

OPINION

Is The Dalles a better place now that it is #thedalles?

I'VE BEEN LIVING IN #thedalles for a long time now, and recently had to ask myself, do ilovethedalles.com?

When I first moved to the city to work as a photojournalist for The Dalles Daily Chronicle (a small daily newspaper publishing six days a week) I recall a man telling me that unless you had lived in town for at least a couple of decades, you were perceived by locals as being one of "them" as opposed to one of "us." Strangers—those who were not born here—were, like children, to be seen but not heard. New ideas died on arrival.

The city, he said, was low and mean and unkind to strangers. I was surprised he thought so—but then I'd worked as a journalist for newspapers on the Oregon Coast and was pretty intimate with low and mean. #thedalles wasn't that bad.

From the Editor

Mark Gibson



"You'll have to wait till you have been here for a couple of decades, maybe they'll listen," the man said.

Is #thedalles low and mean? Looking back on my first decade in town, I would probably use the word "depressed." #thedalles was a long time healing from the closure of the aluminum plant—a major employer—not just once but twice. Development has brought jobs, but bumped up costs as well.

But the city, even then, was putting up a fight. The murals on Federal Street between First and Second Streets are a case in point.

The "historic" streetlights and paving stones throughout downtown are another. So is the Riverfront Trail, despite the fact that it remains incomplete (there are those fighting still to maintain and complete it.)

Columbia Gorge Community College, the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, Fort Dalles Readiness Center, the Port of The Dalles Industrial Park—all were formed or transformed in the last two decades by those who knew #thedalles was gritty and tough and saw a future for it.

The "historic" identity was also established long ago.

That said, I was a little surprised when the new murals went up downtown—they were *not* on a historical theme—and I didn't hear a single complaint.

They were out-of-the-ordinary, flamboyant and even cartoonish. And #thedalles went with the

flow, has even embraced it.

Perhaps the city has become more open to new ideas. Perhaps a few of the mean people have died (or are housed at the new jail and their children being educated at the new middle school.) Hard to know, impossible to say.

The times they are a changin'.

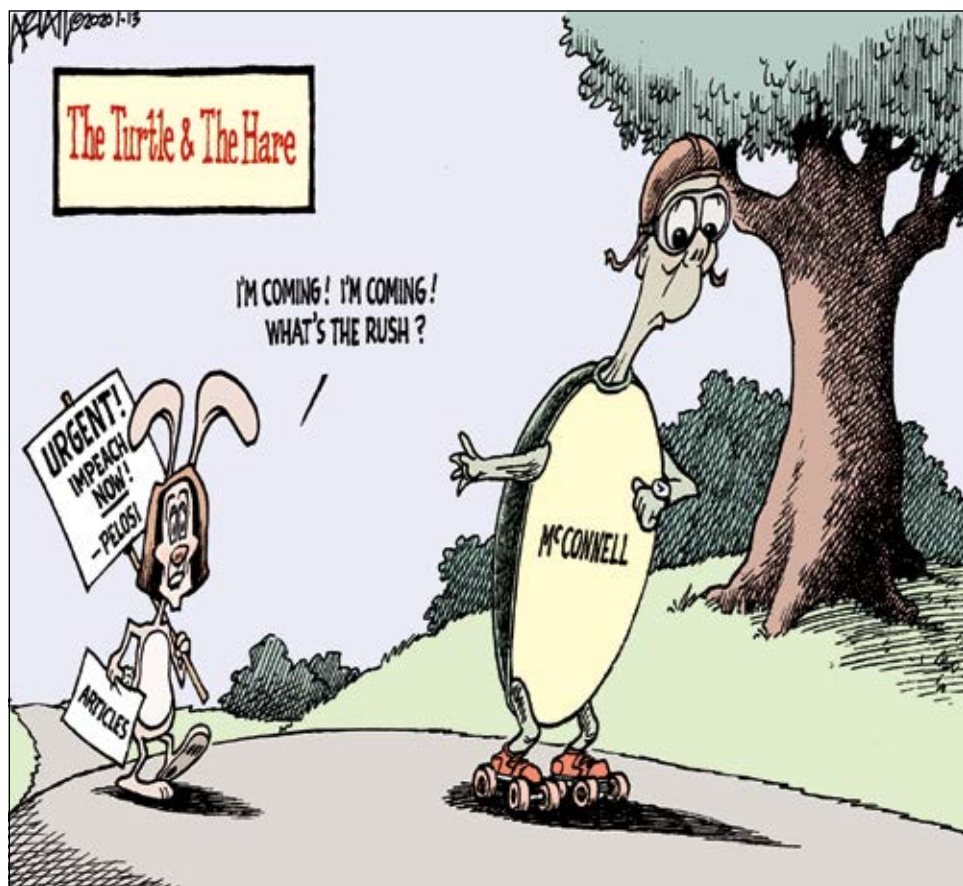
Again. During the Small Business Revolution airing of #thedalles as one of five contestant towns, I was struck by the number and variety of people attending the event. And that is the tip of the iceberg—at The Dalles Art Center they are altogetherthedalles.com, the City of The Dalles' beautification committee is going strong, Blue Zones Project The Dalles is helping clean things up on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and thedallesmainstreet.org is vibrant and active.

It all feels very new—what with

all the .orgs, .coms and #hashtags.

But it all feels very old as well—I remember the guys in "moon suits" cleaning the mountains of pigeon dung from the Commodore when it was gutted and remodeled. I remember the Sunshine Mill Winery when it was a decrepit eyesore on the east end of town, everything inside covered in historic flour dust. We are, however, in a better place today than we were back then—the people of #thedalles aren't so low and mean, and you no longer have to be here for a couple of decades before your voice is heard.

