

OUR VIEW

Students help make difference in community

The effort by the La Grande High School Class of 2022 last week to give back to the community should be lauded.

The students fanned out across the county as part of a senior day of service Oct. 13, helping with a variety of projects. From cleanup and renovation projects to chopping wood, students — and some teachers and administrators — made a big statement about the importance of giving back.

Why these types of efforts are important is self-evident. Communities prosper when residents are involved. That means not only politically but also with charity and volunteer efforts.

Thankfully, Union County can count on a variety of organizations — such as Neighbors Together of Union County — to lend a hand. Most of these organizations are nonprofits. That means, for the most part, they do not have an endless supply of available cash to draw from to support those in the community who could use a hand.

That’s where we all come in. Volunteering time, or even springing for a small donation, to a local nonprofit organization will build the strength of the community by helping someone who needs it. If you can manage it, contributing to a local nonprofit is extraordinarily helpful.

The senior day of service fits right into the mold of helping the community — but it is important for another reason. Such projects teach our youth to help the community. They are the next generation that will make key decisions for us all, and showing them why it is so crucial to help is a big investment into our collective future.

The senior day of service also helps shine a bright light on the ongoing need in our community for volunteers who want to make a difference.

And that’s what volunteering your time is all about — making a difference in someone’s life.

Hats off to the LHS class of 2022.

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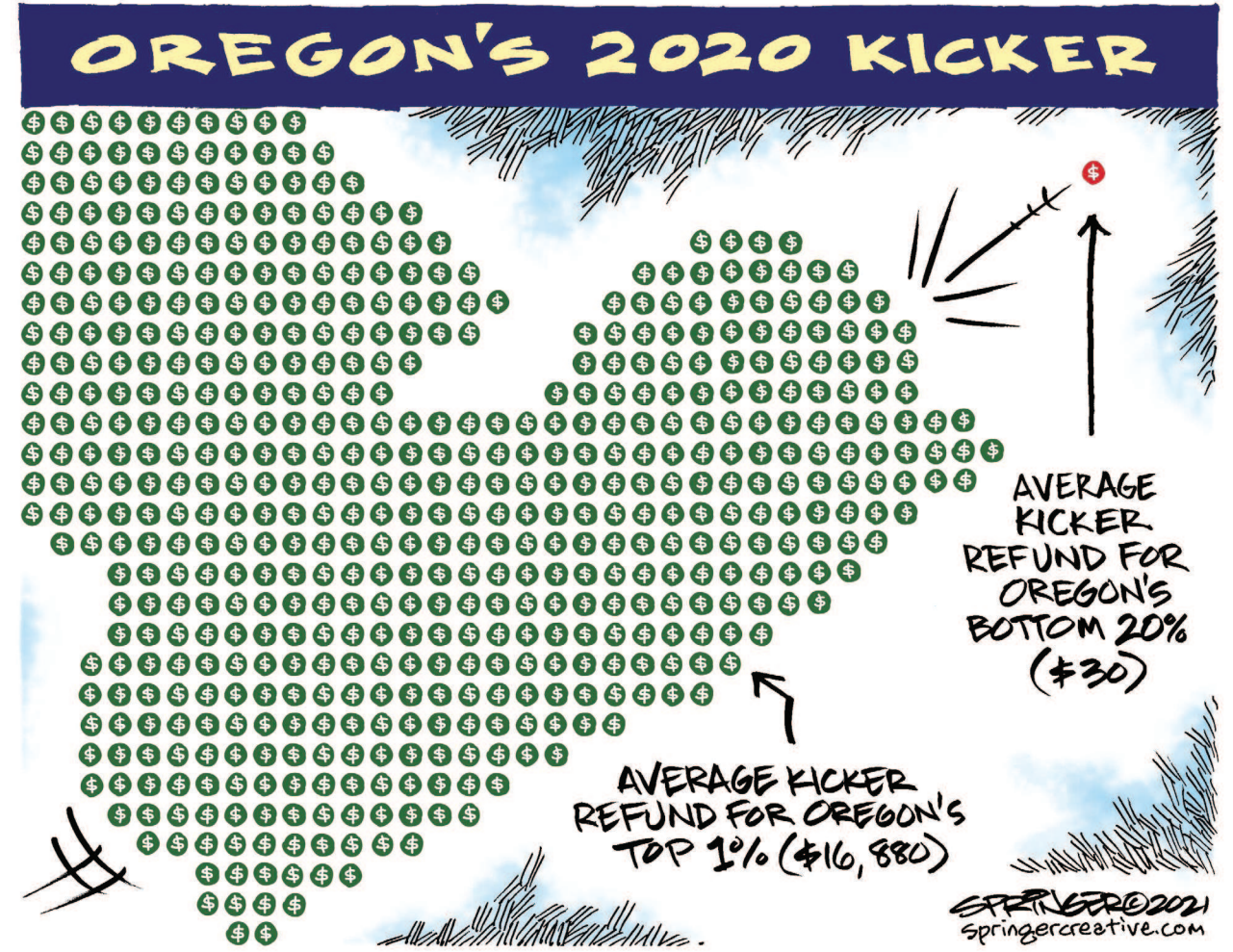
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LETTERS

Reservoirs should not be written off

Our possible solutions to reduce the impacts of climate change should not exclude building more reservoirs. Phil Howell’s short-sighted conclusion — no to reservoirs — seemed to be based on rivers that lack the spring runoffs to fill the reservoir’s storage capacity. He should consider that in many drainages, including the Columbia, there is an increasing amount of unused water lost to early spring flows to the ocean.

Our trend toward warming temperatures has several negative effects on the way river flows are distributed during the year. Instead of a lingering snowmelt that meters out stream flows in the summer months, less snow and an earlier melt result in increased flows escaping to the ocean at earlier dates.

This warming trend will have two major impacts on stream flows. Less snow left for the summer months will reduce mid-season flows and increase water temperatures. This will result in less water for irrigation and water temperatures that will exceed tolerance levels for young salmon and steelhead.

Last but not least, compressing the time period for snowmelt increases the chance of a major spring flood. A rapid snowmelt coupled with the nationwide increase in high-intensity rain events could cause major damage to towns bordering the Grande Ronde River.

In order to reduce the impacts of a warming climate we need transitional tools to use until other methods are found to slow global warming. Here is where smaller dams placed in the drainage headwater could be a useful tool. These dams could catch a share of the spring runoff and meter out the waters throughout the summer, thus keeping stream temperatures lower and providing irrigation.

Another potential source for water storage and release would be to put mini-dams at the spillage end of some of the high lakes in the Wallawas.

For several years dams have not been built, mainly because of their covering of spawning grounds for salmon and steelhead. However, it appears it would be better to sacrifice spawning habitat in order to keep downstream temperatures in tolerance levels of young salmon and steelhead.

Paying for dams is always a factor. However, there are several choices, such as user fees, excise taxes, grants and bonds, to name a few. One should also consider that it is sometimes more costly to not do a project than to do one.

Harlan Scott
Elgin

Commissioners stood up for my right to choose

Fear is quite the motivating force. The COVID pandemic has certainly frightened me. But my biggest fear is government overreach.

Because of my age and specific health concerns, I made the informed decision to get the Moderna vaccine in February and March. However, if I was 40 years younger and pregnant or considering starting a family, I may very well have made a different choice.

I commend the members of the Union County Commission for their bravery in voicing their objection to universal vaccine mandates. The letter they sent to Gov. Kate Brown expressed their interest in protecting my right to choose. That is what I expect my elected officials to do.

Jackie Bingner
La Grande

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