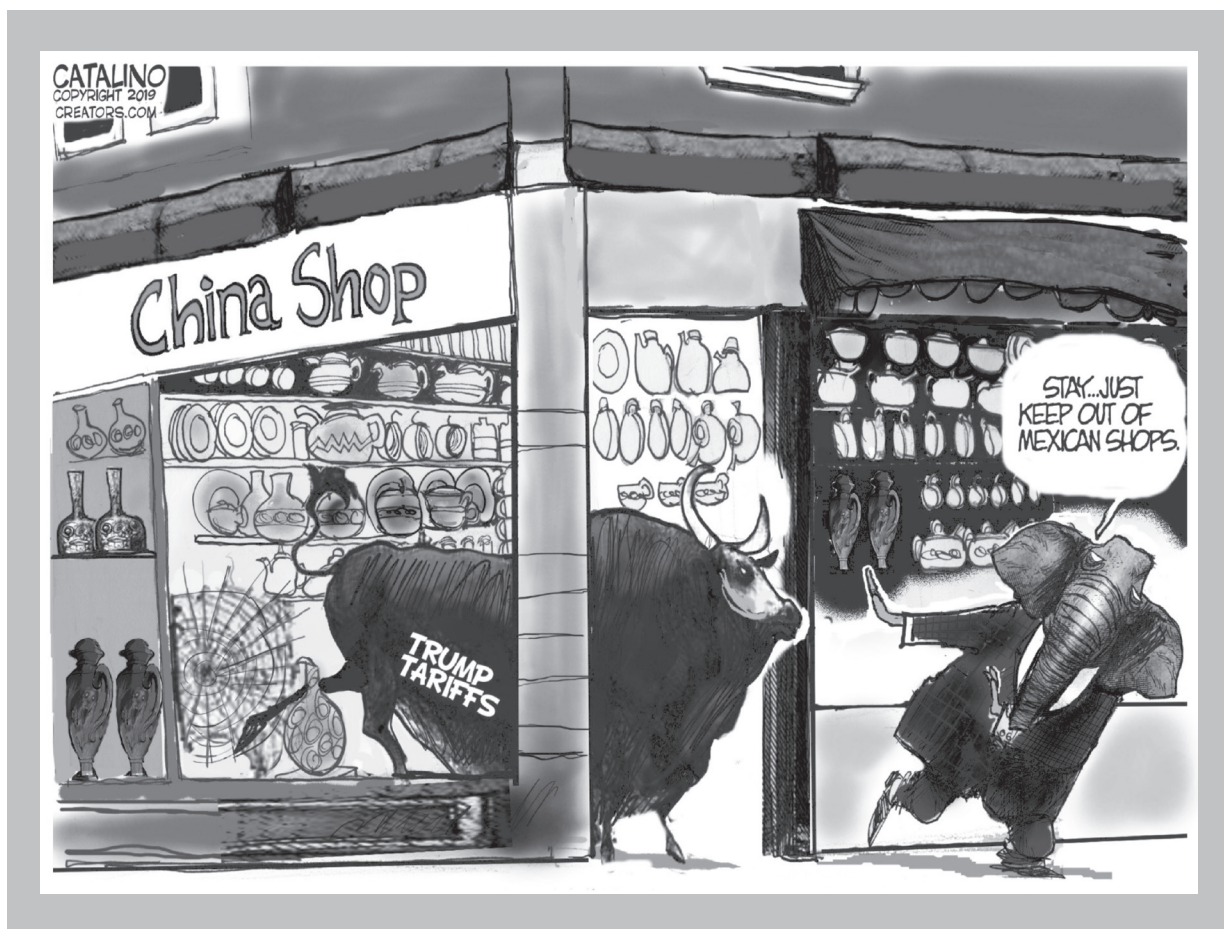


# Opinion



## A leader from start to finish

Another tree in the forest of Keizer leaders has fallen—Dennis Koho passed away this week. The former mayor and city councilor was still active until the day he died; he was preparing for a small role in a theatrical production this summer.

Like most good leaders, Koho had many fans and supporters. The moment his passing was announced, the acknowledgements filled social media quickly.

The words used repeatedly in remembrances were funny, compassionate, patient and inclusive. Yes, all that is true. He was also a good friend to many, including myself. Time with Dennis was always time well spent, one could always count on a story or a joke from him. He enjoyed a good prank as well as anybody.

His compassion for his community and his fellow man were evident. He earned his law degree from Willamette University while in his early 50s and used it to great effect. Dennis was a good lawyer but not much of a businessman. The pro bono work he provided helped local organizations

achieve their goals. Of course, there was much legal work he was paid for, including acting as legal counsel for some small towns in the region.

Leadership was second nature to Dennis Koho. He ran for a seat on the Keizer City Council in 1990—unopposed. Being a man who wanted things to happen, he ran for mayor halfway into his four-year council term. He narrowly won in the a three-man race in 1992, becoming Keizer's third mayor. He was re-elected twice before stepping away in 1998.

