

OPINION

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April is National Child Abuse Awareness Month

Beatriz Lynch
Executive director, SafeSpace Children's Advocacy Center of the Gorge

Nearly 700,000 children are abused in the U.S. each year. No group of children is immune — both boys and girls are likely to experience neglect, sexual and physical abuse. However, girls are four times more likely to experience sexual abuse.

Locally, SafeSpace Children's Advocacy Center of the Gorge, formerly known as Columbia Gorge Children's Advocacy Center, has been working with law enforcement and child protective services to provide a safe and healing place for child victims to tell their stories of abuse. Since 2009, SafeSpace has seen more than 800 children from Hood River, Wasco, Gilliam, Wheeler, and Klickitat counties.

SafeSpace Children's Advocacy Center provides a single point of contact for child abuse victims. SafeSpace offers trauma informed care in their child-friendly center. The child victim of abuse is

interviewed by a highly skilled forensic interviewer and a medical exam is conducted by doctors who specialized in child abuse. The child and family continue to have support from an advocate and referral to mental health counseling.

In 2008, Prevent Child Abuse introduced the pinwheel as the national symbol for child abuse prevention, and it has come to serve as the physical reminder for healthy childhoods that we all want for our children. The installation of pinwheels on the Hood River County Library lawn represents one of the more than 800 children seen at SafeSpace for child abuse assessment.

This past year has been challenging for everyone, but it has been especially difficult for children who may have been home with an abusive person without an outlet to ask for help. Please join SafeSpace in focusing on awareness of child abuse throughout the month of April. For more information, or ways to support our children, log on to www.safespacecac.org.



On April 2, SafeSpace Children's Advocacy Center of the Gorge volunteers Eileen Wendell, Claire McMahon, and Carme Brown, Trout Lake School, installed 800 pinwheels on the north lawn behind the Hood River County Library. The pinwheels represent the more than 800 children seen at SafeSpace Advocacy Center since its opening opened in 2009. Shelley Toon Lindberg, executive director for Arts in Education of the Gorge, came up with the concept of having pinwheels mimic the Columbia River, flowing through the lawn. Contributed photo

YOUR VOICE

American's Creed

You may not be aware of the American's Creed. It was penned by William Tyler Page in 1918 and accepted by the U.S. House of Representative that same year. In Page's own words, he said, "It is the summary of the fundamental principles of the American political faith as set forth in its greatest documents, its worthiest traditions, and its greatest leaders." Part of that creed states, "I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies." As citizens of this great country, we should all strive to live by these words.

Displaying an American flag is a great way to show our love for our country. However, that act of patriotism can become disrespectful if you are unaware of or ignore an important set of rules. The U.S. Flag Code, established by Congress in 1942, establishes advisory rules for display and care of our national flag (Chapter 1 of Title 4 of the United States Code (4 U.S.C. § 1 et seq)). It is a U.S. federal law (Public Law 77-623; chapter 435).

According to the U.S. Flag Code, the American flag should never be displayed with the union down (blue portion with stars), except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property. The wording, "Dire distress and extreme danger to life or property" should not be taken lightly. These instances do not include moments of personal dissatisfaction or times of protest. While it is legal to express yourself in whatever way you so choose, it is illegal to fly an American flag upside down unless you are in a life-or-death situation.

Every time I pass our national symbol of freedom being flown in this disrespectful manner, sadness and anger emerge. Please help our country start to heal and show love and respect to our country and one another.

Nancy Slagle
Parkdale

Free pass?

As I was looking forward to the opportunities after getting my second COVID shot, I was considering traveling overseas. Then I realized that even with the shot, I would have to have a negative test to re-enter the States.

That made me wonder about the illegal crossings on our southern border; I suspect they somehow lost their negative test results or accidentally handed it to the coyotes with the bundles of cash they gave them to get here. But not to worry, we don't have a crisis yet. FEMA has been called in, which I thought they were only used in crisis situations? But then, Sen. Merkley has not rushed down there to view "cages

like dog kennels" (June 4, 2018) built during the Obama/Biden presidency, where the kids are kept. There probably is not room for him since they are admittedly at over capacity (plus-729 percent of capacity at one Texas facility — March 17, 2021, Rolling Stone), with a pretty significant positive COVID test rate. No protests to respect social distancing, I am sure.

But maybe I am rushing things. Even though NBC News is reporting (March 17, 2021) that the administration is restricting reporter ride-alongs (Trump allowed them) and information disclosure by the boarder patrol and sector chiefs, I'm sure the "transparent" Biden will eventually let reporters into the housing and cargo container holding areas, after asking those who leaked photos of the current situation to take them down.

At minimum, as my mom would say, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." Maybe President Biden gets a free pass because of his age? No, he is just a Democrat.

Steve Nybroten
White Salmon

Re-elect Nelson

There are many good folks in my hometown, The Dalles, who make things around them just a little better. And then there are a few John Nelsons — people who, after a life of public service (John was a school teacher for decades) then devote themselves to our community and continue to serve in many ways. John does so with kindness, perseverance, and an unshakable smile.

You may know John, too. Maybe you met him on The Dalles Planning Commission, where he volunteered as a citizen representative for many years, or from The Dalles Kiwanis Club, or during a community clean-up with the Beautification Committee, or perhaps from his service as a volunteer literacy tutor in our local schools and community college.

One of the most demanding roles John has played came unexpectedly, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit our community, for John is a member — the chairman — of the North Wasco County School Board. It has been a thankless job, helping to navigate schools through this past year. (And coordinating the hiring process for our new superintendent at the same time.)

Some people think this about COVID! Some, that! Go back to school full-speed ahead! Don't even think of going back to school until it's 100 percent safe!

