

BETHELL,

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those challenges, and I am the only candidate with the skills, education, experience and relationships to hit the ground running.

KT: Whoever wins this election is going to have to help lead the entire country through a devastating recovery effort at a time when revenues are going to be shredded. Where will you begin and how can Marion County Commissioners guide the process in a meaningful way?

DB: Our community has been through so much this week, and while hard decisions will no doubt need to be made in the future, the strength, generosity and courage of Marion County neighbors was in full display. I am confident that if we can keep focused on our shared priorities, we will come through this stronger for it.

We must rebuild, and as commissioner, I will do everything I can from a regulatory standpoint to ensure that we rebuild our damaged infrastructure as soon as possible so our neighbors can rebuild their homes and businesses quickly. From planning, permitting,

zoning, land use, infrastructure, as well as working with state and federal partners, I will be boots on the ground, advocating for solutions every step of the way.

As far as setting budgets, they are all about priorities. We will need to engage Marion County residents in a meaningful conversation about what revenues we have and the cost of our programs. From there, we will need to prioritize. We probably won't be able to fund everything but it is the job of Marion County Commissioners to work with residents to fund what is most important to them. For programs that don't get funded, are their partners we can bring in to help? For example, the Keizer Chamber and United Way recently did a great job helping with wildfire relief. Others, like the Mid-Valley Homeless Initiative, have been great partners on the homelessness issue.

I look forward to doing the hard work to get our county back in our homes and back to work

KT: What practical steps can the commission take to ensure we have housing for all the people who live here and would like to live here?

DB: We need to drastically increase the supply of housing

in our county. We have underbuilt for decades, leaving our most vulnerable neighbors housing burdened and with little hope of ever buying a home and beginning to build wealth. As commissioner, I will look for ways that the county can reduce barriers and cost to housing development, as well as help cities across the county find creative solutions to incentivize the housing our neighbors desperately need. Whether it is land banking, using currently vacant county property, or working with religious institutions to utilize land they have available to build on, we must think outside the box and create more housing on all levels.

All of this must be done with an eye to protecting the world-class agriculture land we have.

I want to reiterate, home ownership matters – it is one of the surest ways of building wealth across race and class. I am committed to creating more pathways in Marion County to home ownership.

KT: What do you see as a commissioner's role in economic development?

DB: I have been the executive director for the Keizer Chamber of Commerce four-and-a-half years. In that role, I have been the advocate and cheerleader for our business

community, and I believe these skills immediately transfer over to the role of commissioner. As a county, we need to position ourselves not only as the entity that helps reinforce the positive business climate we have, but actively recruit other businesses to move here.

The county commission has many tools in their toolbox to work on the broad spectrum of economic development, from incentives to marketing. I want to use all tools available to make sure that the jobs that are created here are good, family wage jobs.

Another role for the commissioners is investment in infrastructure to make us competitive. Whether it's helping smaller cities pool resources to create a sewer or lobbying at the federal level for transportation dollars, the commissioners' vision and energy is vital in our continued economic success.

KT: Lean times are likely ahead for the county and all the cities and towns it supports. Where would you look to make ends meet?

DB: COVID-19 will test our county like so many others across the nation. As Commissioner, I will work towards ensuring that the county prioritizes the core services our most vulnerable rely on. We

must also prioritize efficiencies and make sure that voters' hard-earned tax dollars are best spent. In this process it will be vital for the commission to listen to all voices across the county, to understand the values and priorities of the community and to be responsive to funding those programs first.

KT: Given that funding available for new programs and efforts is uncertain, are their policy changes you feel the commission should support to start laying the groundwork for future changes?

DB: Marion County has a history of being fiscally responsible. Our county has the least amount of debt among the largest five counties in the state. While we don't have a large reserve fund, each department keeps about 25% of budget on-hand, to manage cash flow. Because of the low debt ratio, we have lots of flexibility moving forward to choose what we want to invest in, versus just paying down debt. Additionally, our position should be relatively more stable in the next year because the county's funding stream is based on property taxes.

One thing that does concern me is areas where the State funds programs they ex-

pect the county to administer. The legislature currently funds three departments in Marion County: Economic development, Parole and Probation and the Health Department. When the state cuts funding, like they recently did with Parole and Probation, we have an issue. If elected, I will be proactive in educating the legislature on the critical nature of these funds to all Marion County residents.

KT: Voters often tend to overlook down-ballot races, what would you say to a Keizer voter who questioned the impact of the board of commissioners on our city?

DB: You are right, everyone gets fixated on national issues, while the items that actually impact our daily lives most, happen at the local level. Just recently the county submitted paperwork to the federal government to apply for grants. Keizer is committed to participating in the distribution of those funds from the county.

Another very important connection between Keizer and the county is public safety. Anyone who gets arrested in Keizer is actually taken to the county jail. Any public safety funding or administrative decisions at the county could dramatically impact Keizer residents.

ESCAPE,

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his buddy was packing up his belongings or had already fallen asleep.

"I wasn't that worried about it at the time. I didn't think there was any way the fire had already gotten there," Guile said.

