

KeizerOpinion

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The west is on fire

The smoke that hung over western Oregon last week was just a small taste of what residents of eastern Oregon and central Washington have been living with for weeks now.

The Grant County fires near John Day and Prairie City have destroyed more than 30 homes and many other structures such as barns. The fires in the north central Washington includes the Omak fire, now the largest wildfire to ever hit that state. Tragically, three firefighters near Lake Chelan lost their lives when their vehicle went over an embankment in an effort to escape flames that suddenly surrounded them.

Wildfires are unpredictable, never more so as when weather conditions whip flames into all directions. Gusty winds and high temperatures have fueled some fires to greatly increase in size. Fire fighting resources have been stretched to the limit. Oregon National Guard personnel joined the fire fighting effort after getting trained for the hard work. Crews from as far away as Australia and New Zealand are joining the hundreds of men and women who have been on the front lines for weeks.

Those in the John Day area who escaped the flames with little more than the clothes on their back discovered their homes had burnt to the ground. The people who live in rural areas look out for each other. The relief effort to house and feed those who lost everything is an ex-

ercise in selflessness and community spirit. Friends opened their homes to strangers, the business community rallied to donate food and other necessities.

By nature of the area, there are a lot of animals, domestic and farm. Horses and other ranch animals were un-paddocked and allowed to flee the flames. Those who could grab their dogs and cats were met by volunteers in town who offered pet food, crates and kennels and toys. The wildfires can't be any less stressful for the animals than the humans.

There are raw opinions about the response of the Forest Service and others to the fires when they were still supposedly containable. But as an editorial in *Blue Mountain Eagle* said, the time for fingerpointing and blame is far off in the future. The only thing to concentrate on when fires are decimating the forests and ranchlands of the west is for the safety of the residents and the firefighters.

Each year brings bigger and bigger wildfires. Some blame it on poor forest management, others blame it on climate change and El Nino that brings drought to an already-dry region.

Fires caused by lightening is one way nature clears out forests and rangeland. But with more people living out in the wilds we should build and live responsibly where such disasters are becoming the norm.

—LAZ

Medical providers prescribe books for young children

By JULIANNE BROCK, FNP-C

Regular medical checkups ensure children stay healthy during their early development, plus receive proper vaccinations.

As a certified family nurse practitioner at Willamette Health Partners Family Medicine clinic in Keizer, I use that opportunity to talk to parents and kids about a likely unexpected topic—the importance of reading.

Reading every day is as important for children as brushing their teeth. Early literacy in kids leads to future success in life.

Developing early literacy is also important for Marion County. An October 2014 study found:

Fifty-nine percent of the students in Salem-Keizer Public Schools were living in poverty. (A strong correlation exists between poverty and literacy.) Nineteen percent of the students spoke English as a second language.

Studies show that achieving literacy by third grade is an important benchmark. It also indicates how well they will do in high school. A team effort strives to tackle that challenge in different ways.

Willamette Health Partners recently made a commitment to promote the *Reach Out and Read* program at its six family medicine clinics. The successful national program discovered a strong link between building vocabulary and introducing books to children from ages six months through five years.

Children receive an age-appropriate book during their checkup, while parents go home with handouts that stress the importance of reading to their child every day. Kids love getting the books and parents appreciate that we're not just

checking off boxes during the exam. They realize we want their child to succeed in all areas.

The program encourages families to read together 20 minutes a day—and afterward ask kids to express what they've learned.

The Marion-Polk County Medical Society provided funding for the program's first year, which covered the cost of buying 2,000 books.

We have so much opportunity to expand the program. Our main limitation is that families need to come to the clinic to be exposed to it. That's where the Community Health Education Center (CHEC) at Salem Hospital comes in.

Promoting early literacy falls directly in line with Salem Health's mission to support the community. CHEC staffers are exploring possible story times for kids, along with fun themed events like puppet shows.

Plans are also forming to serve children in Polk County. The new school-based Central Health and Wellness Center in Independence could become an outlet to encourage early literacy.

It is a privilege for me to see children at such a critical time of their young lives—now with the added opportunity of sharing the joy of reading.

Meanwhile, medical providers gain a different focus by promoting early literacy. We become part of a greater cause knowing these kids will become part of society—and we want them to succeed.

(Julianne Brock, FNP-C, is a certified family nurse practitioner with Willamette Health Partners Family Medicine clinic in Keizer.)

guest column



Julianne Brock



All sides need to make Bottle Bill work

We Oregonians are told that a majority of us support the doubling of the state's deposit on bottles and cans. Why do we want it? So more of us will be motivated to return the empties, one Salem resident was reported to have said. But what prompted her to say she wants a bigger charge for the purchase of bottles and cans?

The answer for a five cent raise has its origin with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission. The commission tells us that fewer bottle and can purchasers are returning their empties, resulting in a decline of redemption rates. The decline has apparently been underway for some time with return rates as recent as last year and the year before, or 2014 compared with 2013, dropping three percent.

