

# HOW WE SUPPORT THE HOUSELESS COMMUNITY



**Sisters Community  
Leadership Initiative**

Sisters Community Leadership Initiative (SCLI) is a local volunteer organization under the fiscal sponsorship of Discover Your Northwest, a 501(c)(3). We have a year-round, weekly garbage collection program that serves the houseless community who reside on the Deschutes National Forest, Sisters Ranger District.

This service is managed via regular communication and collaboration with those we serve, dedicated local volunteers, and a liaison from Sisters Ranger District. SCLI removed 40 tons of garbage during 2023 through our weekly service and larger clean-up events. In addition, we promote better health and hygiene for houseless people by providing UV-resistant, reusable 2.5 and 5-gallon water jugs.

All-encompassing priorities are the removal of abandoned vehicles, RVs, and discarded rubbish on Sisters Ranger District not only from houseless people, but the community at large. Contingent on this pressing issue, SCLI expanded our services to include removal and disposal of vehicles in collaboration with the United States Forest Service, Discover Your Northwest, Republic Services, local businesses, and volunteers. We look to a future of healthy, sustainable forests for the enjoyment of community members, tourists, and those who temporarily reside on the National Forest.



Sisters Cold Weather Shelter (SCWS) was established in 2018, focusing on serving the unhoused population in the greater Sisters area. SCWS aides individuals to secure referrals to behavioral and health services and, whenever possible, to secure subsidized permanent housing. Reconnecting with family and friends, when Appropriate is encouraged. Bus tickets and other means of transportation are provided to facilitate this.

SCWS provides weekly showers and trips to the laundromat, as well as to food banks and medical appointments. Volunteers are critical to this endeavor. They also organize donated items, such as clothing, hygiene products, tents, and blankets in a protected building.

In addition to our outreach activities, SCWS is growing and has recently received funding to hire a part time coordinator. We have also welcomed new board members and are continuing our efforts to grow our volunteer pool.

[www.sistersshelter.org](http://www.sistersshelter.org)



The Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District provides medical help and transport as needed. We also provide first aid kits, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarms, and fire extinguishers to houseless camps in need. The first aid kits distributed were specifically designed for warm weather. We are planning another round of fire extinguisher distribution in the evening, to reach individuals who may be away from their camps.

[www.sistersfire.com](http://www.sistersfire.com)

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The Deschutes County Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) works with individuals that are experiencing literal homelessness that struggle with acute psychiatric and/or substance use disorders.

The team provides direct street outreach through peer and intensive case management services. The team identifies individual barriers and offers person-centered services to assist individuals in gaining stability in their lives and removing those barriers towards forward progress.

[www.deschutes.org](http://www.deschutes.org)



The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office is responsible for responding to all 911 calls and non-emergency calls throughout the city of Sisters and the unincorporated areas surrounding Sisters.

Deputies have daily contact with our houseless community to develop rapport and offer services to them. By developing relationships with our houseless community, we have increased our ability to solve problems and keep our citizens safe.

[sheriff.deschutes.org](http://sheriff.deschutes.org)

The Sisters Library is one of six branches in the Deschutes Library System providing services to the communities of Central Oregon. All are welcome in our buildings. Open 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, staff at the Sisters Library are available to help connect individuals with services and resources to help fit their needs and improve their lives.

A representative from Thrive Central Oregon is available in the Sisters Library every Friday from 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. to provide drop-in social services assistance. The building is equipped with Wi-Fi access for those bringing their own devices as well as five public computer stations that provide access to the internet and the Microsoft Office suite. Copiers and laser printers allow users to copy, print, scan, and fax.

During inclement weather, the Sisters Library also serves as a daytime cooling or warming space during normal operating hours.

[www.deschuteslibrary.org](http://www.deschuteslibrary.org)

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Sisters Family Access Network (FAN) is a social service located in Sisters School District (SSD). FAN has two family advocates who work to provide social services to students and families with students in pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The Sisters FAN family advocates work with the SSD Homeless Liaison to connect homeless families and low-to-moderate income families to basic needs such as food, education, health care, clothing, shower tokens and housing when available. FAN provides a onetime voucher to Sisters Habitat for Humanity (HFH) Thrift Store for needed clothing and blankets, and a onetime voucher to Sisters HFH ReStore for a tent, sleeping pad and sleeping bag when available. FAN partners with Deschutes County Homeless Outreach Team member David Fox to provide shower tokens for local homeless to use at the Village Green Park showers.



Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) provides social and recreation opportunities to the community. With a variety of free options from the community room to special-use parks, SPRD works to foster community connections. In addition, SPRD provides a fee-assistance program for those who are looking to access fee-based programs but may need a little help in doing so. Our community room is open to the public for respite from hot, smoky, and cold weather during our regular hours.

[sistersrecreation.com](http://sistersrecreation.com)



Sisters School District works with houseless families to eliminate barriers to houseless student's ability to access our academic and cocurricular programs.

[district.ssd6.org](http://district.ssd6.org)



Sisters Community Church hosts a number of services through its members and community partners who provide basic needs for members of the community, including the houseless. These services include both physical and spiritual needs.

Specific services include weekly hosted meals through the Community Dining Program for seniors; grab-and-go nutritious meals provided to anyone in need twice weekly hosted by the Family Kitchen; and hot showers made available weekly to members of the houseless community in partnership with the Sisters Cold Weather Shelter.

SCC has also partnered with SCWS to identify shelter space in severe weather, and has a number of individuals in the church who help provide various physical needs (food, clothing, heating sources, assistance in finding stable housing, etc.) and providing spiritual support with various members of the houseless community.

[www.sisterschurch.com](http://www.sisterschurch.com)

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The Sisters Ranger District is committed to working with local governments and community groups to be part of a broader solution to the area homeless and houseless issue. Our staff and law enforcement officers help coordinate clean-up efforts, patrol areas with concentrations of unhoused individuals, conduct fire prevention education and mitigation, and enforce regulations within our existing authorities. Our approach is rooted in empathy, respect, and a sincere desire to contribute positively to the lives of all community members, including those who are unhoused.

As an agency, our resources are prioritized to reduce wildfire risk, protect natural resources, and provide high-quality recreation opportunities. The Sisters Ranger District is invested in being a part of community-driven solutions and Forest Service staff coordinate closely with partners from Deschutes County Behavioral Health, Sisters Community Leadership Initiative, Sisters Cold Weather Shelter, Sisters Kiwanis Food Bank and others who are working to connect unhoused individuals with the services they need.

[Sisters Ranger District](#)

The City of Sisters is actively engaged in a wide range of programs in partnership with local agencies and non-profits to keep people housed and reduce homelessness. Below is a snapshot of low income, houseless, and housing assistance programs the city leads or participates in with a financial or in-kind commitment.

Key initiatives include two low-income utility assistance programs, working with partners for emergency cold weather sheltering, maintaining public showers, and annual community grant funding which includes support for food and utility assistance. We partner with organizations such as Family Access Network, Sisters Cold Weather Shelter, Sisters Community Leadership Initiative, NeighborImpact, Age Friendly Sisters, and local food banks.

Substantial funding is also directed toward affordable housing projects, with grants and reserves totaling over \$1.1 million earmarked for both current and future developments, which underscores the city's commitment to tackling housing issues.

[www.ci.sisters.or.us](http://www.ci.sisters.or.us)