

**Siuslaw News**  
**P.O. Box 10**  
**Florence, OR 97439**

# Opinion

## EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE  
 For the Siuslaw News

### Liz Iabichello



happen," Liz said. "It's unpredictable. What I like about this work is that we face something different every day. No two calls are ever alike."

Camaraderie runs deep among volunteer firefighters as they coordinate family life with other jobs, weekly drills, comprehensive training and community service.

According to her colleagues, Liz always steps up to lend support for another firefighter. That's why she's affectionately called "Mama Bear" around the station.

"You name it, she's there," declared SVFR Fire Chief Jim Langborg. "She's one of our most active volunteers who spends 85 percent of her life in the service of others." Add two other high-intensity jobs and a long track record as a wife and working mom.

Liz remains humbly reticent to take any credit, a hallmark of her profession.

"It's not about me but about the whole team working together," she said. "All I really do is try to connect people. If I ask for help, half the department is there to lend a hand."

Liz and her fellow firefighters face constant uncertainty in a world where accidents happen and things can go wrong. More than just squelching a fire, their response involves quelling distress, often under extreme conditions with pounds of heavy equipment and short on sleep, remaining collected for others during a calamity. Perhaps that explains Liz's distinctly calm demeanor.

"It's all about trying to stop people's pain and suffering," she said. "When it's all coming apart, we try



CATHERINE J. ROURKE

**Suited up and on standby, volunteer firefighter Liz Iabichello is always ready for the next call.**

to hold it together."

Liz gets plenty of opportunities for that in two other part-time jobs as an Emergency Room tech at Peace Harbor Medical Center and as an intermediate EMT at Western Lane Ambulance District.

"If they need help, I come running, often in the middle of the

night," she said. "I sleep with one eye open and one foot on the floor."

Every job has its mundane tasks, and firefighting requires routine maintenance and equipment checks, station chores, staff meetings, special projects and ongoing education. Firefighters also teach fire prevention and support local fundraisers.

"We all pitch in where we can, and we just love to help," Liz said. "It's unique for a community to have this level of unity and coordinated efforts with different agencies and volunteers coming together to provide such services. We are all one ... it might be a firefighter, a paramedic or a police officer, but we are all here to help."

Life is not all about sirens for Liz who often enjoys long beach walks with her husband, Craig.

"We're really beach bums at heart," she said.

The couple discovered Florence during a honeymoon on the Oregon coast and made the move from the San Fernando Valley in 1994.

"I've never seen such a giving community," she said. "I am so proud to call Florence my home because of this wonderful community of volunteers."

All hours and no glamour, emergency response requires an unflinching ability to handle unimaginable trauma with heroic stoicism. Yet Liz and her colleagues seek no recognition for their exemplary service.

"I have this absolute desire to make people's worst moment a little bit better," she said. "It's all about trying to stop their pain and suffering. We're really just ordinary people put in extraordinary circumstances."

*Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning writer, journalist and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. She may be contacted at CJRditor@gmail.com.*

## LETTERS

### Deck the hall

On Saturday, a group of Siuslaw High School wrestlers came to the Disabled American Veterans hall to decorate our tree. Wasting no time, they had the tree decked out and ready to shine.

The members of the Florence DAV Chapter 23 would like to thank each and every wrestler for their kindness and support to the American veterans. God bless them all.

David Burkett  
 Treasurer, Florence DAV

### Changing Columbus Day

What is next — changing Christmas to a different holiday? I'm with you, Tony ("Create Another Day Instead," Nov. 21).

