

THE
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Does the Wellville
campaign matter?

*Wellness happens when people make
their own lifestyle decisions*

Months ago, there was great excitement that Esther Dyson would be coming to town.

Dyson is a technology guru, a marquee name on the lecture circuit. Dyson would be here as part of The Way to Wellville, a national competition that promised a \$5 million prize for one county or community. Clatsop County was a contender.

The run-up to Clatsop County’s participation in The Way to Wellville drew considerable interest. More than 80 people attended a January event in Warrenton.

Now it seems there is no cash prize. Instead communities and counties are asked to collaborate and maybe raise some money to participate

The promoter of The Way to Wellville, Rick Brush, admits to some culpability. He spoke to Kyle Spurr of our staff about the inadequacy of his public relations and website.

To the outsider, The Way to Wellville resembles a bait and switch. That may be harsh, but Wellville is not what we thought it was.

The value of Wellville’s topic is an emphasis on health as opposed to an emphasis on illness, which is what is typically funded in our health care sector. But does

a county or a community need a national consortium of high tech companies to build strategies for wellness?

For instance, one of Astoria’s most important health initiatives was creation of the Astoria Riverwalk. *The Wall Street Journal* years ago reported national research which indicated that communities that create more places for residents to walk show an improvement in heart health. Warrenton also has added trails, as had Cannon Beach. The Clatsop County Health Department has created a map that delineates routes for fitness walks.

Local research underway is focused on the county’s heart health. Columbia Memorial Hospital and Oregon Health and Sciences University are collaborating on a study of women in Clatsop County.

The county will take a major step forward in establishing a holding facility for mentally ill people.

It may be that the wellness discussion which The Way to Wellville started will lead to something tangible for Clatsop County. But a move toward wellness happens when hundreds of people make their own decisions about diet, exercise and lifestyle.

Tar sand costs must stick
on those who profit

Compared to ordinary unrefined petroleum, crude oil originating in the vast tar sand deposits of Alberta, Canada and nearby areas of the U.S. is distinctly more challenging to clean up if it spills.

There is surprising news this week that a great deal of it is moving along the Columbia River and elsewhere in Washington and Oregon — without any spill-response plan in place among state environmental agencies.

Oregon Public Broadcasting reporter Tony Schick did a good job illuminating tar sands issues in a story Monday. Due to a gap in the law that required communications between shippers and agencies for U.S. tar sands but not the same material from Canada, regional train traffic has rapidly expanded just since late November 2014. Up to 10 mile-long tar sands trains per month are now moving between Canada and destinations on Puget Sound, Wash., Portland and California.

There are “good news” components in this. Petroleum processed from tar sands is a large part of why gasoline prices have gone down, as North America again becomes a net exporter of energy. This surge in domestic production, transportation and shipping of crude oil generates profits, jobs and taxes.

But it is nevertheless surprising to learn that vast quantities of a distinctly hazardous substance are being transported around the Pacific Northwest without anything like an appropriate level of preparation for spills — disasters that are virtually inevitable.

Plain old crude oil and petroleum are bad enough from the perspective of spills. In the latest of in a series of

excellent stories, *Sightline Daily* notes that U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River already responds to about 275 oil pollution incidents a year. But pending plans for additional fossil fuel shipments could triple the number of tankers crossing the Columbia bar and double major vessel traffic on the river as a whole.

A good deal of this traffic would involve tar sands crude, which OPB describes as much worse to clean up. Canadian tar sands produce bitumen, a heavy tar-like material that is sticky and heavier than water. Because it sinks and adheres to everything it touches, cleanups are time consuming and expensive — more than \$1 billion in the case of a burst bitumen pipeline in Michigan.

All this has caught U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden’s attention. “It is unacceptable that volatile tar sands oil has been moving through our communities for months, and yet Oregon officials only found out about it last week,” he told OPB. He is working on a strong rule that would ensure that local and state emergency responders are kept in the loop about tar sands shipments.

Beyond this, it is vital that the expense of insuring against spills and making things right afterward are fully absorbed by those profiting from tar sands exploitation. Northwest citizens must be guaranteed that we won’t get stuck holding an empty bag when a tanker wrecks on the bar or an oil train derails in some formerly pristine location.

The oil industry is rife with examples of leaving messes behind for others to deal with. This time, things absolutely must be different. Those who profit must shoulder all the financial risk.

JEFF TER HAR — For The Daily Astorian
Making their way from the Gearhart Golf Links over to Gearhart Palisades, a herd of elk find food in residents’ yards last April.

Gearhart’s herd has its own television segment

It never ceases to amaze me how much attention elk get around here.

They even have their own television segment.

Not only do they stop cars on the highway, they have the power to curtail meetings.

Last week — on the night they were about to star on TV — Seaside Public Works Director Neal Wallace told the Seaside Parks Advisory Committee that its meeting would be swift.

He had to get home to watch the elk.

Never mind that the committee was about to discuss a proposal to develop pathways and bird blinds around the Mill Pond on the south end of Seaside. The project, which has taken years to get to this point, just didn’t muster the attraction that a 10-minute segment on Oregon Field Guide did.

Lured by tales of an elk herd routinely roaming through Gearhart, an Oregon Public Broadcasting producer spent a few days in South Clatsop County to see for herself what all the fuss was about.

She talked to local filmmaker Howard Shippey, nature photographer and biologist Neal Maine, Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist Herman Biederbeck.

The OPB video crew shot footage of 100 elk traipsing through town, past City Hall, down Pacific Way, through local front yards and loping onto the smartly trimmed lawn of the Gearhart Golf Links.

It was like they owned the place.

Gearhart City Administrator Chad Sweet said it was more of a “people problem” than an elk problem; his comments acted as a voice over of a scene of an elk being shooed off by a local resident who yelled, “Quit eating my plants.”