Oregon residents welcomed the Bottle Bill in 1971 and presumably still support it—if the poll that determined this view is valid. It was sold to Oregonians from day one as an anti-litter bill. It appeared to work very well for quite some time as the nickel return on a deposit was worth the effort to return the empty container. Those in favor of an increase from 5 to 10 cents argue that the increase will motivate returns when a nickel doesn't encourage returns well enough.

Meanwhile, it should be a whole lot easier to return the empty containers as Salem has currently established two BottleDrop redemption centers. These redemption centers are located on south Commercial Street and on Lancaster Drive. Of course grocery stores and supermarkets offer redemption sites where bottles and cans are placed into counting machines that issue a receipt for redemption at each store's cashier stations.

Back when returning bottles and cans was quick and easy—among the items in one's shopping cart—the return of bottles and cans could be completed at cashier stations. Now

gene h. mcintyre

the stores that sell bottles and cans of pop, beer et-cetera send their customers to a small, crowded room

or outside into the weather. Inside or out, the areas are most commonly pinched in size, sticky-floor dirty, full of shopping carts that are stacked to the top and overflowing with bottles and cans along with those waiting with two to three more heaping shopping carts deep full of bottles and cans.

These conditions totally discourage most people except those who are presumably so cash-strapped they will endure the wait and horrid conditions to realize the receipt slip—after an hour or more wait—for a mere few dollars in reward. If the state is really serious about motivating people who live in the state to return bottles and cans they will have to open and maintain many more BottleDrop redemption centers. For example, there are about 37,000 residents in Keizer without one BottleDrop Redemption Center.

Then there is the problem of those who throw their bottles and cans whenever they finish with them and apparently care less what becomes of public areas in our cities, towns, forest lands, and beaches. If you hadn't noticed, there are an abundance of places all over Oregon that have become garbage dumps. If it's not discarded bottles and cans it is used needles, empty styrofoam containers of all kinds and sizes, sandwich wrappers, used diapers, dog droppings, food waste, cigarette butts, and, among an almost limitless list of others like water (of which some can be returned), wine and whisky bottles from a huge portion of the population that doesn't give one hoot how bad the place looks, how many chil-

dren are exposed to danger and how much vermin it all attracts. Those responsible walk away from their garbage after not making the smallest of effort to find a trash container or take their used items home with them.

Oregon was not a litter land just a few years ago. Why it has become one would most likely fill a whole encyclopedia full of reasons. Adding five cents to the refund may help to lower the piles of litter but it will take a major reform in what's become a throw away society to make anything like a significant difference. Elementary school teachers can talk to their students about picking up after themselves but if their parents set an example by being slob everywhere, then efforts in schools are probably for little or no results.

Here's the bottom line: What began as a great idea put into practice by dedicated Oregon leaders more than 40 years ago has been allowed bastardization by grocery stores and supermarkets that want the profit from sales of beverages but are not willing to be responsible citizens, sending those seeking redemption to "snake pits" where they are discouraged from taking their empty bottles back unless they're economic circumstances are desperate.

Those grocers seeking profit without participation have made a good thing into an ugly thing while the current crop of office-holders in Salem let them get away with what's become of the Bottle Bill circa 2015, that is, it's broken. No five cent increase is going to turn a corner on what's become an abomination. Such reform will happen when grocers behave responsibly and do their share again and most Oregonians once more embrace the mindset that prevailed in practice throughout Oregon in the early 1970s.

(Gene McIntyre's column appears weekly in the *Keizertimes*.)

Citizen legislature still the best system

The way the Oregon Legislature was originally designed, it was supposed to be a citizen legislature—meaning that the representatives had other professions and came together for a few months every other year to approve a budget for the state. Then they went back to their regular lives. Now that we have yearly sessions, it can make it difficult to hold down a job and be a legislator. I know I have run into many of you at my "summer job," as the voice of the Volcanoes.

The legislature will get back together at the end of September for three days of meetings, and in the interim I've been doing my best to report back to you, my constituents, on what happened during the 2015 session. For example, I spoke to members of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce about the effect of the session on our business community. Business owners are often so busy keeping their doors open that they can't keep track of laws that are made that will impact them. I think it was an eye-opening speech for some of them.

I was very interested and concerned with what was going on in our neighboring city in House District 25. While a proud resident of Keizer, I do represent Newberg, too, and wanted to show support while the town was in an upheaval with their city manager and chief of police being put on leave. I'll be hosting a town hall there in a

from the capitol

By BILL POST



few weeks as well. I have been invited to speak at a couple important rallies this summer and have welcomed every opportunity to be involved in our community.

I was very pleased with a constituent letter we sent out this summer as the response was fantastic.

In the past few weeks I've had multiple people tell me they have never heard from their state representative before, and even though they may be in a different political party than I am, they appreciate being kept in the loop. I may have my opinions and beliefs, but I work for you, the residents of House District 25, and I want you to feel like you can contact me at any time and share your thoughts about what is happening in our community and in our state.

(Bill Post represents House District 25. He can be reached at 503-986-1425 or via email at rep.billpost@state.or.us.)

Keizertimes

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

One year:
\$25 in Marion County,
\$33 outside Marion County,
\$45 outside Oregon

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:

Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303

Periodical postage paid at
Salem, Oregon

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