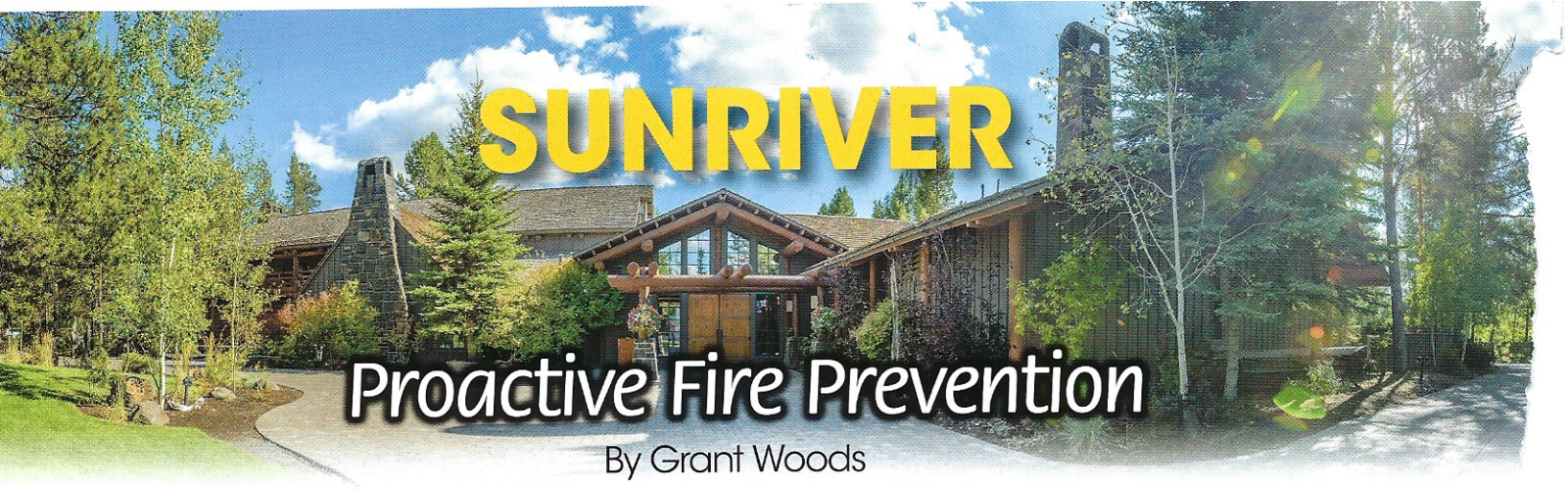

SUNRIVER

Proactive Fire Prevention

By Grant Woods

"Since the huge fires in California, especially the Camp Fire in Paradise, California, people are a lot more sensitive to creating defensible spaces around their property," said Jerry Hubbard, treasurer of the Upper Deschutes River Coalition.

The Upper Deschutes River Coalition (UDRC) is a not-for-profit organization encompassing 29 neighborhoods spread among the rich landscape in and around Sunriver. The UDRC, created in 2003, has a mission of connecting these individual neighborhoods to create a shared focus on solving natural resources issues. Considering the lush landscape and abundant wildlife, fire prevention is high on the list of objectives.

In 2018, several high-profile fires wreaked havoc along the West Coast. California's Camp Fire, particularly tragic in its complete decimation of the city of Paradise, is now serving as a scarred reminder of fire safety and prevention for communities across the nation. Fortunately for the Sunriver area, the UDRC has been very successful in their Defensible Space Reimbursement Program.

"A homeowner can apply online. It takes about a day to get approved. When approved, the homeowner can hire a contractor who creates a defensible space around their home to slow down a potential approaching fire. After receiving the paid invoice, the Upper Deschutes River Coalition writes a check to the homeowner, up to $500," said Hubbard.

Sunriver's fire prevention program is funded mainly through grants and donations. During the early years of operation, the UDRC received two large federal grants totaling around $150,000. These funds acted as a tremendous resource for initiating the fuel reduction and fire prevention programs that now exist in the area. More recently, the UDRC has received a five-year $25,000 grant from the Maybelle Clark McDonald Fund.

The UDRC's fire prevention program serves the communities between Spring River Road and La Pine State Recreation Road. It also extends to include the Spring River, Haner Park, and Wild River communities. The La Pine Rural Fire Protection District, which serves the area, has also been a massive asset in preventing fires, fighting fires, protecting communities, and providing general information on fire safety.

During the colder months, it's easy to forget about the ever-looming threat of fire danger. It requires constant effort by the UDRC and the entire community to remain proactive. Project Wildfire is another program with a mission of protecting human life, property, and the environment from wildfire. Complementing the UDRC's Defensible Space Reimbursement Program, Project Wildfire helps to educate, reduce hazardous materials, and create disaster-resistant communities throughout Deschutes County.

For interested community members, udrc.org provides ample information on fuel reduction, fire prevention, and the defensible property zones. The application for the Defensible Space Reimbursement Program can also be found on the organization's website.

EVENT CALENDAR

March 27

Sunriver Job Fair Looking for a summer job? Sunriver businesses have positions available. SHARC Pringle Hall | 10 am | Resume writing, interview prep, 9 am

April 9

Natural History Pub: Water Management by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Series by High Desert Museum | McMenamins Old St Francis School | 7–8 pm

April 13 and May 11

Second Saturday Artists Reception Meet the artists and enjoy a glass of wine or beer. Artists Gallery Sunriver | 4–6 pm artistsgallerysunriver.com

April 20

Thorn Hollow String Band High Desert Museum, 11 am–2 pm | Free with museum admission | highdesertmuseum.org

April 21

Easter Egg Hunt Plus petting zoo, bounce houses, face painting, and more. | Sunriver Resort | $12 per egg hunter

May 14

Natural History Pub: Forestry Ecology and Management in Central Oregon Series by High Desert Museum | McMenamins Old St Francis School | 7–8 pm