Editors note: In truth, the original question—do ilovethedalles.com?—has gone unanswered above. Sometimes yes. It's fun seeing a new crowd recognize the unique qualities of #thedalles. Sometimes no. But unless your just visiting, every town is mix of the good, the bad and the ugly.



YOUR VOICE

Christmas meal successful

To the editor,
Another Christmas at Community Meals, and we passed out bags to our diners. We had a huge crowd. The best number I can come up with around 90 people, who were served a meal of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables and a roll. All the seats were filled, people were standing, holding their trays and eating. Some were outside at the picnic tables.

Our bags included a hat, scarf, gloves, socks, washcloth, soap razor, comb, toothpaste, toothbrush, shampoo, dental floss, lotion, one dozen cookies and a \$10 gift card for a local fast food restaurant. We figured each bag was worth about \$22.

Thank you to all those who baked cookies. Each year when I ask for 50 dozen cookies, I kind of panic. But generous people come through.

Also thanks to Alvena, who decorated all 50 bags. Thanks also to Lana; she made all the fleece scarves. Other donors include Walt, Marjory, Donna, my brother Ray, his wife Joan and Debbie, who contributed 100 toothbrushes. All these people made this project successful.

I shop all year long for these items, looking for bargains and sales. I already started for next year, buying 38 pairs of men's socks. Please bring me items from motel stays, or purchases.

My brother and his wife were here four days; they brought their motor home down. They helped pack the bags and we transported them to the Community Meal site in the motor home—that was a big help, usually I have to take two cars to deliver them.

Everyone appreciated the bags. It's usually the only gift they receive. That makes this project worthwhile.

Thank you, all who donated.
Klea Espy
Community Meal board member

Good cooks for hard times

To the editor,
My name is Trevor Ryan Lesley and I am currently an inmate at the NORCOR facility in The Dalles.

I would like to bring praise to Carol and Rose, a duo of coordinators in the kitchen at the NORCOR adult facility.

Yes, I understand as an inmate my rights are limited, and my word may be questionable. But I have had the pleasure of working in the NORCOR kitchen for over a month...and so as not to insult my integrity beyond what the label "inmate" already does, let's just say I've had the opportunity to work in numerous kitchens throughout the northwest.

The NORCOR facility is by far one of the best I've witnessed. Carol, the head coordinator, is by far the most caring and functional coordinator in the industry, always making sure the food is delivered in a tasty and timely manner.

The lead coordinator, Rose, is often seen as a culinary wizard, meaning she can turn bologna into steak, so far as taste.

Nowadays it's rare to find people who really care about others just because it is the right thing to do. That means showing care and concern without expecting recognition.

This may not be a front-page story, but I strongly suggest someone investigate. If you ask the staff what they think of Carol and Rose as people and coordinators, I don't think you will find anyone who disagrees with me.

Trevor Ryan Wesley
The Dalles

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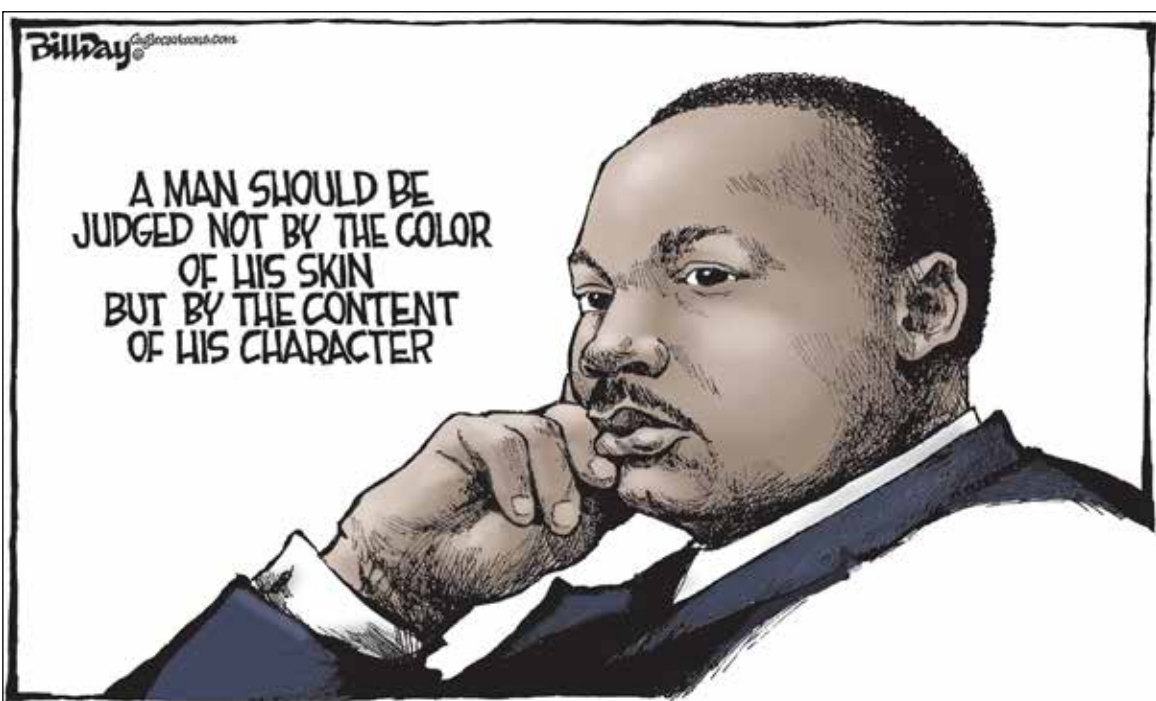
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