

Opinion

Kindness? Priceless...

By LYNDON ZAITZ

Whew! We made it through 2019. We all have about a week of respite to sit back, relax, reflect and rest until we're hit in the face with all that 2020 will offer: the impeachment trial of President Trump in the Senate, primaries to determine the Democratic presidential nominee, and...and...

Between now and Monday, January 6, we will have time to take a collective sigh of relief that this year is ending. This is an important time to think about what we want to accomplish, personally, in the new year, and take stock of the year ending.

Just as world peace begins with each of us, civility in society begins with each of us, too.

It is almost a certainty that everyone wishes for world peace—it's a common holiday wish. While we cannot do anything about strife and unrest in other parts of the globe, we all can do our part in working towards peace in our own backyard.

A off-posted Facebook message states that kindness, politeness and courtesy don't cost a thing. That is true; everyone can be kind to their fellow man. We are all the center of our own universe, but life takes on a positive glow when we endeavor to think outside of ourselves and realize that our equals are our fellow citizens—of Keizer and the world.

No one's desires take precedence over anybody else. Consideration of others is taught in grade school and gradually fades as we reach adulthood. Why does what we learn in first or second grade become less

important? Selfishness is not an inherent trait; it is a learned behavior.

One of my favorite books is Robert Fulghum's *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, from 1986. The bestseller, comprised of 50 short essays, explains how the world would be improved if adults adhered to the same basic rules as children, such as sharing, being kind to each other and more.

It may seem simplistic, but much basic tenets are. There is nothing complicated here; what once served us well as children can still serve us as adults.

Society's mouth-piece, i.e., social media, allows many people to anonymously opine without the messiness of face-to-face communication. We have become polarized, not just in regards to politics but also culture, history and community. We tend to disagree over things that don't matter. I'd rather we disagree and argue over the biggest issues we all face.

Merriam Webster's Word of the Year for 2019 is "they" as it relates to one's choice of their personal pronoun.

The word of the year for 2020 should be *consider*. Let's consider the point of view of others. Let's consider how our actions affect the world and those around us. Let's consider how life can be when we treat strangers like friends or family.

Over the next week, you can bet I'll be considering all of that plus the challenges that'll come with the new year.

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

zaitz writes

What does Matt Shea want?

Media reports that a Washington state lawmaker who has traveled throughout the west in recent years to meet with far right-wing extremist groups to organize anti-government (as in against the U.S. government) activities. He also participated in that infamous act of domestic terrorism at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in support of its armed occupation by the sons of rancher Cliven Bundy who has used federal (our) land without paying any fees for its use.

This guy, Matt Shea, a Republican from Spokane Valley, an elected Washington state representative, has also trained young people to fight a "holy war" against the citizens of the U.S. He's intimidated his opponents and promoted militia training by the Patriot Movement (a right-wing militia movement that commits and supports acts of violence) for armed conflict with law enforcement.

Investigators, headed by a former FBI agent and law enforcement officer, have obtained evidence that Rep. Shea "planned, promoted and engaged in three armed conflicts of political violence against the United States in three states outside the state of Washington during 2014, 2015, and 2016."

Disclosures from the investigations report that Shea helped plan and prepare for the armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns in Harney County. Shea's activities, ongoing since 2015, have involved asking for patriot and militia groups (Oregon has its own group versions and advocates) to rally against the U.S. government. Then there's Shea's involvement in the stand-

off with FBI agents in a dispute over grazing rights. Also, in 2015, he physically resisted authorities when they planned to remove firearms from the home of resident in his area who was forbidden by law to possess them.

Members of the state of Washington legislative body want Shea to resign as he has been determined unfit to hold public office. He refuses to resign and has dedicated himself to more activities to overthrow the U.S. government, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and all U.S. laws. They want possession of all public lands, including wildlife refuges, national parks, and national forests.

Besides wanting this guy locked up so he does not hurt any other American and destroy public lands so he and his pals can subvert them to their personal use and profit, a couple of considerations cause me great pause. First and foremost, what form of government does Shea and his fellow right-wing activists want? Or, do they want no government whatsoever where every American citizen and his family are left to fend for themselves against a lawless collection of malcontents, thugs and thieves?

These people demand to have all matters of public consideration go the way they want them to. When anyone tries to stop them they will, like the agents of demagogues throughout world history, rule with ethical abandon and arbitrary decisions that by their law provide them with absolute power while all others are under their control. By their recipe for rule, we obey or perish.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer and shares his opinion frequently in the *Keizertimes*.)

gene h. mcintyre

APPLE,

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but the nomination is a bigger deal to me mostly because it comes from my peers, so they actually know what I do," Erickson said.

Shelley Percey, a third grade teacher at Clear Lake Elementary, wrote one of letters nominating Erickson on behalf of the school.

"Jason's dedication to music education, community involvement and connections with students goes above and beyond the realm of his job description," Percey said in the letter. "Mr. Erickson's commitment to music education goes way beyond his contracted school day."

Clear Lake principal Artonya Gemmill echoed Percey's sentiments.

"Jason Erickson is someone that truly thinks about how to reach students through music. He works to include all students in class. He is kind, caring and he keeps students engaged in learning," Gemmill said. "He is one that will support students and staff at any time. He makes learning fun for kids. He's a very talented musician and song writer and really loves what he does."

