

Opinion

Talk less, do more

By LYNDON ZAITZ

We have all seen them, the homeless here in Keizer. Those whose whole life is in a shopping cart. Homelessness is a top-of-mind issue that we in Iris Capital can no longer ignore.

For years, the Keizer Police were successful in pushing those who called the streets home out of the city. It didn't matter to most residents where they went, just as long as they were not here.

The Keizer-Salem homeless population has increased even with a robust economy and low unemployment. Some are homeless by choice (living off the grid as it were), some through bad personal decisions, others through no fault of their own. Regardless, homelessness is no longer a problem that can be swept away.

There is a large number of organizations and bodies that address our regional homeless issue. Meetings are held, words are spoken, action plans are written and then...nothing.

What action should be taken? First, a reliable census. A count of those who are homeless by choice and don't want help as well as a count of those who want a roof over their head but can't due to financial difficulties, mental health issues, drug addiction or they may simply not know how to access services.

Knowing the mental health status of a person who won't accept help is key. A person suffering from mental health issues may not be able to communicate their needs or wants in a cogent way. A healthy person who chooses to live on the street is different than a person suffering poor mental health. Poor mental health can lead to suspicions of others and aggressive or belligerent behavior, which can make it hard for them to recognize when assistance—without strings—is being offered. Those people should be steered toward services that will give the help needed.

For those without mental health issues but who wish to remain on the street, unencumbered by society's

dictums, a matter of enforcing rules and law is called for. Panhandling or sleeping in doorways is not what polite society accepts and the laws need to be strengthened. There should not be much sympathy for one who can and is able to hold a job and thus have a permanent address. The sympathy is for those who truly need assistance and will take it.

Oregon's governor talks of adding \$2 billion in services and programs over the next decade. How much of that astronomical amount will be earmarked for the services the homeless need? Building affordable housing

is a nice thing but it doesn't fit into a for-profit model. That means that local governments will have to lead the way and provide the needed housing for those who want it and need it. Of course such public housing needs to be temporary—a hand up, not a hand out.

An action plan to address homelessness of those who are addicted to drugs of any kind, needs to include government-funded treatment centers. Most addicts would rather not be hooked, and if offered detoxification and counseling would take it. Drug treatment coupled with temporary housing and counseling can go a long way to reduce the homeless population.

The best action plan that a body can take to tackle the homeless issue? Cancel every other meeting and spend that time on the streets. Time spent on the street helping those who want help would certainly be more productive than a meeting where the only result is more talk and more strategies.

With more time outside meeting rooms, the task forces, committees, boards could link arms with other groups also working on the homeless issue, and aim for tangible results and solutions.

Just as there is no glamour in being homeless, there should be absolutely no glamour in talking about it without action.

(Lyndon Zaitz is editor and publisher of the *Keizertimes*.)

zaitz writes



Buzzfeed, Twitter give media black eyes

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

First, BuzzFeed News ran a story Jan. 16 that asserted President Donald Trump told his long-time private attorney Michael Cohen to lie to Congress about talks with Russia about a Trump Tower in Moscow. The sources? Two anonymous federal law enforcement officials.

By Friday of that week, a thin gruel of a story had put cable news in a ferocious feeding frenzy as pundits breathlessly pronounced that, "if true," Trump should be impeached. Yes, they jumped on an anonymously sourced story that they wanted to be true, then cagily waved the "if true" disclaimer just in case reality intruded.

They would have continued to say "if true" for days, even as no other news organization could verify the BuzzFeed piece, had not Special Counsel Robert Mueller's office ended their glee by issuing a statement roundly debunking it.

The next day, another epic media fail was born.

A brief video clip of a white male high school student in a Make America Great Again hat staring silently as a Native American activist stood before him beating a drum and chanting was unleashed on Twitter. A rush to ill-informed judgment followed.

The left dusted off every stereotype in its vault. Twitter users described the moment as a confrontation between smug privileged white teens and a besieged Vietnam veteran proud of his Native American heritage.

CNN contributor Reza Aslan tweeted, "Honest question: Have you ever seen a more punchable face than this kid's?"