By 11 p.m. the area was dark and smoky, but fire was not yet visible. By midnight, the Beachie Creek Fire was scorching down the French Creek drainage.

A local sheriff was knocking on doors in the community around midnight, telling residents to evacuate their homes. Unfortunately Torgeson didn't wake up until around 2:30 a.m. when he heard propane tanks exploding at his neighbor's house — which was engulfed in flames.

With no time to spare, Torgeson wasn't able to grab any belongings. He just jumped in his Toyota RAV4 and attempted to flee from danger.

Torgeson started driving towards Highway 22, but didn't make it far. With awful visibility, he ran into a large tree that fell into the street. The car got stuck and Torgeson was unable to maneuver the vehicle out of harm's way. Wearing just a t-shirt, shorts and Wal-Mart

crocs, Torgeson elected to make

a run for it. Even though he has been retired for 15 years, Torgeson has continued to stay active. Years of playing basketball and going on hikes, among other activities, had unknowingly prepared him for survival.

"He's a really athletic guy. If anyone could have made it through, it was Scott," Guile said.

With fire blazing on both sides of the road and heavy winds blowing in his face, Torgeson had to hold his breath during parts of the run, hoping for gusts of clean air.

Near Mile Post 4, he came across a woman, Angela Mosso, on the side of the road, telling Torgeson that she couldn't go on. Mosso was at her home with her son and mother when the flames hit their house. Without the ability to drive out of danger, Mosso told her son to run for his life along with the family dog.

Mosso had been her mother's caretaker for almost a decade. In order to survive, she was forced to leave her behind.

When Torgeson came across Mosso, he told her that he would send help if he could. After continuing to run away from the fire, Torgeson flagged down a driver with a flatbed truck around 4 a.m. At that point, Torgeson's arm was severely burned.

Torgeson begged for a ride

from the man, but then refused when he learned the man was going deeper into the flames. The man happened to be Mosso's husband, Chris Tofte.

Tofte was able to find his wife, who was in critical condition, then picked up Torgeson on his way back down the highway. Tofte stopped the car at the intersection of Highway 22 and North Fork Rd., where they waited for ambulances to arrive.

Mosso took the first ambulance while Torgeson waited 20 minutes for the next one to arrive.

Tofte, however, was unable to track down his 13-year old son, Wyatt, who was found deceased in a car on the family property the following day. Family members believe that Wyatt was attempting to save his grandma.

Just after midnight on Tuesday, Torgeson's son, Erik received a text from his friend about the fires near Detroit.

Erik began listening to the police scanner and tried frantically to call Torgeson's cell phone.

After Erik contacted the sheriff to see if he could find any information on the whereabouts of his father, his hope began to dwindle.

"I didn't know what to do. With everything that had happened, I assumed that he had died," Erik said.

At 5:38 a.m., Erik got a

long awaited call from his dad's phone. It was a paramedic on the other end, telling Erik that his dad was alive and being taken to the Emanuel Burn Center at Legacy Emanuel Medical Center in Portland.

Torgeson had burns on approximately 20% of his body, with severe burns on both his calves and one of his forearms. He has had two skin graft surgeries so far and will have a third one next week.

He will likely have to spend weeks, if not months, in the hospital recovering and will need further rehab care in the months to come.

While Erik is relieved that his father survived — especially after losing his mother just months prior — he knew the medical bills would take a toll on his dad. Erik, along with his friends Chris Wilhelm and Jason Miles, created a GoFundMe page to try to get some financial support.

In less than a week's time, Erik couldn't believe the response that the campaign received.

When you spend more than three decades in the classroom, you have the opportunity to have a substantial impact on a multitude of people's lives.

Torgeson took advantage of that opportunity every day as an instructor.

"He was one of those teachers that enjoyed his job until his last day. Student adored him," Forest Ridge teacher Sarah Koenig said. "Not one person would have a bad thing to say about him. He has touched so many lives in one way or another."

Torgeson worked as fifth grade teacher for more than 30 years at Clear Lake Elementary before spending his last four years at Forest Ridge Elementary — he retired in 2005.

When some his former students, and their parents, heard about what happened, they immediately wanted to help.

As of Tuesday, Sept. 15, Torgeson's GoFundMe page had raised just under \$20,000 and more than 200 people had made donations.

"The page is blowing up. He has impacted so many lives. It's unbelievable to see people who had him as a teacher in the '80s make huge donations and say that he was their favorite teacher ever. I don't even remember my fifth grade teacher," Erik said.

"He really knew how to inspire kids. Kids still wanted to

have a relationship with him as adults. That is why the community is rallying around him," Guile added.

Koenig has been teaching at Forest Ridge now for nearly 20 years. She credits Torgeson as the reason she stuck with being an educator.

"He was definitely my mentor. When he first retired, I had anxiety about returning to school," Koenig said. "He knows what is best for kids and he legitimately cares about them. I know so many people that have such fond memories of him as a teacher."

Over the years, Koenig got close with Torgeson's wife, Vivienne, and described their romance like something from the movie *The Notebook*. On the night when Torgeson was fighting for his life, Koenig is convinced that he wasn't alone in the battle.

"I believe that an angel was watching over him," Koenig said.

puzzle answers

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