

## OPINION

## GUEST VIEWPOINT

# Madison Meadow a grass-roots success story

By **LORRI GOODMAN**

I am thrilled to say that our nonprofit corporation accomplished its first goal and became steward of the two-acre gem of remnant orchard at 22nd Avenue and Madison Street in Eugene known as Madison Meadow.

We exercised our option to buy the land, placing a down payment on Dec. 20. We are grateful to have been given a full year to raise the required \$220,000. Now we have three years to raise the remaining \$250,000.

The visioning and planning have begun in earnest. We will be taking input from everyone who wishes to participate, including botanists, habitat experts and everyday folk.

Who are we? We are a group of neighbors and friends who came together just a year ago to keep this field open, as it has been for generations. If not for this true grass-roots effort (none of us had done this before), this last natural open space in the Friendly Area Neighborhood would have been developed.

Madison Meadow's board is mindful of the importance of in-fill as opposed to sprawl; however, we are keenly aware of the problems of overdevelopment.

A key to wise development is knowing when not to build. This is the new "smart growth." We feel strongly that the reasons not to build on this land greatly outweigh reasons for development.

Natural open space, distinct from playgrounds and parks, has myriad benefits to the neighborhood and the city. As population density increases, access to natural open space becomes critical for people and for wildlife.

Madison Meadow supports a far greater diversity of life than surrounding lawns and gardens. Audubon Society members estimate that nearly 100 species of birds visit this valuable island of habitat. The meadow is a corridor for butterflies and birds during migration. It improves air quality and storm-water drainage.

The meadow's diversity is also good for people, and we believe the community will be enhanced greatly by its presence and use. Children play differently in a field of tall wildflowers, where they can spot a songbird, follow the flight of an iridescent dragonfly and develop a lifelong connection to nature.

A year was a short time to succeed in this project. We did not have time for grants to be reviewed, nor did we have financial assistance from the city. Support came locally and from

afar, from like-minded individuals and families. Now, we have some breathing room to celebrate, plan restoration and continue raising funds.

More than ever, the phrase "think globally, act locally" is apt. Why? While many of us struggle with the lack of peace and cohesiveness in the world, we know we must carry on with the just causes that will benefit our community and humanity. Saving Madison Meadow is such a project. I know deep in my heart we are better off with this field as a community place comfortably accessible to all.

Now we find ourselves dreaming more vividly. How much fun it would be to have an intricate haunted pathway for next year at Halloween — and next summer, a movie and pajama party with star gazing and camaraderie. We may restore butterfly habitat and remove nonnative plant invaders. We see an informational kiosk and some benches.

Local schools can tap into the habitat restoration and plant and animal identification as part of their outdoor classroom. Think about how we can use the meadow for autumn harvest gatherings, spring celebrations, self-renewal and moments of solitude. It will be a place for folks to meet and stroll after dinner. A place to greet

others and feel connected. A free, open space that has its own rhythm, a taste of village life.

Some may say that this project is small. Yet we know that the health and happiness of one child can affect the whole world. Taking a just action can have unanticipated ramifications. In this context, two acres of open space in the middle of Oregon's second-largest city is significant.

May Madison Meadow inspire others to take a stand in their own neighborhoods and lives, so as to sustain what is valuable to them. So "think globally" and start right here in our special corner of Earth. More than 350 families and individuals have let us know they care.

Here is an example of community involvement at work: A high school student asked what she could do to save the meadow she loves. She and her sister spent a good part of their winter break wrapping gifts at a local store, with proceeds going to Madison Meadow. This has strengthened our vision and touched us deeply, creating a desire to support other like projects.

*Lorri Goodman, a photographer and entrepreneur, is on the board of the Save Madison Meadow Campaign ([www.MadisonMeadow.org](http://www.MadisonMeadow.org)).*