In a classic case of confirmation bias, mainstream news outlets went with that narrative that placed the blame on teens in MAGA hats. The

Washington Post reported that the high schooler was wearing a "relentless smirk." The story reported the assertion of Nathan Phillips, the Native American drummer, that the kids were shouting, "Build that wall," even though, the

story noted, there was no video of the students chanting about a wall. Standards?

The *Post* story also framed Phillips as he wanted to be framed, the hapless "man in the middle" who was forced into unwanted confrontation.

Later, conservatives posted a video that showed that Phillips, rather than being surrounded by students as he had claimed, actually had approached the students.

The paper also ran a correction on its reporting that Phillips served in Vietnam. He did not.

Nick Sandmann, the MAGA-hat wearing teen, released a statement in which he denied smirking and maintained that he chose to remain silent and expressionless because he didn't want to inflame a tense situation.

Many who posted nasty tweets about the students from Kentucky's Covington Catholic High School deleted them. Some even apologized.

Actress Alyssa Milano refused to

walk back the tweet she had posted on the standoff by the Lincoln Memorial: "The red MAGA hat is the new white hood."

Noting that the students were on the Washington Mall waiting for a bus after participating in the anti-abortion March for Life, Milano argued, "Let's not forget—the entire event happened because a group of boys went on a school-sanctioned trip to protest against a woman's right to her own body and reproductive healthcare."

Translation: Conservatives are fair game.

Conservatives are fair game for virtue-signaling conservatives. Twitter has turned into a forum in which people prove their goodness by berating others as unworthy, and conservatives also trash-talked the students from Kentucky's Covington Catholic High School.

In the heat of the pile-on, the *National Review's* Nicholas Frankovich tweeted, "As for the putatively Catholic students from Covington, they might as well have just spit on the cross and got it over with." Frankovich later apologized, rightly copped to being "preachy and rhetorically excessive," and deleted the tweet.

When Trump first entered the White House, there was a concerted move to keep him off Twitter because even his own staff was concerned that his often combative bursts on Twitter were, well, unpresidential. Like Aslan today, he would make assertions of questionable accuracy, but stand by them anyway. Two years later, we are all unpresidential and social media in reality is anti-social.

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College admin and coach salaries and perks

Recently, in an open letter prepared by University of Oregon President Michael Schill and three underlings asked for more tax money to not only support the Ducks in Eugene but public education across the state. The university administrators wrote a lengthy column in defense of their needs.

Among several statements made by the collaboration, they wrote that "Some Oregonians hear a message coming from Salem that sounds as if lawmakers plan to ignore tens of thousands of college and university students who represent our collective future. Flat funding will close the door of opportunity for students across Oregon and will hurt the economy."

However, one of the most costly money problems at the UO is what's paid in salaries, bonuses and perks for administrators and coaches at the that public school. President Schill's salary and bonuses, plus a free home, a free car and incidental expenses, add up to well over \$500,000 annually. The other administrators in his office have hidden salaries and perks; however, if known, would likely raise eyebrows so high as to pinch taxpayer foreheads. Meanwhile, it's an established fact that the median household income in Oregon is \$60,212.

Then there are the many coaches in all the sports offered at the UO, including, but not limited to, basketball, gymnastics, softball, hardball, track and field, and football, where it is public knowledge that in basketball and football the salaries, bonuses and perks add up to over \$2.5 million for the head coach. Even assistant coaches are over-abundantly rewarded for

their efforts. Just last week a woman's softball coach left Oregon where he was paid \$274,000 to go elsewhere because he was "not paid enough," while a football wide-receiver coach will go to Mississippi State from UO where he was paid \$335,000 annually.

A former U.S. senator, Everett Dirksen of Illinois, once said, "A billion here, a billion there, pretty soon you're talking about real money." And so it seems as one applies that sage remark to UO. Once its

administrative and coaching costs are added up, they amount to real money. And the question that follows is, if they've got enough real money to throw excessively at all these individuals who manage office and field, why should Oregon taxpayers have to shell out more?

Further, the UO is a public school whose purpose is educating people. To the contrary, its purpose is not to bring in some bigshot from the East

