

OUR VIEW

The heroes who show up to help

It had all the elements of a great tale. A man lost in the wilderness. A search conducted in the teeth of bad weather and harsh terrain. The story of Robert Borders, Baker City, ended with triumph last month when search and rescue personnel found him. Borders fortunately was able to use a satellite device to send text message to help in his rescue, and the story had a happy ending.

Crews from Baker and Union counties searched for Borders, and the lingering theme is the hard — and largely unsung — work of local search and rescue personnel.

Every year the work of members of search and rescue teams — almost all of them volunteers — takes center stage after someone is lost in the vast wilderness that surrounds the great towns along the Interstate 84 corridor through Union and Baker counties.

In places like remote Wallowa County, the work of search and rescue personnel is even more important.

It’s hard to define what drives these men and women. Why do they willingly give up their precious time to descend into terrible weather conditions to look for someone who is missing? Whatever drives them, we should all be grateful.

Their dedication is priceless. It means that if we are somehow lost, we have a reasonable chance of being found. It means we can depend on search and rescue volunteers — even in the worst conditions — to drop what they are doing and help.

There are many ways of giving back to the community, many ways of helping democracy, and being a member of a search and rescue team is one of them. The work of these men and women is a reflection not just on themselves but on all our communities.

That kind of commitment— sacrifice, really — is not only commendable but an outstanding example of the kind of people who live in North-eastern Oregon.

So if you know someone on the rosters of our search and rescue teams, tell them thanks.

A simple thank-you might not be much, but it means we all appreciate what they do and how they do it.



YOUR VIEWS

Troubled by DA's sidelining of duly elected official

First of all, thank you to Alex Wittwer and to The Observer for reporting on the ethics complaint against District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel. The research for the front page story delivered the depth and detail that only good news sources can provide.

As I’ve followed the case and learned more, I’ve been left with a number of questions. Anne Morrison’s examination of the actual transcripts were especially revealing. Judge Williams offered advice, before the actual trial, to both the prosecution and to the defense. What is it that the DA’s office finds difficult to understand about that? Our judicial system is meant to be fair and impartial. And why are Union and Baker County district attorneys sidelining a working judge, someone who was duly elected? As a taxpayer, I take great offense at having any elected official pushed aside. With DA McDaniel on maternity leave, her office continues to sideline Judge Williams because they can, without having to even give a reason.

That brings me to the most important question I have. The DA’s office has, according to the transcripts, itself been witness to the impartiality displayed in the courthouse. Despite that evidence the Oregon State Bar dismissed the complaint. In doing so they stated that attorney McDaniel only needed to perceive bias. So bias does not actually have to exist? This gets us into very deep psychological water I believe. It takes us from a judicial complaint to questions of political motivation. But that’s exactly what the Oregon State Bar said was irrelevant even as their language highlights it.

I’ve been left scratching my head, and with the feeling that

there’s a lot of self-serving cynicism in these actions. The Oregon State Bar needs to seriously reconsider the approach of its Professional Responsibility Board. The idea of rubber-stamping a “nuclear option” with no repercussions because of inaccurate perceptions isn’t a good one.

Norm Cimon
La Grande

Time to list vaccination status of everyone who passes from COVID-19?

How can we go about dropping the data and reporting of “underlying conditions” adding instead “fully vaccinated,” “partially vaccinated” or “unvaccinated” as pertinent data for the COVID-19 related fatalities reported by the Oregon Health Authority?

We are currently able to see the vaccine status breakdown of hospitalized patients, so I don’t understand why the state OHA reporting does not go one step further and provide the information in its daily list of deaths by age, gender and county.

I do not care, nor does the general public in my opinion, about underlying conditions, especially since that underlying condition may be smoking cigarettes years ago, being overweight, any degree of diabetes, just to name a few of the nonlethal conditions included. You are only giving the vaccine deniers fodder for their arguments ... that those dying of COVID-19 were going to die anyway because they were sick, weak, etc. I see and hear these ridiculous arguments daily on social media, Nextdoor postings, radio shows, everywhere.

Maybe listing the vaccine status information of every single lost life would add some level of encouragement for those who are still not fully vaccinated to rethink their decision. I certainly cannot imagine how this

factual presentation of information could be detrimental to increasing vaccine status, especially if it serves to point out that the huge majority of cases are among the unvaccinated population.

Karen Brodsky
Bend

Feeling unwelcome in Wallowa County

My family lives in Wallowa County, has for 100-plus years. It’s always been home. I loved the small-town feel. People were kind and welcoming. Even if I hadn’t been in the county in years I always felt welcome.

In the last few years I have not felt welcome. I don’t want to visit. Going into businesses I get dirty looks and sassy attitudes. I always shop local. It’s hard when you are not welcome. Your lack of recognition doesn’t mean I am not a local, that I don’t belong.

Everyone seems to hate the tourists. Without them businesses would die.

I used to invite my friends to visit. I no longer do. I don’t want them treated poorly.

Recently in Joseph, I ordered pizza, went to pick it up. My nieces were with me. It was busy. No big deal, we were not in a hurry, just happy we didn’t have to cook. We patiently waited, wearing masks. Everyone in there was giving us dirty looks. We clearly didn’t “belong.” The server was rude. We got our pizzas and left. In the car my niece asked, “Why were those people looking at us like that?”

That broke my heart. This isn’t an isolated experience. I have sisters who would live in the county, but hate the way local people treat them. It’s awful to see the way things are going. Maybe it’s too late, but I can hope for change.

Deb Kale
Pasco, Washington

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