Erickson's dedication to his students, and the Keizer community, manifests itself in many different ways. He has made it a tradition to take his fourth and fifth grade students to see the Oregon Symphony every year.

Erickson will also take his students to the Willamette Lutheran Retirement Home during the holiday season before they go off to sing at the state Capitol.

"I want kids to be civic minded. Those retirement homes can be lonely places, so bringing a busload of children to sing is pretty rewarding to see," Erickson said. "We want to make well-rounded people who are nice to each other."

Erickson has also made it a habit to use himself as a prop, giving kids motivation to reach specific goals — like a certain number of jog-a-thon pledges. Over the years, Erickson has died his hair pink and even had cafeteria leftovers dumped on is head if his kids meet their intended goal.

"It's all temporary, but if it gets the kids fired up, it's worth it. We want kids to be glad to be here. If you take away all the fun stuff and make it all about tests and sitting at a desk, they don't have anything to buy into," Erickson said.

But Erickson's commitment to the kids of Clear Lake doesn't end there. He routinely uses his prep time to help students out in some of their other subjects. And currently, Erickson is attempting to have the school install an outdoor learning space.

"I want to get kids outside more, because it feels like

they're stuck in buildings and behind desks a lot or looking at screens," Erickson said.

While on the surface Erickson seems like a pretty lighthearted guy, he takes his job very seriously and puts a lot of pressure on himself to give kids the best music experience possible.

"I've had a lot of people that say they have had bad experiences with music in elementary school and that has turned them off to music for the rest of their lives. That's horrible, so I feel a big responsibility in this position to give kids the best start I can. I'm just hoping to set them up for future success," Erickson said.

Erickson was born with an innate ability to make music. By the time he was five years old, Erickson could play music by ear just by hearing it on the television or radio.

Eventually, Erickson, who is originally from Arizona, graduated from Northern Arizona University, where he majored in music.

After graduation, however, Erickson wound up working at a hardware store for 18 months. But after looking online for a teaching job, he found an inquiry for a temporary, part-time position at Clear Lake.

Even though it was more than 1,000 miles away, Erickson didn't care. And when he first walked through the doors at Clear Lake, Erickson knew that this is where he wanted to be.

"I realized once I got to the school for my interview that it was a special place," Erickson said. "I didn't really look at it as a huge leap of faith. I just really wanted to get started on my career."

Erickson started working at Clear Lake in January of 2001. When the previous teacher, who was on maternity leave, elected not to return to her job, Erickson was brought onto the full-time staff.

"I stumbled into this job because I needed a job, but as it turns out, elementary music is probably where I fit the best," Erickson said.

Erickson's classes focus a lot on singing and learning how to listen to a beat. Eventually, he will have his students playing percussion, keyboards, guitars and several other instruments, along with teaching how to read music, harmonize and perform — with the goal of trying to help his kids perform beyond their grade level.

"I enjoy taking students farther than adults probably think they should go. My choirs tend to sing music that is designed for middle school," Erickson said.

While it's been almost 20 years, Erickson's passion for his job is still undeniable.

"Like any job, I have really good days, and then there are days that are really hard. But I'm having fun with it, and if I'm having fun, chances are (the kids) are going to be having fun, too," Erickson said. "This music room is a big part of who I am."

"If it gets the kids fired up, it's worth it. We want kids to be glad to be here."

— Jason Erickson
Crystal Apple winner

Willamette Valley Hospice offers free volunteer training

Willamette Valley Hospice invites you to attend a free training session to explore the volunteer opportunities available with the non-profit agency.

The free, one-day training will be held at their office, 1015 3rd St. NW, Salem, on Friday, Jan. 17, 2020, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.


Respite volunteers are especially

needed to provide a break to family caregivers, so that they can run an errand or have a minute to rest. Veteran volunteers are also needed to visit other veterans.

Other opportunities include helping in the office, pet therapy, bereavement support, helping hospice patients with their pets, and helping with outreach at community activ-

ities and special events. Schedules are flexible and volunteers can serve close to their home.

Contact volunteer coordinators Brittney or Shelley for more information at 503.588.3600 or e-mail brittneyb@wvh.org or shelley.wagner@wvh.org. Learn more at wvh.org.




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Wheatland Publishing Corp.

142 Chemawa Road N. • Keizer, Oregon 97303

Phone: 503.390.1051 • www.keizertimes.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Eric A. Howald
editor@keizertimes.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Matt Rawlings
news@keizertimes.com

COMMUNITY REPORTER
Lauren Murphy
reporter@keizertimes.com

ADVERTISING
Paula Moseley
advertising@keizertimes.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER & GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Andrew Jackson
graphics@keizertimes.com

LEGAL NOTICES
legals@keizertimes.com

BUSINESS MANAGER
Leah Stevens
billing@keizertimes.com

RECEPTION
Lori Beyeler

INTERN
Brooklyn Flint



EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Lyndon Zaitz
publisher@keizertimes.com
2019-2020 President
Oregon Newspaper
Publishers Association

[facebook.com/keizertimes](https://www.facebook.com/keizertimes)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

One year:
\$35 in Marion County,
\$43 outside Marion County,
\$55 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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twitter.com/keizertimes