

SUNBURST II IS AN OFFICIAL FIREWISE COMMUNITY

By Eileen Wende

Sunburst II Firewise Board, Chairperson

This year and in many recent years devastating wildfires have burned across communities just like ours. We, like many others, live in a natural wooded area, where wildfires are a real risk. The Firewise program is designed to help communities organize to learn how to protect their home and neighborhood from these fires.

Thanks to the walk through community wildfire risk assessment that was completed by members of the Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Forestry, we are now aware of our community's strengths and vulnerabilities.

An action plan for our community was developed by the TVFR and ODF as a direct result of their assessment. To summarize their assessments, in general they found our community to be “well maintained, but at increased risk due to structural features such as wooden siding and attachments, volatile plant selections, especially arborvitae in proximity to structures, and high fuel loading, especially in the 6 acre green space.” It is important to note that these observations were made before the devastating February ice storm.

There are some areas with vegetation very close, even touching homes. Even if it is just a house fire this can spread easily to another home. Firewise has very practical steps home owners can take to increase the fire resistance of your home. Information can be found on their web site: www.nfpa.org. under “Prepare Your Home”. In addition, informational fire prevention tips will be posted on the SUNBURST II web page .

As a community, our vulnerability is increased by the presence of the 6 acre wooded green space. Reading from the results of our assessment: “Fire can come from any direction and any location but in terms of topography I would be most concerned about fire moving upslope through

the community, as well as wind funneling through the stream channel adjacent to the north end of the 6 acre green space.” KJ DeGuire, Community Wildfire Forester, ODF.

Members of this community have organized under the leadership of Leonard Sawchuk to clean up and restore this green space to reduce our fire vulnerability. These fuel reduction efforts are ongoing. Come and join the effort the second Saturday of each month from 9a.m. to noon off Carriage Way. Work side by side with your neighbors and SOLVE volunteers to restore this beautiful area to its natural habitat by removing storm debris and the invasive blackberry, ivy and holly. By doing this, we reduce the risk of wildfire to our entire community.