

KeizerOpinion

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School security and safety

Safety and security in Salem-Keizer schools has been in the news recently due to a proposed police force for the schools. Due to public outcry that proposal has been pulled from consideration.

The safety of students is always in front of mind for parents who trust public schools to keep their children secure while being educated. That's understandable due to the numerous shootings at schools across the country this year alone.

Responses to the proposed police force were swift and generally negative. Many felt a police force would focus on students of color or students from low-income households. One could conclude that that feeling is based on real-world experience. The security of students cuts both ways—they need to be safe from outside attacks and be safe from an overzealous police force.

A Survey Monkey survey was posted on Facebook recently. One question asked if the respondents supported additional school resource officers and/or armed security in our schools; the other question was what level of financial backing they would support, if any. More than 400 responses had logged by the deadline, an overwhelming majority were Keizer residents.

The implied question is whether the public would support security posted at every school (presumably in Keizer) including the elementary schools. Keeping students safe at our elementary schools is as important as for those students at our middle and high schools. Our newer schools

were designed to make it impossible to enter the school without an employee buzzing a visitor in through the security door. That system is only as good as the training of the staff to never let their guard down.

A visitor does not have to ring a bell to be allowed into McNary High School. The office is 100 feet and the sightline to the main entrance is not clear. There are a number of entrances to all of our schools and it is not hard to imagine someone on the inside opening a side door.

Added security in all our schools would ease the minds of parents of students of any grade level. Before bloating budgets by adding security forces the school district should ensure that all staff is trained in threat recognition and procedures for allowing outsiders into the school building. Some of the money from the recently voted-passed school bond will go to reconfiguring some schools front offices for greater security.

The fear that a police force in the schools is not a positive move for students of color nor any student that is different cannot be discounted. We must be understanding of the experience of all our students. We can make all students feel safe if we take the time to discover what would make them feel secure besides a locked front entrance.

Instead of a police force let us move toward an inclusive school system that values every student coupled with better oversight about who gets into our schools.

—LAZ

our
opinion

Foster kids need you to care

By CASEY CHAFFIN

The foster care system is like the youth it fosters: perceived as broken, but really just in need of love and support and better adults.

This is what I've learned over the past several weeks reporting on a series about foster care in Marion County. I've interviewed people within the Department of Human Services, current and former foster youth, foster parents, a senator who worked on care legislation, members of third-party agencies, and an advocacy group.

I've interviewed stakeholders at all different levels of the system, and their message for you, reader, is this: They need you to care. They need you to care about these young people and what happens to them.

I believe learning to care begins with looking into the eyes of individuals. It's easy to read a headline about the foster care system and brush it off. What is that? That's not a person—it's a complex bureaucratic organism. There's no life in that, there's no humanity in that. So, we need to go deeper—don't ask what is happening, but who is being affected? That's a more interesting question. One of the most impactful conversations in my reporting was with a young woman who just aged out of foster care. Her name is Raven, and her story is the

one I'd been anticipating and dreading since I began writing the series.

Raven was abused in her biological home. After being removed at 8 years old, she was abused in several foster homes. She moved around too many times to count. She ended up separated from her siblings. She struggled with depression, bulimia, anxiety. For a while, she was homeless.

There's more to that story. But no amount of ink will ever make you understand how it feels to carry her pain. The point is: The system

failed her.

But it didn't break her.

Four years ago, Raven began working with Oregon Foster Youth Connection. She helped create, lobby, and pass the Foster Sibling Bill of Rights in 2017. Watching the governor sign that bill into law is "one of the proudest moments of my life aside from graduating high school," she told me. She's starting online classes at Chemeketa Community College in the fall with the intention of becoming an elementary school teacher. Initially, she just wanted to work with foster kids, but then she was hired to work for a YMCA summer program. And she realized she can be the better adult in any child's life. "I want to make that impact with everybody and have a

relationship with those kids, so they know that they are important," she told me. "Because they are our next generation, so we have to raise them up and teach them well."

Raise them up and teach them well. That's what we need to do. And that's not someone else's responsibility, that is our responsibility as a community.

An *Oregonian* headline published on August 1 reads: "Oregon anger management counselor, son accused of abusing foster children." The details are familiar. The abuse took place over a period of time, and the appropriate officials didn't catch it until recently.

The comments from angry readers were predictable. Horrible monsters, how could this happen, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Governor Brown fail children yet again.

The outrage is both understandable and necessary. But it's not enough.

We see these headlines, pound out a caps-lock comment. And then we move on with our lives.

We can't do that anymore. These kids need better, right now.

You don't have to foster a child. But you can ask yourself: Can you be the better adult?

Yes. We all can.

Now, let's do it.

(Casey Chaffin, a student at Soka University, is an intern at the *Keizertimes*.)

To the dog owners of Keizer

To the Editor:

I am an avid dog walker who has spent time, energy and money to train my dog. We enjoy evening walks and love looking at the different houses and subdivisions of Keizer. In the year and a half since I got my dog, I have been charged at by more than 10 different dogs of various breed in different locations in northeast Keizer. Some of these instances have been more than one dog at a time. The most recent incident was at the Keizer Terrace Apartments on Sunday, Aug. 5.

We are charged at by dogs whose owners cannot hold their dog and the dog is dragging a leash as it runs at me, or the owner did not have their dog on a leash nor did they have vocal control of the dog, and it charges us from their private property.