Concentrating on his law career in his post-mayoral years, Koho was active in local organizations, including the Rotary Club of Keizer and the Keizer Chamber of Commerce. He was elected Chamber president in 2009.

The political itch was still strong when the former mayor decided to run for an open seat on the Keizer City Council in 2012. For reasons of health, he stepped down in 2016, just months before his seat was up for election. But he got the most out of this second stint on the council: he

was voted president of the body mid-way through his term.

Health scares left Koho hospitalized for weeks. He himself said that when he was in a coma, his late brother appeared to him and said it wasn't his time to go. Koho rallied and went home. But he wasn't done living, not by a long shot.

He 'found' a new career when he decided to audition for Keizer Homegrown Theatre, a group he helped obtain their non-profit status. With cane and oxygen in hand, Koho gave 100 percent in his role, just like everything else in his life. At his passing, he was preparing for a small role in this summer's Shakespeare in the Park.

Dennis Koho was a leader, but first he was a man, who loved his wife, Lori—many times the butt of his pranks, his family and his community. Though his roots began elsewhere, Keizer was home to Dennis and the city received the benefit of his experience, knowledge and passion.

There will be a big hole where Koho was. He will be missed by many.

At press time, service arrangements were pending.  
(Lyndon Zaitz is publisher and editor of the *Keizertimes*.)

zaitz  
writes

## Help for the homeless

Kudos to the *Keizertimes* for the piece on homelessness. Although the numbers of these Americans wax and wane through the months of the year, colder climates like those of New England, with undesirable outside-living conditions, are set in juxtaposition with states like California, where the climate for most of the state is outside-worthy all the time, it, like western Oregon, having greatly increased in homeless numbers in recent years.

Fact is, we Americans have a problem that's not accurately reported or not reported at all in some states and the nation as a whole where guesses come in at total counts from one to two million. But we know from the way our economy moves around from good times to recession, what economists are now forecasting in the near future, we should plan for what likely will be more homeless persons.

A few years ago, while a graduate student at the University of Oregon, I chose to do my doctoral work with Professor Art Pearl as my advisor. Before coming to UO, Dr. Pearl had been active at working to correct social injustices by teaching in California prisons and been the director

of New York City's Department of Youth. He had also been an instructor at other colleges and universities, wrote his *New Careers for the Poor*, and been the principal speaker at a White House conference on Teaching the Disadvantaged from

which federal budgetary advantages followed.

One program site was in Tacoma-Olympia, Wash. My involvement came near its outset when the program had vetted and appointed about three dozen participants who came in with the intent and dedication to

improve their lives from having been poor, unemployed and lacking saleable skills. The racial mix was an even number of Caucasians, blacks and Hispanics. They were placed in state agencies, like Corrections, Employment and Welfare, where they worked at learning agency policies and procedures three days a week and attended Tacoma Community College for relevant classes the other two days.

Of course, participants had problems, the first and foremost was not owning a car or access to transportation of any kind. Then there were the inevitable baby-sitting issues, marital problems, sickness, old habits, recidivistic alcohol and drug problems, chronic homelessness, persistent negative influences by "friends," and a multitude of other hindrances to progress with which to grapple. Nevertheless, by the Pearl design, success stories became commonplace.

Six of us formed a work unit to bring these people along. A lot of my doctoral studies were focused on curricular design and teaching methods; hence, I spent time devoted to making what happened to the participants at work by being embellished through their studies at Tacoma Community College. I had completed a Master's degree in U.S. History at UO plus my baccalaureate studies at Pacific University in preparation for teaching certification so my academic background fit that part to provide the participants applicable general education classes and specific skills-set foundations.

Although the experience seemed at times equal parts heartbreak and breakthrough, the overall success rate was high while the effort proved over time to bring success to lives that had not enjoyed much of it to that point. A phenomenon in growth, we're encouraged now to find ways for the homeless to work and establish livelihoods. One way of proven success is in the public sector, state, county and city agencies, along with public schools, that could use more trained Americans to help other Americans. The Pearl model could serve to bring success while it's up to us to influence our leaders to make it happen.

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

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## JUMPSTART: 'We have been very intentional with our hiring'

(Continued from Page A1)

about every phase of your experience while you are here," Graf said

So what's the plan for getting people back to Volcanoes Stadium?

For anyone attending a game this summer, Graf promises three things:

- A smile at every turn.
- Concession lines that move at lighting speed.
- When people leave the stadium, they will want to come back.

"People come to a game to be entertained. You have the baseball fans that are going to come no matter what," Graf said. "But this year, we're trying to attract a family. A family of four that wants to be entertained for three or four hours that might not be the biggest fans of baseball."

For Graf, everything starts with customer service, which is why he came in and wanted a total overhaul of last year's game day staff.

"We have been very intentional with our hiring this season. Each employee has been selected because of their strong history of having a serving heart and the intangible talent of making people smile," Graf said "You just need to take care of your customers. How hard is that?"

