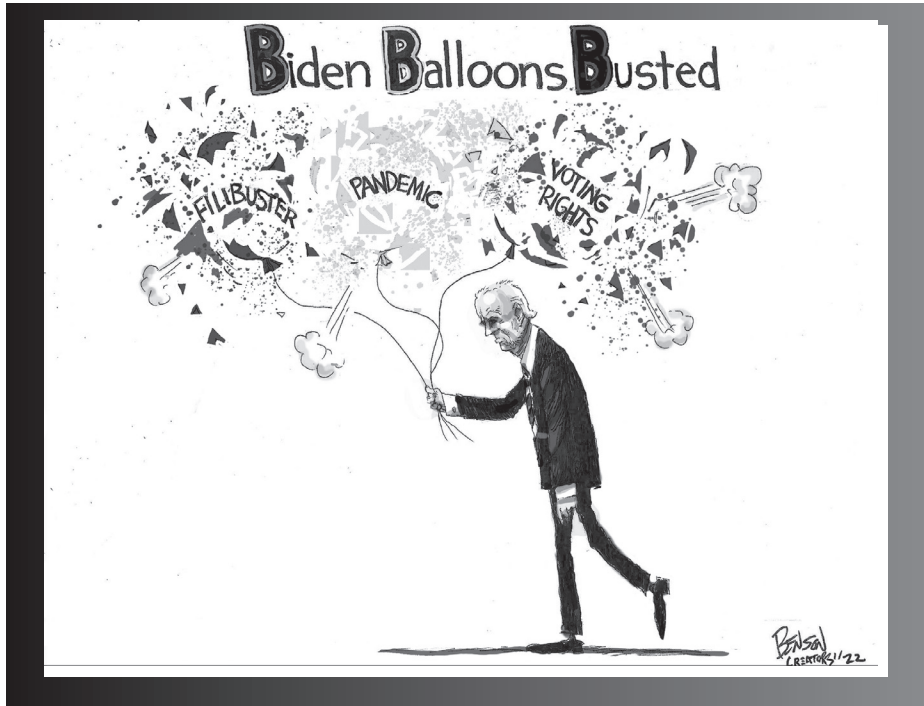


KEIZER PUBLIC SQUARE

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Keizer's 2021 honorees

The Keizer Chamber of Commerce announced winners at its annual First Citizen Awards at a banquet Saturday, Jan. 22.

While the awards may be presented by the business organization, the honorees should be feted by the whole community for the impact they have had on Keizer.

The First Citizen of Keizer is a lifetime achievement award, bestowed on those whose lives have been dedicated to the city. This year's winner, Jim Taylor, whose family has made Keizer its home for almost 100 years, has been a champion of kids, local sports and common sense governance. Taylor was deeply involved with Keizer Little League, coaching countless boys and girls. He is best known for serving for 12 years as a Keizer city councilor (2003-15), where his common sense approach to policy always looked for the fair and legal solution. To Taylor, the law is the law. Period.

As a long-time Rotarian, he was involved with every project the club undertook during his membership. If a project needed muscle, he was there.

Taylor is the embodiment of a First Citizen: for him, the community, its people—especially the children—come first. We congratulate Jim on his honor.

Dennis Blackman, one of Keizer's most generous and genial businesspeople, who flies under the radar of recognition, was the deserving recipient of the Merchant of the Year award. Blackman, owner of Copper Creek Mercantile on River Road, always answers the call when help is needed.

Blackman and his business were instrumental in aiding the Santiam Canyon fire rescue and relief for hundreds of animals and pets that were safely relocated to the state fairgrounds. Blackman is the person who exemplifies 'He will give you the shirt off his back.' In ways both big and small, Blackman has given more in goods and financial help than people will ever know because he does not seek fame nor recognition. He just wants to be a good citizen and merchant in his community.

The Service to Education Award winner, Danielle Bethell, is a Grizzly bear mother when it comes to kids. She is passionate about how they are taught, how they play sports and how they live. That passion led to her successful campaign for a seat on the Salem-Keizer school board, where she has

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been an unapologetic advocate for what's best for kids in our classrooms.

Anytime children are involved, it gets Bethell's attention. The Big Toy project at Keizer Rapids Park and the turf projects at both McNary and McKay high schools had her full involvement. Volunteering time at her own children's schools is second nature.

Our kids are lucky to have a Grizzly bear mother like Bethell in their corner.

