

Redmond neighbors attempt to save woodland

By **Rachel Tuinstra**

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Julia Brand and about 25 other residents have formed Friends of Redmond Woodlands to raise money to purchase a **woodland** from a developer who planned to build 36 houses on the site. The developer is willing to sell if enough money is raised.

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Julia Brand calls it her urban oasis — a pristine **woodland** in the middle of Redmond neighborhoods — and she is hoping to keep suburbia out of it.

When she and other residents realized last year that Kirkland-based CamWest Development owned the land and planned to build 36 homes on the property, Brand hatched a plan to keep the 10-acre woodlands intact.

She approached Eric Campbell, president of CamWest, who told her that if she could find a way to raise enough money, he'd sell her the land.

"You rarely see people willing to step forward and say they believe in open space and be willing to pay for it," Campbell said. "I'm not so closed-minded that I wouldn't give them that opportunity." Brand and about 25 other residents have formed the Friends of Redmond Woodlands, and the group is holding a Walk-a-Thon tomorrow to raise money to buy the area, known as Perrigo Heights. The fund-raising event will be at the **woodland** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Donations will be made based on the number of people who show up to walk. Walkers will meet at the entrance to the **woodland**, in the 17000 block of Northeast 100th Street.

The goal is to raise \$400,000 by June 15 as a nonrefundable payment toward purchasing 6.5 acres of the 10-acre **woodland**. If they succeed in raising the down payment, they have another year to raise the \$4 million needed to buy the land outright from the developer. Brand said the

group could apply for grants, and she theorizes that it could obtain funds from a proposed Redmond park bond if it makes to the ballot and voters approve it.

Brand has been stretching her legs along the trails that cut through the lush and lofty greenery for decades and said she can't stand by as this last open space on Education Hill is turned into a new-home subdivision.

"This whole ridge would be houses," Brand said, waving a hand over a verdant slope. "There's tons of wildlife here. My personal thing is I love wildlife, and I want to preserve it."

The city of Redmond also is talking with CamWest about buying the other 3.5 acres of the **woodland**, which abuts a popular trail that connects Jonathan Hartman Park to Nike Neighborhood Park.

The City Council is expected to discuss a land deal during an executive session Tuesday, said Redmond Mayor Rosemarie Ives, who said she has hiked on the **woodland** trails for more than 20 years.

"It's a pristine, quiet place, and there aren't many places like that left in Redmond," she said. "This is the power of people coming together. On first and second blush, it sounds like a longshot. But miracles do happen."

If the deal is going to work, the city will need to be involved, Campbell said. To make the agreement viable, the developer would need another place to build in the city, and would need to be able to transfer the more than \$1 million in permits it has already paid to the city.

"This will take a lot of effort from everyone," Campbell said. "We're trying to be flexible, but we'd have to have all the parties at the table."

The Perrigo Heights **woodland** is a natural laboratory to learn about ecosystems, soil samples and water quality, and it's only a five-minute walk from Redmond High School, said Mike Town, an environmental science and biology teacher at the school.

Town has taken more than 3,500 students to the area for environmental studies and experiments over his past 20 years of teaching at the school, he said.

"It would be difficult to find a high school in this area that has access to an area like this," Town said. "From an educational standpoint, it would be good if the city can **save** it because what it does is provide education to every student that goes to Redmond High School."

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