

**OTHER VIEWS**

## Charlotte's Web; the awful price of this pandemic

The pandemic has turned our world upside down. We work from home. School is canceled indefinitely. Weddings, graduations, baptisms and all of the other indicia of the normal trajectory of a human life are suspended. This is what it must like to be in Limbo, that now defunct Catholic state of existence without boundary, but also without God. The anxiety is real, palpable and weighs on all of us. On some, though, the weight is much heavier.

There is a little girl who should have had no weights on her young shoulders. She should, after so many years of sorrow and pain, have been well and happy and enjoying the budding spring. She earned her hard-bought happiness through a sacrifice that no one anticipated. But the coronavirus stole from her the life she should have had.

Charlotte Figi was a child when she started having terrible seizures. Nothing could stop them, and their violence and unpredictability caused her desperate parents to look everywhere for

**CHRISTINE FLOWERS**  
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

a cure, or at least some respite from the tremors and the terror. Her condition, called Dravet Syndrome, was a rare form of epilepsy that couldn't be controlled by any known medication. She wasn't expected to live past the age of 10.

But her parents heard of the beneficial effects of medical cannabis, and moved to Colorado, where the drug was legal, to see if it might be able to help their little girl. And it did. Her journey was documented in the film "Weed," which showed the ways that the non-psychoactive drug helped her. A special strain of it was created, and named in her honor, "Charlotte's Web." And she inspired thousands of other people, children with seizure disorders and the parents who loved them, providing hope that there might finally be a cure for this debilitating condition.

Tragically, Charlotte was unable to resist the devastating impact of COVID-19. While it was not conclusively established that she had died of the virus because initial tests came back negative, it is likely that she became infected in early March and by the time she was tested for the condition, it was too late. Because of the respiratory problems brought on by the virus, Charlotte began to have seizures again, one of which caused her to go into cardiac arrest. She passed away on Tuesday. She was 13.

Like Ryan White, the child who provided a face for the AIDS crisis a generation ago, Charlotte Figi humanized the struggle for those who sought solace in revolutionary and controversial treatments. Because of her willingness to go public with the illness, and because of her parents' deep love, Charlotte was able to remove the stigma that had been unfairly placed on medical cannabis. People were finally able to see just how this treatment, in its many variations, could save lives.

I watched a segment on CNN where Sanjay Gupta spoke about Charlotte, and could barely keep his composure. The doctor had been a vocal and notable critic of the benefits of medical cannabis, doubting its efficacy (although rarely its safety). However, after having spent significant time with Charlotte, and telling her story, he became convinced of the truly therapeutic impact CBD could have, particularly on children whose immune systems are much more delicate.

It is particularly cruel that Charlotte Figi could survive and become a success story at such a young age, and give very substantial hope to other children who suffered from seizure disorders, but then would succumb to the pandemic that is swirling around us. In words that approached poetry, Charlotte's mother announced her death by writing "Charlotte is no longer suffering. She is seizure-free forever."

While there is some comfort in the knowledge that this warrior child is finally at peace, the price that she had to pay is far too high. This virus has stolen far too much, far too many moments of joy, far too many lives, and even the unappreciated pleasures of normalcy.

That Charlotte Figi was among these losses triggers a sadness that transcends normal comprehension. But her legacy, as that of Ryan, lives on in the memory of those who themselves will live on, because of their journeys, and their courage.

**About the Author**

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## Your views

### Boyd Rasmussen is a man of his word

We are pleased to support Boyd Rasmussen in his reelection. Our county has been fortunate to have such an experienced, knowledgeable and trustworthy sheriff.

Boyd is a man of his word who cares about the welfare of the people he works diligently to serve and protect. He has done an exceptional job serving the citizens of Union County as our sheriff. Let's help that continue. Boyd has our vote.

*Michael and Tracy Partney  
La Grande*

### Boyd Rasmussen is positive and helpful

I came to know Boyd Rasmussen in 2012 when I was on the Elgin city council. He was there to help us find a new police chief for the vacated position. We ended up choosing the Union County Sheriff's Office as our primary law enforcement.

As we worked on the task together, I found Boyd to be a very professional and likeable person. We stayed in touch afterward. He was always very approachable and we respected each other's ideas. We became friends and he made me feel like part of his family. He has helped me through some very tough times.

Boyd has always been helpful to his neighbors and to his church. He is also very involved in Union County youth programs and is a mentor to many kids. I believe he has touched a lot of people's lives in a positive way.

Being sheriff has allowed Boyd to interact with people in a positive and helpful way. I am glad Boyd Rasmussen is the sheriff. He has my vote

### LETTERS DEADLINE

The Observer will not run candidate endorsement letters of more than 400 words. The deadline for letters to the editor is noon Wednesday, April 22. This allows for responses before Election Day, if necessary. We run the letters on a first-come, first-served basis. Letters must include the name of the author, their city of residence and a daytime phone number so we can verify the letter. You can send letters to The Observer, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande 97850, but we prefer you email letters to news@lagrandeobserver.com. Having the letter directly in the body of an email makes it easier to place it in the paper.

Saturday, April 25, is the last day we will publish endorsement letters. Letters we receive after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 19.

and my friendship.

*James Brainerd  
La Grande*

### Sheriff Rasmussen leads with passion and commitment

I have been a longtime teacher and coach at Cove schools, now retired, and am in full support of Boyd Rasmussen being reelected as Union County sheriff.

We all love our county and want what's best for it. Having a safe place to raise our families is of paramount importance to us. It's important that our law enforcement is there to pro-

tect us when we need them the most. Sheriff Rasmussen has been doing an amazing job of this over the past 16 years. He and his deputies have been doing their jobs valiantly and giving us peace of mind.

I first became aware of Boyd as an outstanding athlete at Imbler High School many years ago. What stood out to me was his intensity to be the best player on the court. What a competitor he was. You could see that his teammates looked for him to give leadership. He was a total player who knew what his role was in the success of his team.

These many years later nothing has changed. He leads his team of deputies with passion and commitment. That is clear in speaking with him about his people and his efforts to put the best "player," "on the court." His most recent hire was patrol deputy Kyle Witty here in Cove. Sheriff Rasmussen and his highly trained deputies prove themselves every day. They are a shining example to our county. We are very lucky to have this department working for us.

Boyd is a local-grown boy who grew up in Imbler and was raised by a loving, caring family. This gives Boyd a good understanding of the people he is working for. He understands our community and how important it is to keep it safe, as he has a vested interest in maintaining the rural lifestyle we enjoy in this valley.

For these reasons I urge you to vote for Boyd Rasmussen for Union County sheriff. We need his experience and management skills for another four years.

*Skip Pereira  
Cove*

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Donald Trump:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

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**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

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Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov.

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

**State Sen. William S. Hansell (29th District/Pendleton):** Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., S-423, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1729. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/hansell. Email: sen.billhansell@oregonlegislature.gov.

**State Rep. Greg Barreto (58th District/Cove):** Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-384, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1458. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/barreto. Email: rep.gregbarreto@oregonlegislature.gov.

**State Rep. Greg Smith (57th District):** Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-482, Salem, OR, 97301; 503-986-1457. Heppner office: P.O. Box 219, Heppner, OR 97836; 541-676-5154; Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/smithg. Email: rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.

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