

OUR VIEW

New year a time for reflection

As the new year descends upon us, it is fitting to step back and remember a few key items about our community, state and nation.

That might be a tall order for some if a casual glance at the news is any indication. For some in our great nation, a great deal of bitterness lingers in the wake of the impeachment of the president by the U.S. House of Representatives. That is understandable, up to a point.

Fact is, though, Trump will remain president through his four-year term. The Senate will not remove him from office, and he will run for re-election. It is time to move forward.

We are, it seems, bombarded with a steady diet of “what is wrong?” in our nation and communities. That isn’t all bad. The first step toward fixing any issue is a strong dose of the truth, and often the truth isn’t very appealing.

Yet it is critical when we reflect on the past year — and eye the future with hope — we all realize that overall, we are in a good shape as a nation. There are problems — no doubt about it — but there also are a lot of great things about America.

For one, regardless of the rhetoric piped into the big pop-culture machine of Americana, we remain a nation of laws and specific freedoms. We can, if we so choose, congregate together and protest peacefully. We still carry the right to defend ourselves. We are a nation governed by laws and a system of due process. We still can hold free elections.

In short, there is an array of good things about our nation and communities that should be remembered as the new year dawns. Locally, we remain a community that cares. We are a community that embraces change while preserving our most cherished traditions. We appear to collectively seek answers and develop solutions to challenges that arise.

Write to us

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters are limited to 350 words and must be signed and carry the author’s address and phone number (for verification purposes only).

We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We will not publish poetry, consumer complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Thank-you letters are discouraged.

Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.

Email your letters to news@lagrandeobserver.com or mail them to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850.

MY VOICE

My Voice columns should be 500 words. Submissions should include a portrait-type photograph of the author. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships.

We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those published elsewhere.

Send columns to La Grande Observer, 1406 5th St., La Grande, Ore., 97850, fax them to 541-963-7804 or email them to pwright@lagrandeobserver.com.



Moving into a new era of delivery

Happy New Year: The calendar has taken another faithful leap from the end of one year to the beginning of another and hopes are running high. January is often prime time for personal and professional reflection on the past 12 months and preparation for the future. It’s also a month of resolutions and improvement plans. We wipe the slate clean from the challenges and disappointments of the previous year and begin laying the foundation for a more successful and promising year ahead with anticipation. It’s a month of transition and change. If my newspaper career has taught me anything, it’s that change is inevitable — and necessary — but there will be bumps along the way.

Brace yourselves, loyal readers, as we embark together on yet another exciting adventure in newspapering.

One of my key initiatives for 2020 was to evaluate our customer service, including how to provide more reliable in-home delivery to subscribers and a better overall product. So much of the last few years of our operation and the decisions we made were based purely on survival. It’s refreshing to be able to refocus our attention and energy into rebuilding our brand and reconnecting with our readers and communities. Adding more value to your subscription and providing you the best product and service possible is once again our top priority.

Without a doubt, the most challenging facet of our business is delivery. The simple act of getting your newspaper from our office to your front door sounds pretty simple, doesn’t it? But it’s a job that has proven to be more difficult with each passing year. Finding and maintaining a carrier force has become a daily struggle and a trend we haven’t been able to buck. Our ability to provide consistent delivery to our subscribers is in constant jeopardy. It’s an exhausting cycle.

You might not know that your carrier isn’t an employee of The Observer or the Baker City Herald. They’re contracted haulers and self-employed. Gone are the days of the beloved “paper



FROM THE PUBLISHER
KARRINE BROGOITTI

route kid.” Our carrier force is made up primarily of retired folks and workers who aren’t looking for full-time employment but rather a way to supplement their income. Delivery of our product is a vital aspect of our operation.

What good is a breaking news story, a compelling photo or an advertising campaign if it doesn’t reach the homes of our readers? A shortage of carriers and recruitment challenges have forced the office staff at both newspapers to pitch in and deliver “down routes.” There’s been more than one occasion in which myself, reporters and advertising staff have delivered newspapers. I am fortunate our office culture has a “all hands on deck” mentality. While it’s a nice change of scenery for those of us who are chained to a desk most days, it’s not a model that can sustain itself long term.

And here’s where our adventure begins.

Beginning Tuesday, Feb. 4, The Observer and the Baker City Herald will convert our delivery method from contracted carrier to same-day U.S. Postal Service mail delivery. At the same time, we will shift our publishing days to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Shifting publishing days allows readers the advantage of receiving their coveted grocery sales ads on the day the sales start, expands our late-breaking news opportunity and puts us in a position to provide Friday night sports coverage and scores in our Saturday editions. It also sets the stage for getting your newspaper to the post office in time for same-day delivery by mail. A partnership with USPS allows us to hand off the delivery of our product to the experts, freeing up my staff to do what they do best — reporting on local news and events and helping promote and market businesses in our communities.

Shifting our publication days and moving from afternoon carrier delivery

to same-day delivery via postal carrier is a natural and industry-wide solution to delivery challenges and gives us the ability to fix inconsistencies. This is not a cost-cutting measure. There are no savings with this switch. It’s a decision based purely on our desire to ensure our valuable subscribers get the newspaper delivered to them, three days a week, on a consistent and predictable schedule they can rely on and with the most vetted, accurate, up-to-date local news coverage and advertising we can provide.

The conversion to mail distribution does mean the end of an era for our newspapers in terms of our delivery force. After nearly 125 years for The Observer and 150 years for the Baker City Herald, the last carrier-delivered newspaper will hit your doorstep Jan. 31. Our dedicated carriers waged war against unpredictable weather, late press times, aggressive dogs and disgruntled subscribers. It’s a difficult and often thankless gig — even under the most ideal circumstances. And rarely are the circumstances ideal.

There are few words that can express the gratitude we have for our carriers, past and present. They are truly the unsung heroes of our operation, and although we think that partnering for postal delivery is the right business decision to make, it is not easy to say goodbye to our delivery partners. I hope in the coming days and weeks as we transition our delivery that you will take a few minutes to visit with your carriers and to thank them for their service.

The foundation of a successful newspaper hinges on its commitment to its readers and customers. It’s my sincere hope our readers will embrace and appreciate these changes as inherently positive transitions in which The Observer and Baker City Herald fulfill our promise of providing the best product and delivery service possible — not just for the short-term, but in a way that is sustainable long into our future.

Karrine Brogoitti is the publisher of The Observer.

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Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-422-3110
Fax: 541-963-7804

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com
Website: www.lagrandeobserver.com
Street address: 1406 Fifth St., La Grande

POSTMASTER
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STAFF

Publisher.....Karrine Brogoitti	ClassifiedsDevi Mathson
Regional circulation directorKelli Craft	Home delivery advisor.....Amanda Fredrick
EditorPhil Wright	Customer service repMollie Lynch
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