

# KeizerOpinion

KEIZERTIMES.COM

## The children shall lead them

After the massacre of 17 students and adults at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, an affluent suburb of Miami, survivors and students wasted no time in calling for action. The students demanded action from Congress and the president to stop senseless mass killing by gun.

The call for action has swept the nation like a prairie fire. Douglas High School student activists have called on their peers around the nation to also demand action from state and federal legislators.

So far two events have been planned: the National School Walk-out on Wednesday, March 14, and the March of Our Lives on Saturday, March 24.

As some are pointing out, the shooting in Parkland may prove a turning point in the gun control debate. Why? The survivors of Sandy Hook in Connecticut were too young to even conceive of a protest. The survivors of the Las Vegas massacre were varied and not part of a homogenous group that could communicate something like a protest.

The survivors in Parkland have something in common: they are all students at the same high school. It is easier to rally with and share a message with one's peers.

The students in Parkland (and across the nation) are savvy enough to use the megaphone in front of them. The students who spoke on newscasts the day of the shooting proved to be articulate, knowledgeable and passionate. Our children have learned well.

We should cheer the students in Parkland and elsewhere who are taking a stand and protesting for changes in gun laws. When you see your friend or teacher shot down in cold blood, you have credibility when you demand action on guns. Some are saying the student activists are being riled up and led by outside groups. You know that is not true when you see interviews with students who had no time to get any coaching from outsiders before talking to news reporters.

The United States has a proud tradition of civil protest and civil disobedience. When our high school students take this route it is a teaching moment for us adults: our children have been watching and listening all the time.

What do these students want to accomplish? None are advocating an outright ban of guns. They want to see actions that are supported by a majority of Americans: background checks on any purchase, limiting or banning assault gun weapons, banning of bump stocks. None of those actions, if enacted, would take a gun away from an owner.

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting is a tragedy and we shouldn't have to go through something like that again. The student's rallying cry is "Enough is enough." It's a cry that should be taken up by those who represent us on the local and federal level. If adults won't lead on this issue, then we may not have a choice but to let the children lead us.

—LAZ

our opinion



## Let's have that conversation

By JONATHAN THOMPSON

In a recent *Keizertimes* editorial entitled, *Yet Another Conversation*, the author appears to take issue with an upcoming event hosted by the Keizer Chamber of Commerce to discuss the future of River Road. The author is tired of more discussion on the topic and wants to see more action.

We appreciate the *Keizertimes* taking notice of our event and we hope they will come cover it. But this event is not happening out of thin air. Some context is helpful.

The Keizer Chamber of Commerce started planning this event last year as the Keizer City Council was considering a change to city rules which would require businesses in town to put aside an amount equal to one percent of construction or remodeling costs for "public amenities." These amenities could have included benches, fountains or contributions to the City's public art fund. When we at the Chamber started asking local folks what they thought of the proposed changes, we did not find a lot of support.

What we did get, is a lot of good ideas about the future of River Road.

These ideas ranged from ways to encourage façade and landscape improvements to doing nothing at all. We also heard many ideas in between.

What was clear is that we need a larger conversation, including as many members of the community as possible. This brought us to the upcoming Community Conversation.

As the aforementioned editorial notes, there has been a lot of talk around the future of River Road. We do not intend to recreate the wheel. We have invited representatives from the city to take us through that history as a starting point. Many great things have happened along River Road and we want to build on those.

We take issue with two parts of the column in particular. First, that "talk is cheap, we've talked before." Talk may be cheap, but if we had not talked to members of our community during the debate on the one percent public amenities proposal last fall we would have never heard some of the voices in our community which have a right to be heard. Good public policy is made by engaging stakeholders.

Second, the author of the column

wants to see action. We agree. While talking is not necessarily action, doing something just to look like you are doing something is a great way to end up with a mess. Let's hear from as many people as possible and listen to the folks who will be paying the bills before we act.

At the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, we are looking forward to hearing from as many members of the community as possible about the future of River Road. Those who may want to see fountains and pedestrian malls have no more or less right to be heard than those who think River Road is fine and do not want to change it.

No matter what you want River Road to look like, and whether or not you are a member of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, we want to hear from you. Join us in the next phase of a discussion of the future of your city. We look forward to seeing you at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 28 at the Keizer Civic Center.

(Jonathan Thompson is a local small business owner and chair of the Government Affairs Committee at the Keizer Chamber of Commerce.)

guest column

## Road salt

To the Editor:

Before the state Department of Transportation and Oregon cities and communities commit to the use or increased salt as a de-icing agent they should all consider the recently released results of studies on the use of salt in the Northwest and Midwest.