Most times, I pick up my 45 pound dog and hold her in the air, leaving myself exposed to the dog jumping on me. I yell loudly at the charging animal—No! Back! Down!—and usually that scares them a little so the owner

can run up and grab their dog. Some owners apologize, some grab their dog and walk away without speaking, one actually told both his dogs that were jumping on me that, "Not everyone wants to be their friends." He didn't apologize.

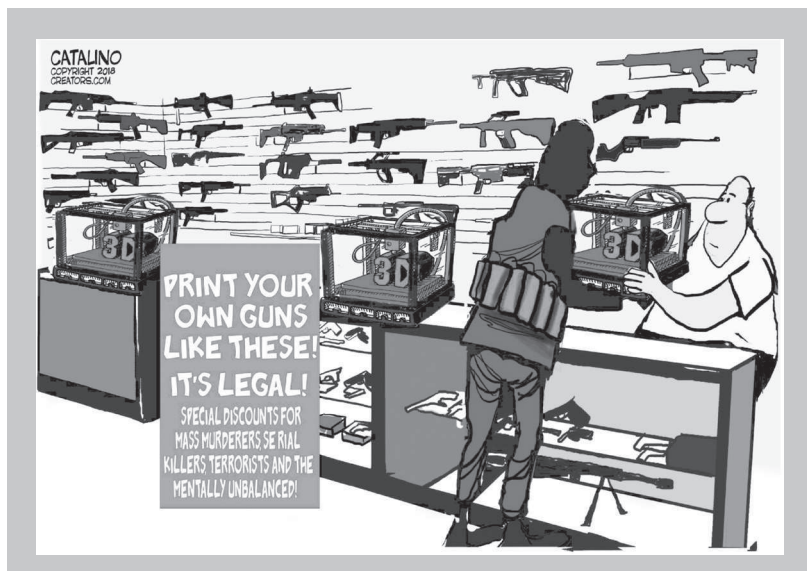
The fear my dog and I experience at these occurrences is something I don't wish on anyone else. It is terrifying and has made it difficult for my dog to discern a good dog from a bad dog. It actually changed the way she greets other animals. She is very hesitant in meeting other dogs and she used to be happy and excited.

To this end, I am begging the citizens of Keizer: *train your dog, leash your dog, control your dog!*

If they are attacking me, they will attack others. I never want to harm an animal but in order to protect myself and my dog, I will begin defending us using a stick or pepper spray. We have been lucky that neither of us have been bitten during these attacks. I feel that luck running out.

Lillian Weaver
Keizer

letters



Manafort, Gates display worst of excess

As many in the nation have become transfixed with the Paul Manafort trial, another name associated with President Donald J. Trump, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, the cabinet member who used federal government aircraft to transport, entertain and impress his recently-wed bride, has informed us that he and his boss are advocating for an additional \$100 billion tax cut for the same recipients of the recent Trump administration tax cut.

Those with a measure of insight to what's going on to rob America's other 99 percent see the two events, the Manafort trial and the recent—and now newly proposed—tax cut as another cut from the U.S. flag as metaphor. As the reader may already know, Manafort had grown super rich by taking public money while Mnuchin now seeks a legal version of what got Manafort into the crosshairs of special counsel leader, Robert Mueller.

In the latest version of what's become an 18-month grab of anything not nailed down in Washington, D.C., this proposed cut would be brought about through what's called executive fiat or an action without a vote of Congress. It's not only highly unusual but also contrary to the actions of anything known done by any democracy and would fall into the category of plundering the U.S. treasury while led by the guy given the assignment to protect it. Mostly, it will enrich the U.S. elites as well as Mnuchin, Trump and other wealthy Trump cabinet members.

What's really going on should be a warning to all of us, even those who will benefit from it, because it seriously threatens our nation as a constitutional government based on the rule of law and U.S. sovereignty. It even has a name, that is, kleptocracy. For those without a handy dictionary, kleptocracy refers to a ruler who

uses his political power to steal his country's resources.

Interesting to note that we often hold the view of ourselves as a people who do not abide the sort of nepotism and outright theft so common in other countries, including, for example, Brazil. Another generalization we Americans hold dear has been that our practice in good government would be duplicated elsewhere. However, increasingly, shamefully and destructively, we have become a sanctuary for laundered money, shell companies and underhanded real estate deals. Wealthy Americans plant their money offshore in 2018 and have done so for a couple of decades, just like their crooked counterparts in bottom-feeding nations that we Americans commonly view as disgusting and despicable.

Manafort is one of those Americans who has led the way into the world of dark, shady and illegal deal-making. He works well with thugs and despots at stealing from their citizens and then hiding their plunders. Manafort helped sanitize Philippine

Ferdinand Marcos and his wife, Angela's Jonas Savimbi, the Congo's Mobutu Sese Seko, and Kenya's Daniel Moi. These crooks by Manafort's means were able to receive arms and aid from the U.S. And, by the way, he's helped Russian oligarchs who, along with Vladimir Putin, are busy trying to undermine America.

The tales of betrayals are foreboding for Americans as the Manafort and Mnuchin stories are just two of the many underway with a Trump administration where foreign countries are financing deals that profit the president's own family along with the bank accounts of his entire retinue, most poignantly of late by the shenanigans of Tom Price and Scott Pruitt. There's an American elite who are active just like Manafort and others who, for personal gain and riches, send us into the toxic gasp of international kleptocracy. The Trump administration is the most wildly corrupt ever while the Republicans in House and Senate do nothing about it. Currently, the only hope for corrections and a U.S. rescue reside in the special counsel.

(Gene H. McIntyre shares his opinion every week in the *Keizertimes*.)



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