

She was a mother of two and frustrated about the state of her city's parks for her children to play in.

Lore Christopher looked around and saw no one doing what she thought should be done for Keizer and its families. She was involved with Keizer Little League and spent almost 10 years on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board – parks began her political career but it ends

with much more.

She'll be the one first one to say she didn't do anything—she was one of seven 'folks' helping out. She may have been one of seven votes, but her style and her determination aided her in forming coalitions, if not downright unanimous votes.

Lore Christopher always had Keizer and its residents' best interest at heart. Her votes over

the years reflect that philosophy. She sought consensus when she could and barreled ahead when she could not.

A dynamo, Christopher put her energy and passion into all things Keizer which meant fostering close relations with officials from Salem and Marion County among others in the region. If one of those other governments wanted to do something not in Keizer's favor she was the first to put her 'stop' hand up.

Though she called herself just a neighbor and a 'folk,' Lore Christopher grew into one of the most astute politicians in the Willamette Valley. She easily dispatched with ease two opponents who figured she was an easy electoral target. She had been approached many times to seek higher office. She never had aspirations for any other office.

As the Lore Christopher Era ends she can sit back and say "It's good."

# The Lore Christopher Era

Article By  
CRAIG MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

Introduction By  
LYNDON A. ZAITZ  
Of the Keizertimes

Lore Christopher had a bit of a philosophical shift during her 14 years as Keizer's mayor.

When Christopher took over in 2001 after two years on the Keizer City Council, she was bound and determined to shake things up and speed the wheels of government along.

"I had a real shift," Christopher said recently as she prepares to hand over her title to veteran councilor Cathy Clark at the Jan. 5 council meeting. "I was going to kick butt and take names. But I came to respect the founding fathers and their approach. There is so much public process. You put money in the pot together and decide how to spend the money."

For example, at the start of her reign – Christopher was Keizer's first female mayor and served the longest tenure to date – a drawn-out process like the one resulting in Keizer Station would have been unfathomable.

"It was painful to go through the Keizer Station process for eight years," Christopher said. "But look at how highly successful that has been. When the economy took a down turn and folded up, we didn't. Two stores left, but they left all their locations. It comes down to the time it took to plan that all out."

Lore Christopher, change agent? Not so much.

"When I first got involved, I thought everything takes so long," she recalled. "I thought that wouldn't happen with me. I've really come to understand it. The longer you take, the more debate, the more painful, the better the decision it is. There's less animosity or naysayers that come to the table because they've had the chance to be heard. It takes a long time to get things through government. That was the way it was designed. You answer every question, then move forward. I can't believe how many times I thought (something) would start this

way and it ended this way (instead). I thought I was going to be a change agent."

Part of that was the realization the mayor is simply one voice in a group.

"You sit in a chair. You're not accomplishing that stuff," Christopher said. "Everyone else is doing the heavy lifting. You are not acting alone. It takes six other councilors, it takes a myriad of volunteers. I've been exceedingly blessed to be surrounded by such talented people. Our little city has been able to accomplish more than larger cities due to the community spirit."

The outgoing mayor pointed to the Big Toy project as an example.

"We are absolutely going to build the Big Toy," Christopher said. "When has Keizer not built something we said we would? We always

"We're kind of a Honey Pot kind of community"

– Lore Christopher

At city council meeting responding to testimony about building flush bathrooms at some city parks. March 5, 2012



execute."

Another example came when Christopher was asked what – if anything – in Keizer should bear her name as a reminder of her contribu-

"You don't have politicians up here. What you have are neighbors helping neighbors."

Regarding the installation of new city councilors. January 7, 2005

Salem "either joins us as partners...or we divorce them."

Regarding efforts to expand urban growth boundaries and bring more industry to Keizer. June 10, 2011

"I'm feeling decadent tonight. I've got bad hair and no underwear."

Remarks at Chamber awards banquet. January 25, 2003

tions.

"I have no idea," she said. "I don't mean to sound flip when I say this, but that's not really important to me. I don't need to have the Christopher something. When I drive down Chemawa Road and see the community center, I know we built it. When I go to Keizer Station, I can buy socks and underwear. Every summer when I'm down (at Keizer Rapids Park), I'm so proud of that. That's all mine and that's all yours. We all did it together."

Christopher said the team concept she sees at the city level has seeped into all aspects of her life.

"I guess what I've learned is politics is a team sport," she



Lore Christopher | Keizer Mayor 2001–2015

said. "You don't do anything individually. For example, when we built our cabin in Bend, I had my seven others. I'm just so used to making a decision in committee. I value the opinion of those people I trust. It can even be your opponent."

Speaking of opponent, only twice in her seven campaigns for mayor did Christopher face an opponent. That included her last campaign in 2012 when she faced councilor David McKane, with whom Christopher had memorably clashed in 2011. While not mentioning McKane by name, Christopher did seem to reference him when asked if she had any regrets from her time as mayor.

"I sometimes speak out too quickly," Christopher said. "I've heard from time to time I was brusque with

someone, or hurt someone's feelings. I felt terrible. I don't want to do that. In interpersonal relationships with the city council, there were times when things got more heated than they should have. I didn't need to be the person to add fuel to the fire."

Along those lines, Christopher's advice for Clark and other councilors is to get along with others, even in the midst of disagreements.

"Be accessible and be kind," Christopher said. "We can disagree and not be disagreeable. I don't have to punch you or be mean to you. We've had folks be angry, who said you don't listen. Well, maybe we didn't agree, but we did listen. Because these are issues that hit close to home, folks are very emotionally invested. Our job is not to get into

that but to keep looking into the future. Don't alienate those folks. I can have a conversation with any of those people who have spoken."

Christopher herself was one of those folks not long after moving to Keizer in 1988, driven to speak up about the needs for improved parks in Keizer.

"It truly was I was a young family with young kids," said Christopher, who has worked in human resources for years and is currently a human resources director for the state. "My daughter was 6 or 7 and I had a son who was 2. Keizer did not have a lot of amenities for parks. I lived in those parks and I knew others were as well. I got involved in the Parks Board. I wanted swing sets and big toys in our parks. They were expensive.

Right: Keizer Mayor Lore Christopher helps youth try out one of the new swings at Willamette Manor Park after dedicating the new playground equipment on Tuesday, June 25, 2013.



Left: Keizer Mayor Lore Christopher, shown unveiling the Walsh's Landing sign during RIVERfair festivities at Keizer Rapids Park in August 2013.



Right: Lore modeled her Hawaiian gear for the Parrothead Party at the 2007 Iris Festival.



Above: Keizer City Councilor Marlene Quinn (left) and Mayor Lore Christopher (right) accepted their ALS ice bucket challenge in August 2014, having ice water dumped on them at the end of the McNary Blue Day.