Long term studies in these areas now show that the use of salt on roads and highways has degraded the water quality of ponds, lakes, and other waterways into which the salt-laden runoff ultimately drains. And the results are not good.

The studies show that there has been a negative impact to water quality resulting in harm to fish, invertebrates, amphibians and plants. In short, most forms of aquatic life have been damaged or are disappearing from the impacted waterways.

There is no easy answer to keep-

letters

ing road surfaces ice free. But if the transportation agencies insist on the use of salt, then the legislature needs to increase funding to the Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Fish and Wildlife so that these

agencies can begin studies of water bodies likely to receive the salty runoff. It is important to establish background (before salt use) levels of salinity and other bio-markers so that future wetland monitoring can detect changes that could spell trouble. As we know, it is very difficult and expensive to repair and restore streams, ponds and lakes to good health once damage has occurred.

Studies also show that salt damages road surfaces and related infrastructure and vehicles at an annual cost ranging in the millions of dollars. Damage from road salt use is far reaching.

Jim Parr  
Keizer

## An education overhaul needed to face future

A small group of lawmakers in the House and Senate are recognized for pushing forward with serious proposals to overhaul the nation's higher education system.

These legislators are known for their track record to make things happen. What they're looking at is the Higher Education Act of 1965 that includes the entire federal loan system that has not been updated in more than a decade. Then, too, and perhaps most important, these office-holders in D.C. view the overhaul as addressing economic implications that would address the skills gap to fill the more than 6 million job openings going vacant in the U.S.

Further, the effort is very timely as the nation's colleges and universities seek to redefine themselves in a rapidly changing market where they can become more affordable, accessible and relevant to the ever-growing number of youth and adults in low-income financial situations. Some of the interest in this matter, too, comes from the need to counteract the trend throughout America where a huge number of high schoolers do not graduate and those who do get to college, fail to stay to certificate or degree status.

Reports out of Washington on this subject indicate that, in the Senate, Lamar Alexander, R-Tennessee, who chairs the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and ranking member Senator Patty Murray, D-WA, are calling for movement. Of course, these two movers and shakers will need the help of many Senate colleagues but have won the hearts and minds of their fellow senators in past efforts to get things of consequence accomplished.

The pair of senators held five committee hearings last year though they've been at the matter for the past four years and thereby have a foundation upon which to build. These principal legislators have already proven once that they can "thread a needle" by crafting the re-write of No Child Left Behind a couple of years ago. Some diplomacy, however, will

be required for the "majors" to work together as the confirmation of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos resulted in bad feelings all around.

Negativity appears to rule over at the U.S. House of Representatives as efforts there have been almost exclusively along party lines.

House Republicans have proposed some non-starters for the Democrats that include the elimination by GOP members of several federal grants, lower cost repayment programs and protection of student loan borrowers who have been defrauded by for-profit colleges. The contest in the House has Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., versus Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., so heavy-duty negotiations remain for progress to occur.

It has been recognized for years that we'd do better, much better, at education and training outcomes by combining them as one contiguous activity. A treatise on this subject could be written but suffice it to say that we could and should do more to integrate theory with practice from beginning to completion in our schools and, later, colleges and universities. Stating the matter another way, instead of sitting our youth at desks or in lecture halls to exclusive rote memory by lecture and book learning, they would learn at every step and stage of their development to relate what they

learn to practical applications. This kind of route to preparation would of necessity require a close relationship between schools/colleges and work places of all kinds, a coming together that's found at community colleges but much less so in K-12 school districts and four-year institutions of higher learning. A process like this requires teachers in schools along with professors in colleges to provide our youth with exposure to jobs and careers that piggyback on interests and aptitudes. Suggested motto for new American curriculum at all levels: Heads-engaged always, hands-on ready.

Among many other relevant education and training-related matters is the ability to recognize fact from fiction, truth from lies, reputable sources from propaganda, hyperbole, understatement and the illogical. The 2016 election proved that many Americans do not recognize false news and gross exaggerations and were influenced accordingly by Russian agents disguised as Americans out to sabotage our democracy. If our youth and young adults were able to determine what's accurate and not accurate information, we'd be a nation of people safer from devious, insidious manipulations. Education and training is available to teach and practice our youth so that in the future the average American is less easily, even seldom, hardly ever, bamboozled and thereby misled.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

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