

Bidding adieu to 2016 in words of local authors

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

A tradition among community newspapers is the "year in review" article, typically published the week after Christmas. In the shadow of New Year's Day, it documents the waning year's biggest news, from bad weather to good citizens.

Giving the old journalistic ritual a new twist, this story bids goodbye to 2016 using the words of Silverton's own writers. A few local authors faithfully post their work online, and the pieces featured here represent the community's three best blog postings of 2016. The collection doesn't claim to be exhaustive or authoritative, but each entry tells a story worth reading.

1. Good-bye Normal Jean: Thank you for Loving my Special Needs Daughter Silverton's iconic florist, Norma Jean Branstetter, was unforgettable, and this beautifully written story by Linda Atwell tells us one more reason why. In vibrant detail, she recounts how Norma Jean found ways – both large and small – to quietly enrich the life of Atwell's special needs daughter, Lindsey, over the years.

She writes: "As Lindsey and I talked about the loss of this incredible woman, my daughter told me, 'She always made me feel special.' Indirectly, Norma Jean made me feel special too. I remember a Mother's Day when Lindsey asked me what kind of flowers were my favorites. A few days later, my girl came home clutching a bouquet of red, yellow, and purple tulips. 'These only cost me \$3.00,' Lindsey said. Her hands tremored as she handed me the flowers. 'Norma Jean gave me a real bargain.' The tulips were worth far more than three bucks. But Lindsey probably didn't have any more money at the time, so Norma Jean made it work." The read the whole story, log on to <http://outonear.com/good-bye-norma-jean-thank-you-for-loving-my-special-needs-daughter/>. Atwell has written extensively about the joys and

challenges of parenting her daughter and will release a book next year.

2. Beyond the Diet: 10 New Year's Resolutions for Your Neighborhood "Most New Year's resolutions are focused on personal improvement. Get in shape. Quit smoking. Get organized. Read more. These are great, but what if we made some resolutions to help improve our places too?" writes Silverton author John Pattison.

Best known for co-authoring the book, "Slow Church," Pattison has a lot to say about the business of community building, and his blog about New Year's resolutions was an interesting read in 2016. Readers will find it applies to 2017 too.

Some of Pattison's ideas for New Year's resolutions: (1) Meet your neighbors, (2) Go on walks, (3) Host a soup night, (4) Build a little free library, (5) Visit a local senior or shut-in, and more. For the remaining five proposals, log on to <http://slowchurch.com/neighborhood-resolutions/>.

3. Everything is Temporary

This blog post by author and geologist Naseem Rakha, who penned "The Crying Tree," takes readers on a hike through the Grand Canyon. Now buried in snow, the canyon is inaccessible until spring, making Rakha's journey almost surreal. With a professional writer's cultivated simplicity, simultaneously stark and graceful, she describes tall lava columns, the Colorado River and the cacti around her. For Rakha, there are lessons to be learned here – lessons of humility, perspective and peace.

"It's one of the reasons I come to this canyon. All those years piled on top of one another, a lexicon of what's been. What is my existence in all of that? All of human civilization would amount to barely a hairline in these walls. The idea calms me, puts my own losses in perspective," she writes. Her post can be found online at <http://naseemrakha.com/2016/02/everything-is-temporary/>.

More than 100,000 Oregon residents join health care enrollment rush

LAUREN E HERNANDEZ
STATESMAN JOURNAL

More than 100,000 Oregon residents have signed up for health care through the Affordable Care Act, joining a nationwide dash for coverage.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services released a snapshot of national enrollment in health care from November 1 through Dec. 19 with 6.4 million consumers signing up for health insurance — 2.05 million new consumers and 4.31 million renewals.

In Oregon, 112,864 consumers selected plans, a 9 percent increase from last year, according to Jonathan Gold, Press Secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"I was attending local enrollment events in Oregon and I could see the energy to get people covered," said Andy Slavitt, acting administrator of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Slavitt said half of Oregon residents could obtain health coverage for \$75 or less a month.

Most marketplace consumers should be able to find similar coverage costs in premiums, Slavitt said. The department generally refers to marketplace consumers as those in the 39 states that use the HealthCare.gov platform, including Oregon.

"It turns out that \$75 per month is an affordable number for consumers and it changes their lives," Slavitt said.

Residents in Marion and Polk counties have 56 different plans available from seven carriers, said Jake Sunderland, public information officer for the Department of Consumer and Business Services.

While Sunderland said rate increases were approved for every carrier for 2017 health plans, consumers can remedy the increase by applying for financial assistance while signing up for health care at HealthCare.gov.

"Financial assistance is going to make up for most of that increase. The way it is calculated is income based, so if you make a certain income you only have to pay x-percent of your income on your health insurance," Sunderland said.

Individuals may see different rate increases depending on their age, income and smoking habits.

As an example of the varying rates, a 21-year-old, single non-tobacco user could see up to a 58 percent rate increase with the standard silver plan provided by Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon. A 60-year-old person under the same criteria could see a 24 percent increase under the same plan.

"It's hard to say what any individual change is going to be," Sunderland said.

A 40-year-old resident living in Marion and Polk counties choosing one of the standard "middle of the road" silver plans, premium costs range from \$312 to \$414. That range does not account for reductions based on financial assistance, Sunderland said.

Sunderland said the Department of Consumer and Business Services does not calculate averages for premium costs because every county has different health needs and hospital availability.

He said Marion and Polk counties have a reasonable number of carrier options for consumers with just one carrier shy of Portland-Metro region's nine carriers. The lowest number of carrier options are found in some rural areas, with

five carriers.

He urges residents to do their research while choosing or reapplying for a plan that works best according to their income and health needs.