Volcanoes Stadium will feature seven new food vendors throughout the concourse. Graf provides the space for free, but vendors will supply their own staff and pay a commission that goes to the Volcanoes.

What will be much different, however, is the strategy when it comes to concessions.

For example, the El Patron Mexican Grill food cart sold a litany of different items at their stand last year. But this season, there will be only three items available (tacos, burritos and taco salads) and they will be handed to you immediately after you order.

The motivation behind this strategy is to get the customer great food as quickly as possible so they can get back to watching the game.

"It excites me that the fan experience is going to be exponentially better than it has been in recent memory," Graf said. "It's all about the fan. We got to take care of that fan."

"It excites me that the fan experience is going to be exponentially better than it has been in recent memory"

— Mitche Graf  
Volcanoes president

"Fans are going to be absolutely blown away by, not just the quality, but the speed, the professionalism and the smiles that they get no matter what line they are standing in."

Graf will also have what he calls "hawkers" throughout the stadium that will provide things like beer, hot dogs and snack food.

While this strategy is still in its experimental stages, Graf has already seen early success.

At the OSAA State Baseball Championships — which were held at Volcanoes Stadium on May 31 and June 1 — Graf said that the Volcanoes were able to do their highest concession numbers ever in the 21 years of being the state championship host.

Even though the most noticeable changes will start with concessions, Graf has brought in several other additions that

will enhance the fan experience.

Before this season, the Volcanoes hadn't made any changes to their sound system since '97. But Graf decided to have 24 Major League-quality speakers installed in the stadium to bring more energy to the crowd. He also had the old sound system rearranged to face the parking lot so that fans will start to feel the excitement as they arrive to the gate.

"There's not a hotspot or dead zone throughout the entire place." Sound is part of that fan experience," Graf said.

Even the Volcanoes mascot, Crater, will receive upgrades to his suit to make him more agile. Roofman, who is also a fixture at Volcanoes games, will be upgraded as well.

"My whole life, I've done things a little bit differently. People call me a status quo disrupter," Graf said.

Graf becoming the president of business operations for a professional baseball team is definitely different, especially considering that he has never worked in baseball before. But with his successful career as an entrepreneur and business author, the Walker family had no reservations about bringing Graf on staff and giving him the reigns to execute his vision.

"I wasn't looking for a job. I was perfectly happy with the lifestyle I had ... But the opportunity to run a professional sports franchise was too big of a challenge for me to pass up," Graf said. "I've always attacked challenges head on, and this is my chance to really make a difference in something much bigger than myself. I want to make the Volcanoes the absolute best they can be, and hopefully we have assembled the magic formula heading into this season."

Fans will have a chance to see what's new this weekend as the Volcanoes host their first series of the season against the Boise Hawks. Opening night is Friday, June 14, at 6:35 p.m. and will have a fireworks show at the conclusion of the game. The Volcanoes will also play on Saturday at 6:35 p.m. and Sunday at 5:05 p.m.

"My job, above all other things that I am trying to accomplish is to change the mindset of the community. This is still professional baseball, we're lucky to have it right here in Keizer," Graf said. "I really believe that if we bring the energy back and the fan experience back, the stands will fill up, the energy will be there, and before you know, we're going to start playing better and winning more games."

"We're actually doing stuff, we're not just talking about it. If we can nail opening weekend, it'll catch fire and the stands will start filling up like crazy and we'll go back to the olden days."

## KOHO, continued from Page A1

the Rotary Club of Keizer, a past president of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce. He was honored by the Keizer Chamber of Commerce with the President's Award in 1998, an award he bestowed on Chet Patterson in 2009 as president of the group himself.

As an attorney, with a degree from Willamette University, he often worked pro bono for local Keizer organizations that benefited from his knowledge.

Even when he wasn't spearheading the charge, Koho found ways to foster conversations in the community. He was one of the founders of a Facebook group dedicated to Keizer issues that continues to see a lot of activity.

He enlisted Carol Phillips Zielinski to take over some of the administrative duties on the group when he stepped away.

"I first met Dennis when I was a Keizer Rotarian in the very early 2000s. While his classification badge stated attorney, he struck me as the embodiment of the Rotary motto of *Service Above Self*. At that time I was new to the community and it seemed like he had been active forever," Zielinski said. "I appreciated

"He never met a meeting he didn't move to adjourn."

— Lyndon Zaitz  
Longtime friend

his trust in me that I would carry on his creation (the Facebook group) as he hoped. I can only assume he trusted me to carry the Rotary principles with me as an admin on the site."

*Keizertimes* Publisher Lyndon Zaitz said his friendship with Koho spanned more than two decades and many good times.

"I enjoyed his company on our various outings, but it was his sense of humor that I will remember the most. That and the fact that he never met a meeting he didn't move to adjourn. He was no fan of meetings but he was a fan of getting things done," Zaitz said. "Regardless of any obstacles, Dennis always faced life with a positive, smiling attitude. He never gave up in politics, work or life. Just when you thought he was done, he'd bounce back."