

Realtors With Heart

Four Central Oregon real estate brokers find joy in volunteering their time to organizations that are near and dear to their hearts.

by Susan Thomas Springer, for The Bulletin Advertising Department

In addition to buying and selling houses, many Realtors serve their communities by volunteering in activities close to their heart. Their unpaid hours range from occasional to nearly full time. They give their time because they see it as an extension of their profession—helping to make their community a wonderful place to live. But mostly, they give because they care.

Linda Gardner made two life-changing observations as a young girl. First, she loved to visit open houses. Today, she and her husband own Bend Brokers Realty. Another early observation influenced her volunteer work.

“When I was 10 years old, I figured out that boys and girls were treated differently,” said Gardner. “I couldn’t play Little League.”

Today, Gardner is active in the American Association of University Women. Recently, the group organized a math and science fair to inspire young girls to pursue careers in those fields.

She also serves on the board of the Women’s Resource Center of Central Oregon (WRCCO).

“Education for women is near and dear to my heart,” said Gardner.

Through WRCCO, Gardner has seen women pull themselves out of poverty and abuse and lead productive lives. She remembers one woman who was homeless for 18 months then found work and a better life through WRCCO’s

“Life Transitions” workshops. Gardner is looking forward to the annual “Women of Inspiration” luncheon happening on March 11.

“When you see the difference in someone’s life just because you’ve written a couple of grants, it means a lot,” said Gardner.

Phyllis Mageau, broker with Bend-based real estate company, Taft Dire, was inspired to be active with the American Cancer Society after losing several loved ones and friends to the disease.

This year, Mageau is co-chairing the Society’s annual Relay for Life event in which teams walk a school track for 24 hours. In addition to organizing the event, she is walking on the “Realtors at Relay” team. She said the event’s



Phyllis Mageau (center) walks with her teammates during the 2009 Relay of Life. Photo courtesy of Phyllis Mageau.

evening luminaria lap is an emotional time when the track is illuminated by faux candles in bags decorated with the names and photos of loved ones. The lap is walked in silence.

Mageau is motivated to spend her time and energy in the hopes that her 12-year-old son doesn’t experience the losses that she has.

“I would love for him to never know that there is not a cure for cancer,” said Mageau.

Also, Mageau is the president-elect of the Women’s Council of Realtors and has been active in the “I Love Bend” project. She spends her time working on beautification projects such as painting fire hydrants.

Terri Visser, owner of Desert Sky Real Estate,



Terri Visser (second from right) attends “An Elegant Evening Out,” benefitting City Care Clinic with her husband, Dr. Randy Visser (second from left). Also in attendance, Karin Coombe (left) and Owen Larkin (right). Photo courtesy of Terri Visser.

has been instrumental in Redmond’s City Care Clinic which provides free health care for low-income families. Visser recently organized a fundraiser that raised \$15,000 for the clinic—providing nearly enough money to cover one

year of the clinic’s operating expenses.

Visser and her husband, Dr. Randy Visser, have gone on medical trips to third world countries. The conditions they see when they bring health care to a jungle is unimaginable. She said that people in those locations value basic pain relievers that are available over the counter in the United States.

“When you don’t have the basics, it’s hard to be strong in other areas of your life,” said Visser.

Visser also volunteers her time to various activities in her church’s youth group. She appreciates the insight into the world of teens and feels hopeful when she sees them helping each other during those difficult years.

Mary Thurman, broker with The Associates Real Estate, has spent her 30-year career entirely in Prineville where she has contributed to a long list of community projects. From the schools, to the Chamber, to Habitat for Humanity, to serving as President of the Board of Pioneer Memorial Hospital, Thurman said that in a small community, it’s easy to see needs and have the desire to make improvements.

Thurman is proud of the completion of a fenced-in toddler park in the center of Prineville—a Kiwanis Club project she was involved in.

She also enjoys the annual “Catch a Special Thrill” (CAST) event, in which kids with special needs enjoy a day of fishing, prizes and a barbecue.

“They don’t have disabilities that day,” said Thurman. “They have abilities.”

Her decades of community service are driven by her philosophy that people are responsible for leaving their community better than they found it.

“You don’t have to look for volunteer opportunities,” she said. “They find you.”

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Linda Gardner representing the Women’s Resource Center of Central Oregon during the Healthy Home-town event. Photo courtesy of Linda Gardner.



Mary Thurman (third from left front) looks on as the ribbon is cut for the new Kiwanis playground in Prineville. Photo courtesy of Central Oregonian.