

Eugene, OR - On Tuesday, November 8, 2016, the Optimist Club of La Grande received the Volunteer Service Award from the Oregon Recreation & Parks Association (ORPA). The award given at the annual ORPA Conference is bestowed upon an individual or an organization whose efforts as a volunteer made a significant contribution to parks and recreation in the state of Oregon. Nominees may include individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations, ad hoc groups or others whose time, expertise, and/or labor is donated and unpaid. Nominations may be made in recognition of the nominee's cumulative service or for their efforts on a single project or activity that has created benefit for parks and recreation at the local, regional, or statewide level. Examples of significant volunteer contributions to parks and recreation in Oregon may include, but are not limited to, direct service to parks and recreation agencies or facilities; enhancement of a park and recreation facility or site; creation of a program or event that benefits parks and recreation; fund-raising for parks and recreation programs or facilities, or efforts to recruit other volunteers to engage in service to parks and recreation.

Since 1968, almost 50 years, the La Grande Optimist Club has been volunteering, not only for the City of La Grande Parks & Recreation Department, but also the community in general. That was the year the School District came to them hoping they would take over the 7<sup>th</sup> grade football program, which they did. The program soon expanded to 8<sup>th</sup> grade football, then to all Middle School sports. With games and practices taking place at Pioneer Park, they immediately began making improvements. Those improvements included constructing Optimist Field, installing fencing at the park, filling in an old drainage ditch that would become the soccer field, building dugouts, and more.

As important as the installation of Optimist Field in the early 70's was the Club's continued maintenance of the facility for years after. They purchased tools and equipment; they planted, mowed, and watered all turf consistently until the City's budget could support the new field. An impressive army of volunteers continuously worked on the field preparing it for the variety of games and tournaments it has hosted over the years.

The La Grande Parks & Recreation Department would like to congratulate the Optimist Club and thank them for their support over the years.