Leo Nencini  
 Florence

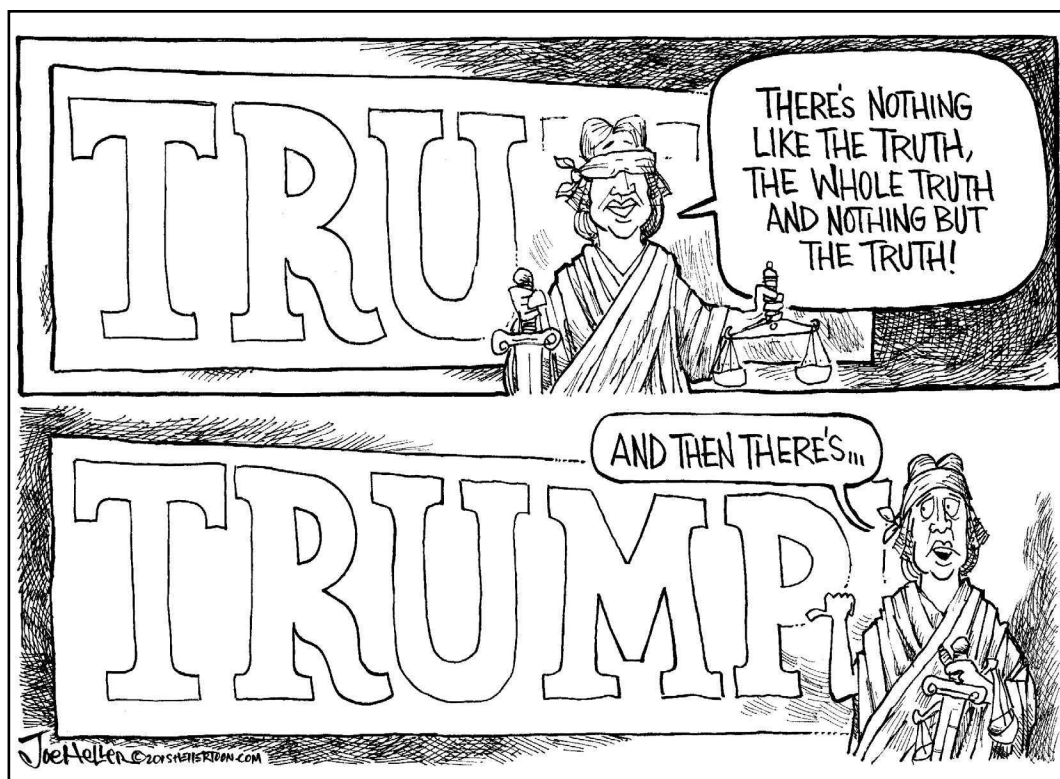
### Christmas Store success

The Florence Area Humane Society (FAHS) Christmas Store wrapped up another very successful season on Nov. 30.

The store was packed with everything from Christmas trees and gift-wrapping supplies to gift items for young and old. Everything was priced at incredibly affordable prices and all donated by residents and local businesses.

The store was manned by volunteers daily through the month of November.

On behalf of all FAHS volunteers, and especially on behalf of the dogs and cats waiting for



a forever home of their own, a most sincere thank you, for without great community support this wonderful event would be impossible.

As always, all proceeds will benefit the Florence Area Humane Society, helping to feed and care for the many wonderful dogs and cats each waiting for their own forever home.

Lynda Bare  
 Volunteer, FAHS

### We must speak out

Donald Trump recently gave an interview advocating for a registry for all Muslims in America. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill with restrictions on Syrian refugees coming into this country, restrictions so tight as to completely keep Syrian refugees out of this country, people who are fleeing from terrorists.

I am sickened. Americans are better than that. Martin Niemöller, a prominent Protestant pastor who spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps, once said:

"First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out —

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out —

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out —

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me."

We must speak out. We must vote.

Marybeth Marengo  
 Florence

### Christmas in Florence

The Christmas spirit arrived in Florence this past Saturday afternoon. Santa arriving in a fire truck with lots of children and parents waiting with anticipation and joy.

The City of Florence providing festive hay rides along Bay Street and the interpretive center beautifully decorated along with the lighting of the Christmas tree made me feel so happy and proud to be a part of our community.

We should all be proud of our city. Also, a big thanks to Cal Applebee, executive director of the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, for his hard work and dedication to our city.

Gary Foglio  
 Florence

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County. Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed.

All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone number for verification.

Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received. Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published. All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

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