

## Falls café reopens Under new management

*By Melissa Wagoner*

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Char Hawkins has been managing snack bars for 23 years but her newest venture, the South Falls Café, located inside the South Falls Lodge at Silver Falls State Park, surpasses all the rest – especially when it comes to ambiance.

“It’s beautiful out here,” Hawkins confirmed. “The fresh air, trees and birds. I leave my stress behind as I get closer and closer to the park each day.”

A graduate of the Business Enterprise Training program – a course offered by the Oregon Commission for the Blind – Hawkins began managing her first snack bar in May 1998 thanks in part to the Randolph Sheppard Vending Facility Program – which assists those who are legally blind access business opportunities located on federal and state properties.

“I like the challenge of something new and to build a business from scratch,” Hawkins said of her decision to apply for the opportunity to manage the South Falls Café, particularly because it has been closed for over a year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Opening for business during the long Memorial Day weekend, Hawkins hit the ground running.

“One thing I didn’t anticipate was the incredible number of snacks and drinks we would sell,” Hawkins – who oversees an average of 800 transactions each week with the help of 11 staff members – said. “We’re still getting used to that.”

And it’s not just drinks and snacks, the menu also boasts a variety of sandwiches, wraps and salads as well.

“[T]he South Falls Burger is a big hit,” Hawkins said when asked for a list of the café’s hottest sellers, “but we’re also selling a lot of Samuel Boardman Breakfast Burritos, a local Portland ice cream favorite, Ruby Jewel ice cream sandwiches, and Italian sodas.”

Although currently the bulk of the café’s customers stem from the park’s estimated 1.1 million visitors each year, Hawkins is hoping to attract local customers as well, especially during the coming winter.

“[F]or the winter months we’re starting to think about the seasonal offerings such as soups and more hot menu items,” Hawkins said.

But whether the customers are tourists or locals, staying for dinner or just grabbing a drink to-go, Hawkins’ goal is for every patron to have a wonderful experience.

“We want to provide the best service we can for the park visitors,” she emphasized.

The South Falls Café is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. inside the South Falls Lodge in the heart of Silver Falls State Park.