



HDP Assumes Community Center Stewardship with Gratitude for HCOT's Founding Vision

The Harney County Community Center has found a new steward committed to preserving its vital role as a community gathering place. High Desert Partnership (HDP) has assumed ownership of the facility from the Harney County Opportunity Team (HCOT), marking a transition that promises continuity and enhanced community service for years to come.

The Community Center's journey began in 2003 when Congressman Bob Smith sought to donate property in Burns. When the original plan for the donation encountered obstacles, a dedicated group of community leaders, including Fred Flippence, formed a nonprofit organization (Harney County Opportunity Team) to transform the space into something the community truly needed—a central gathering place where residents could connect and collaborate.

"We did not have a lot of meeting space at that time and so we decided to make the building into a community center," Flippence recalled. The vision became reality through the generous support of foundations like The Ford Family Foundation and Oregon Community Foundation, along with community members who believed in creating a shared space for all.

HCOT has been a steward of this community asset, and their decision to transfer ownership to HDP reflects their ongoing commitment to the county's wellbeing. "HCOT chose HDP because we felt that it has similar goals for Harney County as our group did and they have a strong commitment to Harney County," Flippence explained.

HDP recognizes the Community Center's importance as more than just a building—it's a hub where organizations collaborate, visitors learn about the region, and community members forge connections that strengthen the entire county. "We are deeply grateful to the HCOT for entrusting us with this incredible community asset," said Brenda Smith, Director of High Desert Partnership. "HCOT's vision and dedication created something truly special for our community, and we are honored to continue their legacy of bringing people together in this space."

Harney County Chamber of Commerce office will continue to be housed in the Community Center.

The ownership transfer represents what HCOT sees as a natural evolution—ensuring the Community Center remains true to its founding purpose while benefiting from HDP's vision for collaborative community building. As the center enters this new chapter, it continues to embody the community spirit that brought it to life more than two decades ago.

For questions about the transition, community members can contact Becki Graham at becki@highdesertpartnership.org. The Community Center's mission remains unchanged: serving as a vital gathering place where Harney County's residents can connect, collaborate, and build a stronger future together.

This article is provided by High Desert Partnership; a nonprofit convening and supporting six collaboratives in Harney County Oregon.

