



TERRA COTTA BOUTIQUE

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# Women

IN BUSINESS

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*Barb*  
Ayers



By Noah Noteboom | Hood River News

**D**espite being an urban-grown global traveler, Hood River County Emergency Manager Barb Ayers' favorite place is right here in the Hood River Valley. Ayers was born and raised in San Diego, Calif., where she discovered her passion for public safety and windsurfing. Her interests have brought her all over the world, from Bali to Mosier.

She graduated from San Diego State University, where she studied journalism and creative services. In 1991, she was hired as the public relations director for the San Diego Zoo, where she worked for 13 years. During her time there, she worked alongside local establishments to try and drum up business, and even aided in the filming of documentaries about the wildlife in the zoo.

After 9/11, tourism was on the decline, while public safety was on the upswing. Ayers then saw an opportunity to serve with the San Diego Fire and Rescue Department. During her four-year stint, she played a prominent role in the founding of San Diego CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

"It's not just, we will do it for you. We do it together," said Ayers on including the community in emergency response, and not simply relying on firefighters or police officers.

Trained by firefighters and other safety officials, the nearly 1,500 volunteers for San Diego CERT are tasked with getting the community involved in how to best prepare themselves for natural disasters.

In 2007, Ayers moved to Hood River, where she spent most of her summers previous, and secured a job with Providence Hospital as the director of marketing and communications.

After four years at the hospital, Ayers took a job offer to be the communications director for the city of Vancouver, Wash. She spent just over three

years in Vancouver, but Hood River was a place that never left her mind.

"I missed Hood River every single day I was gone," she said.

Ayers maintained her home in Mosier, and was living there in 2009 at the time of the Microwave fire. She had to be evacuated as the fire had burned more than 1,200 acres. Ayers was also a resident in 2016 when the Union Pacific train, carrying crude oil, derailed, incurring over \$9 million in damages.

"I have lived both sides of disaster," says Ayers on her experiences.

After Karl Tesch retired in 2014, Ayers was hired to succeed him as the county's emergency manager. Witnessing all the good that can come from being a public servant, she has pledged to only work for non-profits or public agencies.

"I woke up one day and thought to myself, I want to be a part of the solution."

Volunteering is something that is important to her: She is on the Hood River Rotary and Mosier Fire Board, while also serving on the board of the United Way of the Columbia Gorge. United Way is a group that raises money to help keep non-profits operating in Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Klickitat and Skamania counties.

When she's not planning for potential disasters, Ayers thoroughly enjoys windsurfing and hiking with her dog, Doodle. Doodle can be seen hanging ten off the front of her stand up paddle board, or riding a surfboard in the annual Fourth of July parade.

Ayers is also the webmaster of DogDiary.org, where she writes stories through the point of view of her dogs. She has always had a passion for writing and photography and aspires to be a published author someday. Living a service-oriented life has turned out to be just the ticket for the Hood River community's emergency manager.