Well, opinions are easy. Steady leadership is hard. John has spent many long hours balancing many peoples' views, from the governor's to random ones like mine. We need sound, thoughtful leadership during these uncertain times, and John brings that along with a

lifetime of experience in schools. Please re-elect John Nelson to the North Wasco County School Board.

Dan Richardson
The Dalles

Support for Nelson

I wholeheartedly recommend re-electing John Nelson to the North Wasco School Board.

I have known John and worked with him in several capacities over the years, and he is consistently even handed, dedicated, and open-minded. John has served well in his first terms, and given that we will have new a superintendent, it is important to give our district continuity and the wisdom of experience. Moreover, John was a classroom teacher for many years. He understands how important teachers are to their students and how important high quality schools are to their community.

Phil Brady
The Dalles

Republican uproar

Republicans, the people that rail against cancel culture the hardest, are in an uproar because Major League Baseball (MLB) had the audacity to move their All-Star game out of Atlanta.

Why would MLB do such a thing? In the words of commissioner Rob Manfred, "Major League Baseball fundamentally supports voting rights for all Americans and opposes restrictions to the ballot box. In 2020, MLB became the first professional sports league to join the non-partisan Civic Alliance to help build a future in which everyone participates in shaping the United States. We proudly used our platform to encourage baseball fans and communities throughout our country to perform their civic duty and actively participate in the voting process. Fair access to voting continues to have our game's unwavering support."

Now why, you might ask, do Republicans feel the need to make it so much harder for people to get to the voting booth? It is because Republicans know that the more (dark skinned) people brought into the franchise, the less likely they will ever win another election. This is the reason they fight so hard against granting statehood to certain territories. Their ideas are unpopular, backward, retrograde and serve only the wealthiest individuals, who get the benefit of government bailouts while millions live in poverty.

Republicans want to degrade material conditions, widen wealth inequality, and disenfranchise citizens to the point where people rebel and riot, then condemn the riot and use it as an excuse to further militarize police who, along with a for-profit prison system, contribute to the further degradation of material conditions. Rinse. Repeat.

Or maybe not. I recall a certain bearded German economist who predicted all of this and offered some solutions. Look into it is all I'm saying.

Benjamin Sheppard
Hood River

Benjamin Sheppard is a social worker.

Rolling in The Deep

Here we go again, the murky depths of big government pulling our freedom under the surface. We are treading water while Congress chums the sea, tossing out socialist and costly ideas of a fake utopia to control every aspect of our lives, hook, line, and more taxes, upping the price we pay at every stroke of their oars, our state legislatures will have no control over the stormy seas, their compass broken.

Object, and they throw out corrupt nets with shouts of racism to divide our country as they pull us in to silence our voices. The nets are poorly made with non-partisan agendas, our cries for justice unravel large holes in their ideas, build back better rots in the holds. We escape, gathering the forgotten and lost in great schools to swim up the rivers of America, a wave of vaccinations washes over us, spawning hope and renewal.

Time to pull up the anchor of government overkill, stow away the nets of hate and division, set sail to the sunrise of truth and freedom on the horizon once again.

Sheilah Nelson
Hood River

Act on gun violence

I have called on my elected officials in Congress, Sen. Ron Wyden, Sen. Jeff Merkley, and Rep. Cliff Bentz, to personally take responsibility for passing protective legislation in Congress against the gun violence. Gun violence threatens us in every venue of our lives — schools, shopping, church, movies, neighborhoods, and home. And now two more mass shootings in a week! Lives are snuffed out in an instant, and ripples of terror and grief spread out in ever-widening circles around them.

Enough is enough! We've said it before. Efforts at needed legislation have been made and thwarted. Thoughts and prayers are sprinkled by elected officials who don't give a damn. I beg Wyden, Merkley, and Bentz and their Congressional colleagues to step up and give a damn.

We need true universal background checks, closure of loopholes in existing legislation (including Charleston and domestic partner loopholes), an outright ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and mandatory safe storage and trigger locks. It is way past time to deliver

on these long-needed protections. Our elected officials must act NOW. Legislators, don't even think of "thoughts and prayers." Only ACTION will do. Act on Gun Violence NOW.

Linda Densmore
Hood River

Nelson for D21 Board

John Nelson is a devoted community servant who has earned the right to be re-elected to the School District No. 21 Board.

John has chaired the school board for the last two years and has provided faithful and thoughtful leadership for a total of eight years. John's experience is especially valuable now as a new superintendent joins the district.

John's background as a city planner and as an elementary teacher gives him a broad perspective on the importance of public education. He is smart, kind and works collaboratively to seek the best outcomes possible for our schools.

We believe that The Dalles is on the cusp of building new and improved schools while making sure our district lives up to its goal statement: Motivate, Educate, Graduate. Our new superintendent deserves the best board we can provide her to make this come true. Please vote for John Nelson on May 18 for School Board Position No. 4.

Marolyn Wilks and Bruce Lumpner
The Dalles

All Walks of Life

During this past winter, I experienced some time with the homeless community. In doing so I met and interacted with these people. Who come from all walks of life.

All we ever hear about the homeless community are negative aspects. But my experience was very humbling, an eye opener you could say. To hear the journeys they have walked, to feel the emotions, and to laugh with them touches ones heart.

But through the hard times, especially these times of a pandemic, they survive out there. Sure the bad reputation is out there for different reasons, but mistakes are made by all.

The mental illnesses, addictions, legal issues, and whatever the case may be, this community gets through it too.

Through the good and bad days, that step forward is taken. One person I met is one with the bad reputation. Yet this person fixes skateboards at the skate park and leaves them for the kids. Sweeps parking lots at night without being told to do it. Is the one who is called to give pointers to someone released from incarceration.

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