

## **Sisters marks ‘age-friendly’ status**

Sisters City Council was presented with the certificate denoting the City’s designation as an Age Friendly City by the World Health Organization. photo by Sue Stafford

Sisters City Council was presented with the certificate denoting the City’s designation as an Age Friendly City by the World Health Organization. photo by Sue Stafford

By Sue Stafford

12/17/2019 12:34 PM

What is an age friendly city?

- A city that has structures and services accessible and inclusive to people of all ages with varying needs and capabilities.
- A city that emphasizes enablement rather than disablement.
- A city that is friendly for people of all ages and abilities.

The availability and quality of these community features impact the well-being of older adults and help make our community more livable for people of all ages and abilities.

Domains to be considered include: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; work, volunteerism and civic engagement; communication and information; and community and health services.

For more information email AFSC at [agefriendlysisters@gmail.com](mailto:agefriendlysisters@gmail.com).

Carmel Perez Snyder, Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP Oregon, made a formal presentation to the council of the designation of Sisters as an official World Health Organization (WHO) Age Friendly City at last week’s City Council meeting.

That designation is held by only seven areas in Oregon, and Sisters is the only one in Central Oregon.

Snyder made the point that the designation is much more than just a piece of paper to hang on the wall. She likened it to a building permit that provides a template for the City to start working on creating an “age-friendly” community in everything they do, taking into consideration the quality of being age-friendly in a broad sense.

The other six Oregon locations with the Age Friendly designation include: Multnomah County, Newberg, Talent, Salem, Springfield, and Portland, the first such designation in the U.S. Sisters is the newest and the smallest in Oregon, but the Age Friendly Sisters Country board hopes it will serve as a model for the rest of Central Oregon.

In the early 2000s, the WHO began the Age Friendly movement. Portland State University was invited to join the WHO efforts in 2006, thus making Portland the first city in the country to earn the designation. PSU continues to provide leadership in the movement. The goal is to make Oregon communities great places to live, work, and play for people of all ages and abilities. Advocates note that what is good for an 80-year-old is good for an eight-year-old and everyone in between.

December 17, 2019

With 10,000 people a day turning 65, the need for walkable streets and neighborhoods, vibrant and convenient gathering places, and accessibility for all abilities and ages is of great importance. Public transportation allows for greater mobility and reduces isolation. Safe routes to school benefit the children. By using Age Friendly standards in decision-making, the City will be taking everyone in the community into consideration for building ordinances, public spaces, transportation options, and more.

Snyder told the council that the best attitude for everyone is, "If you live here, you have a stake in the future of the community."

In the U.S., AARP was chosen as the lead organization because of already having an established nationwide network within the communities.

Last week, Oregon held its first statewide Age Friendly summit in Portland for people already part of or interested in joining the Age Friendly movement. There were 350 people in attendance from all corners of the state. Sisters resident and Age Friendly Sisters Country board member Dixie Eckford was part of a panel discussion on transportation options, sharing the plans in the works for Sisters. They came together to explore and discover innovations and promising practices in housing, transportation, health, intergenerational connections, and other critical Age Friendly domains.

Governor Brown opened the summit and Gil Penalosa, originally from Bogota, Columbia, was the keynote speaker. Bogota is a city with open streets, not centered around vehicles; a community able to be easily used by everyone. Governor Brown is being encouraged to apply for the state to be designated Age Friendly. There are already seven or eight states that have received the designation.

By meeting with other areas promoting the Age Friendly concept, cities are able to connect, collaborate, and share resources while hearing from experts in the field.