

Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

For our teens

Over the last week, both the benefits and potential drawbacks of media involvement came to light in a singular story—that of a missing teenager from Baker City. This was a situation in which local media of all types had a chance to spread the word in order to help bring someone’s child back to safety. Our job, in our view at least, was to report that he was missing, give details that would assist in his being located, and then report again when he was found. Past that, we have no desire to work on a follow-up article. Some details, which are clearly complex here, aren’t for public consumption and should remain within the teen’s family to work through.

Mostly, there are things we wish we could say to this young man—or to any teenager going through a tough time for that matter. So here it goes:

Dear Teenager,

We wish we could get across to you just how precious your life is. When you become a parent, you’ll probably realize it profoundly and immediately, but right now you might just have to take our word for it. Across all this world, there isn’t another single person alive exactly like you. There’s no one else who was born with the same eyes, the same hair, the same laugh, the same voice. There’s no one who was given the same interests or abilities. God put into you a one-in-a-zillion set of gifts entrusted only to you. Run with them. Use them brilliantly.

We hope you know that whatever happens in life, most bad things pass. The ones that don’t pass? Well, you’ll be strong enough to get through those, too. We’ve been around a lot, lot longer than you, and our perspective is different. Even when life seems overwhelming, there are always brighter times ahead, and in those brighter times you’ll eventually be able to see why you went through the bad times. It’ll all make sense if you hang in there.

Please know that even if your situation made the media and a lot of people heard about it, most will forget. Faster than you’d guess, too. So don’t walk around fearing that people are wondering if you’re that guy from that story. Most aren’t wondering anything past what they’ll make for dinner.

Life is one long series of decisions—one after the next, after the next. Make good ones. Why? Because as a general rule, good decisions will draw good into your life and bad decisions will draw the bad. It sounds simplistic, but it’s true. Manage your life deliberately, and realize each decision is part of that management. Stop and think. Is your decision illegal, immoral or unethical? If it is, change it.

Surround yourself with decent people. By decent, we mean people who won’t try to push you into bad decisions. You know, the illegal, immoral, unethical kind. Good people will help you make good decisions that will draw good into your life. Don’t fill your life with “friends” who don’t help you accomplish that. They just take up all the room for the decent ones who would.

And finally, we wish you knew that when times get rough, there are people all around you who would help you if you ask. You’d be surprised how many.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

About Integrity

To the Editor:

Integrity - “An adherence to moral principles, honesty.” Where has that gone, and why can’t we find it in the discussion on the motorized access restrictions to The Blue Mountains.

Some work in shades of gray, elected to positions they feel they need to protect to continue their paychecks and their positions of power. Some work in backdoor deals to protect their business venture to access resources they need to keep themselves afloat. Some work in “partnership” with groups that strive to see general motorized use removed from the forest under some moral calling of protectionist dogma that inflates their egos and swells their pocketbooks with lawyer fees. When companies begin to state “why does the public need to be there” and civil servants tell business’s that “any interference or preventing the Forest performing road closures will jeopardize timber outputs on the Forest,” we see the lack of Integrity from both elected officials and civil servants alike.

For the record, the counties do not “lose their seat at the table” if they refuse to sign the MOU accepting cooperating agency status with the forest service. This narrative has been passed around by county officials far too long. What it does require is elected officials doing their jobs and being held personally accountable for their actions. Instead of giving themselves political cover when they sell our access down the river.

One county has shown personal integrity to protect its residents to see a forest plan revision developed that protects the quality of life for all their residents, not just the few influential companies that benefit from the “go along to get along” mentality, and that is Baker County.

Integrity isn’t about doing what is easy, or personally advantageous. Integrity is standing behind the words you say and doing what is right. That seems to be sorely missing from a great deal of elected officials and civil servants nowadays.

John George
Bates

— GUEST OPINION —

Labor crisis at ports affects agriculture

By U.S. Rep. Greg Walden



Submitted Photo

Greg Walden represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central, and eastern Oregon.

For the past nine months, operators and workers at the Port of Portland and 28 other West Coast ports have been locked in bitter negotiations over a collective bargaining agreement. Like pebbles thrown into a pond, the slowdowns and delays caused by the dispute have had a ripple effect throughout Oregon’s economy. Crops are sitting, rotting on the docks. Trucks sit idle at the ports. Prices of commodities are plummeting. Farmers are losing their customers and communities are losing their livelihoods.

And negotiations are still at an impasse after nine months, despite the involvement of a federal mediator. The situation will only get worse. Since growers cannot reliably export their products, foreign customers have been forced to go elsewhere and may never come back.

Onion growers in Malheur County (whom I met with this week) are shipping at less than their production costs, if they are able to ship at all due to a backup on the railways. Pear growers in the Columbia Gorge are seeing shipments of perishable fruit delayed by over a month, degrading the value of the product. Cherry growers have lost thousands of dollars due to the disruption, and Oregon’s potato farmers have seen their sales decline 15 percent. Manufacturers and transportation companies are also reporting a heavy reduction in sales, reverberating throughout Oregon’s economy.

Nationally, agriculture exports have been reduced by \$1.75 billion every month because of the labor slowdown. At the Port of Portland, Oregon’s largest port, 95 percent of shipments are being delayed, with delays averaging four to six weeks.

On top of that, the Port’s largest carrier, Hanjin, announced recently they are cancelling service to Portland, a double whammy for Oregon agriculture and other industries.

Enough is enough. It’s time to end this crisis. I’ve teamed up with members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to introduce a resolution calling on both sides to swiftly reach an agreement. It’s time they get their work done before more people suffer.

And we’re calling on the President to get involved too. A similar situation in 2002 was only ended when the President got involved to end a lock out.

While it is encouraging that President Obama has sent a member of the cabinet to help mediate the dispute, he must do more to publicly urge both sides to end this conflict as soon as possible. And if the situation should move into a strike or lock-out, he should immediately use the legal authority Congress has granted him to settle the dispute and end this crisis.

More than one in five Oregon jobs depend on trade. And 40 percent of our agriculture products are shipped internationally, according to the Oregon Farm Bureau. The labor dispute at West Coast ports has already harmed our fragile economy, and it will only get worse if not resolved. It’s time to end this crisis and get Oregon products—and our economy—moving again.

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