

# OPINION

## Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address, and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

### Dark skies

To the Editor:

I was pleased to read in *The Nugget* about the city making its Dark Skies Ordinance a priority. Standing on our front porch the other night, it was quite striking to watch the full "wolf" moon rise in the eastern skies. The moonlight was so bright you could read the headlines of *The Nugget* by its glow. A midnight stroll around the neighborhood could easily be done without the aid of a flashlight. Still, I couldn't help but notice that some neighbors had their porch lights on. Hmm... It takes a while to break old habits. I loved to go fishing when I was a boy and would keep every fish I caught regardless of size. Later, when I first heard about "catch and release" and "barbless hooks" it just didn't make sense to me. Hey, those

are "my" fish! But at some point my thinking turned around. My habit changed. A second article in *The Nugget* entitled "Light Pollution Affects Everyone" underscored the importance the daily cycle of light and dark has on the health of plants and animals. For example, birds and butterflies do most of their migration at night. Bright lights can confuse and kill them.

You can adjust your outdoor lighting by lowering the wattage of your bulb, buying lights that point down, or adding a motion-detector device to what you already have. The cheapest thing you can do and one that will save you money is to just turn off your outdoor lights before you retire for the evening.

Changing habits takes time but at some point you "get it." We are all part of this natural world

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## Sisters Weather Forecast

### Wednesday

January 26 • Sunny

49/24



### Thursday

January 27 • Sunny

47/26



### Friday

January 28 • Partly Cloudy

51/28



### Saturday

January 29 • Partly Cloudy

52/31



### Sunday

January 30 • Mostly Cloudy

49/33



### Monday

January 31 • Snow to Rain

43/29



### Tuesday

February 1 • Mostly Cloudy

44/30



# The Nugget Newspaper, LLC

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## A question of trust

By Jim Cornelius  
Editor in Chief

Someone asked Sheriff Shane Nelson the other night whether the ODOT cameras that have proliferated across Central Oregon could be used for law enforcement purposes. Nelson said that that would require a warrant and, to his recollection, it's never happened in Deschutes County.

The question carried a clear implication of concern over a high degree of surveillance creeping into daily life. Nelson noted that "anything can be used for bad" and that there must be a level of trust between agencies and citizens about the use of technologies.

There was a certain irony to the remark, because Nelson's appearance before People's Rights Oregon 5 (PR OR5) had stirred controversy due to it being scheduled "behind closed doors." Concerns raised by media and local citizens reflect a certain lack of trust over what an elected official might be talking about with a controversial group. For their part, PR OR5 planned to prohibit media and the public from their meeting because they don't trust journalists to depict them fairly, and they don't want other activists disrupting their meetings.

Lack of trust is a pandemic of its own in contemporary American society — and it's percolated into our local community.

To a certain extent, lack of trust is a reasonable default position. We humans are hardwired to be suspicious of others. The conditions of most of our evolutionary history made decisions about trust a life-or-death proposition. Does that group of horsemen on the hill want to trade with us, or kill us all? We can hope for the former, but it's safer to assume the latter.

Trouble is, modern society doesn't function very well without "social trust." That means trusting individuals and institutions that are outside our personal in-group or tribe. And that can be hard to do.

Scandinavian countries, which consistently hit the top of the scale in indices of "happiness," enjoy a high level of social

trust. Journalist Megan McArdle wrote an essay on Denmark, where "trust" kept coming up as a key element of a functional, happy society:

*"Trust," said a photographer, when I asked him the best thing about living in Denmark. "If we agree on something, you would live up to that." That confidence, he added, "makes everyday life more comfortable."*

*"There's a lot of social trust," a speechwriter at the culture ministry told me. "Farmers putting out their products by the roadside, and then putting a jar and saying, 'Put money in this.' It's very common here, and it works."*

*Las Olsen, chief economist at Danske Bank, said: "We have this high trust, and it is a huge asset. It is very good for productivity that you don't have to spend a lot of time and money checking everything."*

A country as vast and diverse as the United States can never have the same kind or level of social trust as a tiny, homogenous nation like Denmark. And we probably don't want to try to be Denmark, anyway. But we have to do better in the arena of social trust, because it's clear that the social fabric is coming apart at the seams.

Improving social trust starts with individual trust. We each have to work to be worthy of trust. That doesn't just mean not stealing from the tip jar. It means checking our biases and our double standards and reaching out to others so that we can assess others for who they are, not whom we assume or prefer to believe they are. It means that our institutions have to be forthcoming and transparent, and that those who comprise them remember that they serve the citizens, not the other way around.

Trust requires a lot of care. Trust is built, and it takes time. Trust can be broken in an instant.

There's always risk associated with riding out to parley with that group of horsemen on the hill. There's vulnerability reaching out a hand instead of a fist. But there's risk in not doing so, as well — risk of alienation, impoverishment, and the erosion of what common bonds we might have.

## Graduating on the jobsite...



Students from Heart of Oregon's YouthBuild program helped build the two newest Habitat for Humanity homes in Sisters. The young people celebrated their graduation from the YouthBuild program at the job site during a home dedication ceremony on Thursday, January 20.

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK