

The Sandy Post

Editorial & Opinion

Scott Newton, editor
Kimberly Nelson, advertising representative

Safety net could protect schools

The unrest and upheaval that accompanies a school closure due to financial insolvency is well known in Sandy.

And the struggle in Boring to find money to keep schools open if a levy is defeated in March is a potent reminder of how dire the situation is.

These problems should motivate the state Legislature to make sure Oregon public schools never again are faced with such situations.

That assurance could come in the form of a school safety-net bill already approved by the Senate. The bill, although flawed, would take a large step toward solving this state's school funding woes. The measure is being considered by a House committee, which is likely to amend the bill considerably. Once adopted by the House, the legislation will have to be approved again by the Senate before going to a vote of the people.

The proposed constitutional amendment would permit school districts to levy the same amount of property taxes levied in the previous year without receiving voter approval. If a district required more taxes than it received in the previous year, it would have to seek voter approval.

Ironically, many school administrators oppose the legislation. Most say the measure would do more harm than good.

School administrators complain that the measure does not take into account that districts might suffer revenue reductions from sources other than property taxes. And they complain that the measure does not provide any allowance for growth.

Certainly, school districts and other governments must be allowed to grow. The public has demanded that government be run as a business. That should include the opportunity for growth — with voter approval.

The thrust of the safety net, however, is not to assure growth. It is to assure that Oregon schools never close. The measure maintains the voters' right to consider and to reject or approve increases in property tax support. It is up to local school boards to convince voters to support growth in the form of larger levies.

The safety-net plan admittedly is a short-term answer to a larger problem. But this state cannot afford the luxury of seeking a solution to the overall problem while communities continue to face the threat of school closure.

Personally speaking

Volunteers needed to continue work

by MARIE WEBB
Special for The Post

"What is the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind?" I am amazed whenever someone in Sandy asks me that question.

The foundation has been in existence since 1962 and many people right here in our own town don't know about it.

That remark is especially interesting considering one of our past presidents said he thought the foundation would put Sandy on the map. Maybe we will prove him right yet.

Perhaps people are confused by the word "foundation." Some people may think the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind is a school. It is not. It is a recreation center on the Sandy River for adults who are visually impaired or blind. We are offered a variety of sports, such as beeper basketball, shuffleboard and showdown, which is a favorite. Showdown is similar to bowling. Like all the games offered at the park, it is designed to be played by blind people.

People who attend our activities also enjoy hiking, fishing in the trout pond, playing bingo, listening to music, playing cards (marked in braille) and just socializing.

It is important for blind people to receive this sort of support. Some people who use the park have been blind since birth. Others have lost their sight later in life. Sometimes one is devastated at the loss, but when he or she meets others with the same problems, it helps that person learn to cope.

The programs at the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind do make a difference.

Since the foundation has been sponsoring its summer camp program, we have been pleased to have participants from throughout the United States and Canada. We have advertised the camp in braille publications, and are happy to share the park with blind people throughout the country.

I have been blind since I was 9 years old. I attended state schools for the blind in Salem and Vancouver, Wash. I feel I received a good start on my education and learned to cope with being blind.

I attended St. Mary's Academy in Winlock, Wash., my senior year. It was an all-girl boarding school and I was the only blind girl who ever attended. I had learned to read braille, type and play the piano, and got along famously. It was a challenge

and I did my best to meet it right on. I was married in 1936 and we had three children, and raised our grandson after a car accident claimed the life of our daughter, JoAnne.

My life has been full and rewarding, and I want others to have the same opportunities I have had.

My husband and I were the first caretakers at the Oral Hull Park, working there from 1970 to 1976. We loved every minute of it as it was exciting to witness the development of the place and see it grow.

We were proud to witness the creation of the beautiful Garden of Enchantment, which is maintained by the Multnomah and Clackamas district garden clubs.

We now have a beautiful lodge — Rainbow Lodge — a dorm (Phillip Hall) that sleeps 48, a picnic shelter and other nice facilities. We also have a trailer court. Some of the trailers are owned by individuals and others by the foundation. Lodging for blind people during a camp or other outing is only \$3.50 per night.

I have always been thankful that I was able to see for several years as I can now visualize what things must look like.

I think it would be doubly hard for those born blind to visualize different things, such as the ocean, the first snowfall or a rainbow in the sky. I have had many blessings.

We, at the Oral Hull Park, are constantly reaching out to locate more visually impaired people to come and enjoy what we have to offer.

People at the park enjoy a variety of backgrounds. Included in that group are teachers, a woman who was a pilot during World War II, and Vietnam veterans who lost their sight during that war. We are also blessed with a multitude of talented musicians. Sandy should be proud to have such a place located here.

We have had many volunteers who have done a great job, but we need more young people to get involved and help us carry on in the future.

Some of us who are pioneers of the program have gone over the hill, so to speak.

It has been a joy for me to be involved with the activities of the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind. I hope other people will come to realize the same sense of satisfaction that I have gained from working as a volunteer.

Marie Webb recently retired as an officer on the Oral Hull Foundation board of directors. She spend nearly 25 years involved in the group's activities.



Letters to the editor

Handicapped in AEA's 15 percent

After having read the Affordable Education Association's negative letters issue after issue, I ask them, "Do you ever look for the positive aspects of a situation?"

Their most recent attack on the quality of education that the Sandy Elementary District provides is unfounded. Perhaps 15 percent of the eighth grade class does reach the high school with less than an eighth grade equivalency test score.

Do you (AEA) understand what type of students comprise this 15 percent?

There are emotionally handicapped students, learning disabled students, educable mentally retarded students and students that come from dysfunctionate homes which greatly interfere with the learning process.

In years past, these students would have dropped out. Now, they are dealt with and educated to their potential. So yes, they're included in the statistics.

Personally, as a patron of the district, I am extremely pleased with the education my children are receiving. Yes, I feel, to keep a quality education you must pay the people who provide it a quality salary.

Chris Clum
Sandy

Sandy schools aren't failing

I would like to provide some information to the patrons of Sandy Grade School District No. 46. People in the district may have the impression that the quality of education in the district as a whole is questionable.

While 15 percent of the freshmen entering Sandy High School from Sandy Grade School, as well as the other four feeder districts, may require special remedial attention, this must not be interpreted as a failure on the part of the grade school districts.

On the average, about 11 percent of students entering the grade schools will be identified as handicapped and in need of special remedial help.

State and federal laws require our school system to provide these children with an opportunity to make the most of their natural abilities. A child study team composed of the child's parents, teachers and other appropriately interested parties is established to chart the educational course of the handicapped child.

It is this team that makes the decision to allow a child to pass into the high school from the grade school.

Failing all students incapable of doing "average work" at the eighth grade (or any grade for that matter) would deny them the opportunity to rise to their fullest potential, thus limiting their chance to lead a productive life.

A report of California Achievement Test (CAT) results presented at a recent Sandy grade school board meeting pointed out that students in the district scored higher than the national average in most subject areas. It is a credit to the Sandy Grade School District personnel that they are able to operate an above-average school district in the midst of a maelstrom of public controversy.

The disturbing aspect of this controversy is that district patrons are unaware that the industrial arts program (shop) at the middle school was sacrificed to make way for a computer lab because there are insufficient funds to support both programs.

Most of the computers were purchased as part of federally funded programs and the shop teacher had appropriate credentials to assume the responsibility of teaching the new class. The district board essentially elected to trade one program for another with minimal cost to taxpayers.

Public education bashing has become a popular pastime in our state and our community. We have failed to recognize that our public schools turn out some of the nation's best students. Oregon's seniors recently received acclaim for compiling the second highest scores in the nation on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT), with 45 percent of the class of 1986 participating. Oregon's schools were singled out for praise by Secretary of Education William Bennett because of the outstanding performance of our students.

I would like to encourage the district's patrons to attend the grade school board meetings held on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Cedar Ridge Library.

Art Lowery,
member of the board of directors
Sandy Grade School District No. 46

Large family has housing problem

We are parents of five children and have been living in Sandy the past six years.

We moved here from San Francisco looking for a healthy atmosphere in which to raise our children.

We had been living in the same residence for the past four years.

My husband was employed at a

local grocery store for three years and prior to his employment at Sandy Sentry, he was a member of the U.S. Air Force Reserves with an honorable discharge and two years of college education in ground to air communications.

Our three older children attend Sandy Grade School and Cedar Ridge Junior High. Our daughter and oldest son are both honor roll students and are a great source of pride, as are all of our children.

Recently we have lost our place of residence due to the landlord's unfortunate loss of property. We were on a monthly contract and had no choice but to honor the original owner's wishes to vacate the property.

For the last three months we have been living with a relative in a two-bedroom apartment. Despite everyone's good wishes and hard work, we are facing a frustrating reality.

We are able to pay approximately \$450 a month rent, and have excellent references. However, we have been unable to locate a new residence because of the size of our family.

We have exhausted every avenue open to us and our now appealing to the town of Sandy as a whole.

We have grown to love this community, as have our children, and are really sickened by the possibility of having to move our family to an area like northeast Portland just to obtain a home.

If there is someone in Sandy who can help us find a residence or feels that we can be an asset to this community, please contact us at P.O. Box 461, Sandy, 97055.

John and Kathy Heidrick
Sandy

Electronics not needed at SUHS

I would like to comment on the Sandy Union High School board's decision to eliminate classes in electronics.

The board has a moral, if not a legal obligation, to provide students with a mandated curriculum as required by the state Department of Education in Salem.

The mandated curriculum consists of 14 credits of required curriculum and eight credits of required academic electives. Classes above and beyond the mandated curriculum are electives. These classes include photography, electronics, toile painting, etc.

Generally speaking, the elective classes have been created over the years by special interest groups and not by the Department of Education or taxpayers. We also take notice of the fact that approximately 50 percent of our annual tax levy goes to

support the electives program created by special interest groups.

I believe it is time the taxpayers and not special interest groups have more input in the process. This can be accomplished with a two-step levy. Proposition No. 1: A levy for the mandated program required by the Department of Education; and Proposition No. 2: A levy for electives not required by the Department of Education.

In view of the above, I believe the SUHS board made a proper decision on the electronics class for the following reasons: 1. There was no community support for the program; 2. The subject is and should be taught in junior colleges after students gain knowledge in math and other basic skills at high school; and 3. The subject is an elective with class size less than the acceptable 25 student per class average.

Lloyd A. Cummins, secretary
Affordable Education Association
Sandy

Classes at SUHS should be full

A high percentage of Sandy High School patrons and constituents are beginning to feel a little more comfortable with the overall operations of our education system.

Some of the more noticeable concepts are: 1. Stronger direction toward democratic process of and with patron suggestions;

2. Zero-based budget approach to more affordable funding expenditures;

3. More efficient and prudent management policies, including teacher-student ratio, minimum student registration for course activation or continuance;

4. Requirements that each instructor-teacher (except counselors) are assigned at least three classroom subjects in addition to other assigned activities of all electives (including athletic and activities directors);

5. Opportunity for fulfillment of students' electives by Mt. Hood Community College attendance. The electronics II class with only seven students is a good example.

For affordable purposes registration of 25 students conforms to a school policy that justifies a class. Past practices have permitted course implementation regardless of the number of enrollees per class. This is cost inefficiency.

L.G. Brian, president
Affordable Education Association
Sandy

by Adam Kraft

Bobcats