"It's complicated, especially when you're looking at 56 different plans," Sunderland said. "We recommend working with one of our licensed insurance agents."

Enrollments spiked on a national level with an increase of 400,000 compared to last year, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

In Portland, a city considered to be a top designated market area in the HealthCare.gov platform, 73,988 consumers selected health plans through December 19.

While it's difficult to pinpoint a specific reason for the nationwide spike in enrollment, HHS secretary Sylvia Burwell said she hopes it's explained by people merely educating themselves on the benefits of signing up for healthcare.

"It's a combination of things but the issue of affordability is so important to folks," Burwell said.

Burwell pointed to the plan's dismissal of annual or lifetime limits on health care for one factor in the increase, citing a woman she met in Florida who reached her limit for chemotherapy treatment before the Affordable Health Care Act was put in place.

"People are getting more educated on the financial security of the benefits," Slavitt said.

He said while health care plans can change every year, even before the Affordable Care Act, Slavitt said it's important for people to remember the law is designed to protect people from those changes.

Although Burwell and Slavitt said they're excited to see the nationwide boost in enrollment, they said the presidential election did create "headwind" in the discussion of Affordable Care Act's future – specifically following President-Elect Donald Trump's call to repeal and replace the healthcare plan.

Burwell said there are constant conversations with everyone from President Barack Obama to insurance companies and the Department of Health & Human Services regarding how agencies would deal with a possible repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

As of Dec. 19, Burwell said call centers have received 38,000 callers curious to learn about the potential effects on their health coverage in the event of a repeal.

If the Affordable Care Act were repealed, Slavitt said roughly 475,000 Oregon residents could lose health coverage.

"That would have a profound impact on Oregon," Slavitt said.

Burwell said the enrollment increases represent growth in the right direction for healthcare. She hopes to ensure the conversation surrounding health care for United States residents moves from "rhetoric to reality" by listening to what issues matter to people.

"It's important to remember even in the current headwind, the debate that's occurring here in the HHS and in Washington D.C., that the Affordable Care Act is a product that consumers want, and need to sign up as an expression that they need this," Burwell said.

To explore health care options, visit HealthCare.gov or CuidadoDeSalud.gov.

Marion County deputies continue DUI patrols

WHITNEY M. WOODWORTH
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Marion County deputies are continuing their increased DUI patrols through the New Year's holiday, officials said. Grants from the Oregon State Sheriff's Association and the Oregon Department of Transportation are helping fund the increased patrols.

"Deputies will be working overtime in an attempt to detect and arrest those drivers who choose to operate their vehicles under the influence," sheriff's officials said in a statement.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, deputies working specialized DUII overtime arrested four drivers for driving under the influence.

According to Oregon Department of



MARION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Marion County deputies are stepping up DUI patrols over the holiday.

Transportation statistics, DUI arrests and fatalities in Marion County declined from 2009 to 2013. During that five-year span, 64 people died in drug- and alcohol-related crashes.

Wurster

Continued from Page 1A

She brings a wealth of experience to us."

Among other past accomplishments, Wurster helped the City of Dayton develop a community center between 2009 and 2013. This included buying and renovating a Masonic lodge, as well as using the rejected site – as a new public works shop. In the end, the city "invested nearly \$1 million into the community with almost no cost to local taxpayers," due to grants, Wurster said.

She also walked Dayton through the process of

acquiring water rights to the Willamette River when its spring-fed water system was shut down. The city obtains water from its well field but needed a secondary source of water, she said. A collaborative request from Dayton and three other cities gained approval from the state, opening access to an additional 2 million gallons of water per day.

As Wurster starts with Silverton in January, she'll also begin a new position as president-elect of the Oregon City/County Management Association. As such, she is "well respected by other city managers in the state," Willoughby said.

She plans to relocate to take this new job. Saying

she's "always admired the city" and the way its "residents and city leadership embrace strategic opportunities for managed growth," she's planning to move to Silverton from Albany. She and her husband, Todd, have one son, who recently joined the Marines. When she's not working, Wurster especially enjoys traveling.

"Christy did her research on Silverton ... to be certain that she was a good fit for the community," Lewis said. "I am impressed with her background, her strong management and leadership skills, her community involvement, her relationship with staff and partners and her customer service focus."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Zenith Women's Club says thank you

The Silverton Zenith Woman's Club thanks the community of Silverton for all the help they received for their 2016 Tree of Giving project. Together, we were able to make Christmas a little brighter for 135 families (including 363 children) in the Silver Falls School District.

We wish to particularly thank:

Silverton Together for help with screening families; Drakes Crossing Nursery for the Christmas trees; Rite-Aid, Hi-School Pharmacy, Immanuel Lutheran Church,

St. Paul's Catholic Church, First Christian Church, Silver Creek Fellowship,

Silverton Friends Church and United Methodist Church for displaying the trees and accepting/storing individual gifts; The Palace Theater and Zebra Printing for the ad at the theater; Silverton Elks and Mt. Angel Oktoberfest Committee for their generous donations; Silverton Fire Department and Les Schwab for their toy drive; Silverton High School students for their drive and help with wrapping gifts; Silverton Senior Center knitters for all

the beautiful and warm hats, scarves and headbands they made and donated; and all the members of the community who donated money, purchased gifts and donated time wrapping gifts.

If we have missed anyone, we apologize in advance. Blessings on all and have a great new year!

Barbara Fischer-Chase, Silverton Zenith Woman's Club

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POLICE LOGS

SILVERTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Received calls from Dec. 12 to 18. Dec. 13

Stolen vehicle, 7:01 a.m., 200 Pioneer Drive.