

Mayor Lundbom:

The Grant County Senior Citizens Advisory Council proposes that a small plaque and garden be established near John Day's new public restrooms to recognize and commemorate local volunteers whose work has tangibly benefited Grant County seniors. If constructed, we believe these would:

- Educate community members to the need for and satisfaction derived from volunteer work on behalf of seniors;
- In doing so, inspire further such volunteerism;
- Build community; and
- Augment the city's efforts to upgrade and beautify its downtown business district.

The Senior Citizens Advisory Council is a County Court-appointed, five-member volunteer body empowered to monitor programs serving Grant County seniors and (as per its by-laws) serve "as an advocate within government and the community at large for the interests of elderly persons."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people 65 and older comprise almost a third of Grant County residents. Their knowledge, experience and wisdom are indispensable to our civic life. Many, however, suffer age-related infirmities that limit their ability to bathe, dress, cook for themselves, or engage in the social contact so vital to their physical and emotional well-being. Many more live on fixed incomes of \$1,000 or less a month. Consequently, a large percentage of our seniors require assistance from local agencies and programs, both public and private -- many of which, in turn, rely heavily on volunteers to discharge their responsibilities.

Memorializing exemplary volunteers in a downtown garden, we believe, would stimulate interest among other residents to undertake the volunteer work so vital to the success of the county's senior-citizen programs.

We envision such garden as being approximately four feet by eight feet and consisting of:

- Several rose bushes;
- A stone bench;
- And at its center, a raised, two-and-a-half foot by three-foot metal plaque which, every four to six months, would be inscribed with the name of the Grant County resident most recently awarded the SCAC's "Service to Seniors" award.

SCAC members and volunteers would bear the cost of the rose bushes, bench, and plaque -- and, of course, would welcome any funding the City of John Day might choose to provide. Once established, the garden would be maintained by SCAC, Chamber of Commerce, and youth-group volunteers and, if the Council so approved, city public-works employees.

A permanent garden in a high-traffic downtown location would raise public awareness of seniors' enduring value to the community and ongoing need for their neighbors' help. It would inspire more volunteerism on seniors' behalf. And it would be a low-cost way to help beautify the City of John Day.

I have e-mailed this proposal to all Council members and the city manager, and hope to meet in person with the Council at its Sept. 13 meeting.

Thank you for considering this idea, and for your service on the Council.

Richard F. LaMountain
Chairman
Grant County Senior Citizens Advisory Council