Each year the leader of the Chamber of Commerce, on their sole discretion award the President's Award. This year Darrell Fuller, a renaissance man of involvement and volunteering was honored with the award by Bob Shackelford, who had four pages filled with reasons why he chose Fuller.

Fuller's day job is a successful lobbyist, but his volunteer endeavors have found him in all corners of Keizer, from schools to community projects. A man with four pages of accomplishments is a good choice for the President's Award.

We know that none of this year's honorees are involved with projects because they seek the limelight, it is just the opposite. We expect to continue to see their impact throughout the community for a long time.

The Chamber of Commerce added a new honor at this year's banquet: the Dennis Koho Future First Citizen Award. Named for Keizer's former mayor, the honor comes with a \$1,000 scholarship. A McNary High School senior has to be exceptional in many areas to be nominated for (and to win) this award.

The first recipient of the award was Logan Ready, an athlete and a member of the National Honor Society.

There were three final nominees for this award. They were all so deserving that the Chamber decided to give the two other nominees a scholarship as well. Good going, Chamber. Congratulations to three students. This is how First Citizens start out. Will we see you accepting an award at a banquet in 2067?

—LAZ

Be understanding of small businesses that are facing ever-changing COVID rules

It's time to call a timeout. Walk to our sidelines and have a chat. As we approach the second anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic we need to talk. For two years we have thanked and supported healthcare workers and they unquestionably deserve it. They are heroes who have worked long hours and saved lives.

There is another group of workers who have worked hard as well. They have showed up, they have served their customers and worked to feed their families. This group, who run and work in small businesses are now in the middle of a growing fight. Masks mandates and vaccine requirements are all things we should continue to discuss but no matter which side of the question you fall on, putting small business in the middle is unfair and it is wrong. These Keizerites did not write the rules and have little training or support to enforce them.

Here at the Keizer Chamber we take calls often from owners frustrated because a customer on one side or the other of these debates verbally attacked one of their employees over masks or vaccines. It needs to stop. These businesses employ

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our neighbors and provide the goods and services on which we all depend. They did not pick this fight and should not be put in the middle. In short, we need to show them the grace they have earned by taking care of us over the last two years.

If you have strong opinions one way or the other on masks or vaccines by all means, reach out to your elected leaders and make your voice heard. But no matter how much you yell and scream, or even worse, vent in the small business' reviews, the clerk at the corner store cannot fix these issues and the owner is doing the best they can with guidance and rules changing daily. Understand that small businesses are doing they best they can in an impossible situation.

(Submitted by the Keizer Chamber of Commerce.)

City can make a public library a reality

To the Editor:

Jim Schepke's recent opinion piece in Salem's daily paper, *Salem needs more branch libraries*, is right on the mark.

Those who understand the power that libraries bring to people have tried for decades to gain city support for branch libraries in the north and south areas of Salem. An even needier area of the extended community is Keizer. Reading scores in many of the Keizer schools are among the lowest in the Salem-Keizer district and the state.

Since 1988, concerned citizen volunteers have run a small non-profit library, loaning a limited collection of donated books, DVDs and CDs to Keizer residents who could afford to pay \$10 for library cards. Through much hard work, Keizer Community Library cards are now free so anyone can access these materials and services.

What Keizer's library doesn't have is public library status. Why? Only because half of Keizer Community Library's budget needs to come from public funds to complete the State Library of Oregon's requirements to be a public library.

A really small annual investment from the Keizer city budget would enable the library to apply for public library status and also for membership in Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service, giving people access to the vast resources of the regional library system. Convenient access to public library services in Keizer

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could make a difference for everyone, but especially for our children. With the help of Keizer city officials, this can be easily and quickly accomplished.

B.J. Toewe
Keizer

Response to 2022.2?

To the Editor:

Outside of coining a new catchphrase: "pull up out boots," I don't think readers learned anything from your Public Square piece, *2022.2?* (Jan. 21)

I do see some hints that you might be wondering if we have stayed too long with a misguided approach to controlling this virus.... in Oregon anyway.

The convoluted approach our leaders (the ones that currently have the clout) have steered us into has driven the wedge deeper into our nation and our state. How they couldn't see that coming is beyond me, and now we have an economic mess looming.

What *really* got us out of the Great Depression was World War II, and there doesn't seem to be anything like that on the horizon now. We certainly need something bigger than the virus to reunite the country and no one wants war. Guess we can pull up our bootstraps, huh?

Bruce Priem
Salem

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