

New Senior Services Division Takes Shape

By Mike Gardiner, APRC Chair, and Isleen Glatt, Senior Services Superintendent

This past August the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) was pleased to welcome Isleen Glatt as Superintendent of the new Senior Services Division. This new APRC division was designed and created to better serve the broad needs of Ashland seniors and their families.

Superintendent Glatt comes to APRC with a master's in public health and over twenty years of experience in health and human services. She has worked with seniors over the last decade in hospice and bereavement support, dementia care and as a member of regional Senior Advisory Council for the Rogue Valley Council of Governments. She also works with family caregivers as a support group facilitator.

The goal of the new Senior Services Division is to help Ashland respond to the needs of our large and growing senior community. Ashland demographics reflect national trends as Americans are living longer; further, as an attractive retirement destination, Ashland has an even higher percentage of seniors than our county, state and nation. Over 31% of Ashland residents are 60 years or older! Ashland seniors are integral and valuable members of our community, contributing as volunteers, leaders, mentors, tax payers, donors and patrons of local businesses.

Senior issues affect all of us: we are all aging, and many of us are caring for elder family members and helping elder friends and neighbors. Further, many aspects of an age-friendly community are beneficial for all residents, including affordable and accessible housing; public transportation; safe and clean public spaces; walkable and bikeable streets, paths and trails; and engaged social and civic participation.

To this end, the APRC has also established the Senior Services Advisory Committee (S-SAC) to provide input from both Senior Services users and community partner organizations. All meetings are open to the public and include a public comment period. For upcoming meetings and past minutes, go to ashland.or.us, select the City Commissions menu, then Parks and Recreation Commission.

Superintendent Glatt will work with the Senior Services Advisory Committee and lead the effort to build a strong division that will:

- Foster healthy aging throughout Ashland, to help seniors stay independent as long as possible.
- Provide our large population of older adults and their families with information and referrals to aging services, benefits programs and caregiver support.
- Raise awareness and oversee expansion of programs at our Ashland Senior Center to include more diverse services for a range of senior ages and needs. (For a list of current

services and classes, see the APRC PlayGuide, visit ashlandseniorcenter.org or call 541-488-5342.)

- Reach frail or vulnerable seniors who may be isolated and connect them to services that could help them maintain independence and well-being.
- Advocate for the needs of Ashland seniors and provide input to other City of Ashland departments, commissions regarding policies that affect seniors.
- Build partnerships with the many local and regional organizations that serve seniors to foster collaboration and create a stronger safety net.

Glatt reports, “I am so honored to help our community improve our services and planning for seniors and their families. I am starting with a lot of listening, having conversations with seniors, their families, local leaders and regional partners. Please send your comments to seniorinfo@ashland.or.us, or offer public input at an S-SAC meeting.”