Adam Woods, from the Highlands Golf Course, likened the frequent invasion of frolicking elk to 3-year-olds weighing 1,500 pounds ruining the golf course. Employees have to work an extra 20 to 30 hours a week

IMPRESSIONS

BY
NANCY
MC CARTHY

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repairing damage caused by the elk, Woods said.

But Shippey, who had stunning shots of elk wading into the Necanicum Estuary, turning toward the camera and galloping in the water, had a different take on the elk.

“It almost looks like they’re smiling,” Shippey said. “They were, I think, obviously having fun. Having fun just wasn’t something I ever expected to see elk doing.”

Well, who wouldn’t have fun when you’re with your friends and you can throw your weight around, and no one — certainly not these silly humans with their cameras — can stop you?

It reminds me of that cliché: If you can’t beat them, join them. Widdop seems to agree.

“They have become quite a part of Gearhart,” she told the OPB crew.

The elk even attracted enough attention that a town meeting was called just to talk about them — or rather, how to reduce their numbers. Contraception? Relocation? Hunting?

Maine suggested attaching a GPS locator on them so people could go to their computers to check where the herd happened to be that day.

None of the ideas seemed effective, or, in the case of hunting in the middle of town, appropriate.

In the end, educating the community about the elk was about all people could come up with. Signs are going up now, but I’m wondering how effective they will be if a herd gets too close and knocks them over. I guess that will teach some sort of lesson.

Despite some negative reaction toward the elk, Shippey and Maine saw the positive side.

“We’re living in a high-quality place with enough open space to have elk,” said Maine, who spends much of his days trekking through the local backwoods to gather fabulous photos of wildlife we all take for granted.

“That’s kind of a blessing you don’t want to mess up by having a community battle,” he added.

As Shippey watched a young bull elk lock horns with a larger bull in the dune grass on the beach, he called the elk an “opportunity.”

If we on the North Coast want “clean, nonpolluting” attractions that bring in temporary tourists and permanent dollars to the community, then “elk are a perfect vehicle,” Shippey said.

Goodness knows, they stop enough vehicles on the road, I responded snarkily as I watched the end of the Oregon Field Guide segment.

But no sooner had Shippey made his comment than it was confirmed by a beachgoer who encountered elk on his path to the ocean.

“I was in Jacksonville, Wyo., and I didn’t see this kind of action,” the beachgoer said. “And that’s why I went there.”

Hmm... Maybe we need to rethink our response. Instead of trying to shoo the elk away, perhaps we should embrace them as tourist attractions, take the bull by the horns (so to speak) and take a meeting with their publicist.

There must be someone around here who can polish their image. And who’s going to do their hair and make-up?

Nancy McCarthy covers South Clatsop County for The Daily Astorian and is the editor of the Seaside Signal and the Cannon Beach Gazette. Her column appears every two weeks.

What is the purpose of society?

By MARK BITTMAN
New York Times News Service

The world of food and agriculture symbolizes most of what’s gone wrong in the United States.

But because food is plentiful for most people, and the damage that conventional agriculture does isn’t readily evident to everyone, it’s important that we look deeper, beyond food, to the structure that underlies most decisions: the political economy.

Progressives are not thinking broadly or creatively enough. By failing to pressure Democrats to take strong stands on everything from environmental protection to gun control to income inequality, progressives allow the party to use populist rhetoric while making America safer for business than it is for Americans. No one seriously believes that Hillary Clinton will ever put the interests of Main Street before those of her donors from Wall Street, do they? At least not unless she’s pushed, and hard.

It’s clear to most everyone, regardless of politics, that the big issues — labor, race, food, immigration, education and so on — must be “fixed,” and that fixing any one of these will help with the others. But this kind of change must begin with an agreement about principles, specifically principles of human rights and well-being rather than principles of making a favorable business climate.

Shouldn’t adequate shelter, clothing, food and health care be universal? Isn’t everyone owed a society that works toward guaranteeing the well-being of its citizens? Shouldn’t we prioritize avoiding self-destruction?

Plenty of Democrats, even those who think of themselves as progressive, would not answer yes to those questions. Some would answer, “Don’t be naïve, that’s impossible,” and others would say, “All we need to provide is equal opportunity for all and let the market sort it out.” (To which I’d reply, “Talk about naïve!”) I’m fine with disagreement, but I’m not fine with standard public questions like “How do we create a better climate for business so it can provide more jobs?” Consider what this implies about the purpose of people, to say nothing about the meaning of life. The business of America should not be business, but well-being.

Think about it this way: There are two kinds of operating systems, hard and soft. A clock is a hard system. We know what it’s for, we know when it isn’t working, and we know that 10 clock experts would agree on how to fix it — and could do so.

Soft systems, like agriculture and economics, are more complex. We don’t all agree on goals, and we don’t agree on whether things are working or in need of repair. For example, is contemporary American agriculture a system for nourishing people and providing a livelihood for farmers? Or is it one for denuding the nation’s topsoil while poisoning land, water, workers and consumers and enriching corporations? Our collective actions would indicate that our principles favor the latter, that has to change.

Mark
Bittman

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Defining goals that matter to people is critical, because the most powerful way to change a complex, soft system is to change its purpose. For example, if we had a national agreement that food is not just a commodity, a way to make money, but instead a way to nourish people and the planet and a means to safeguard our future, we could begin to reconfigure the system for that purpose. More generally, if we agreed that human well-being was a priority, creating more jobs would not ring so hollow.

Sadly, even if we did agree, complex systems are not subject to clever fixes. Rather, changes often have unexpected results (that shouldn’t happen with a clock), so change necessarily remains incremental. But without an agreement on goals, without statements of purpose, we are going to continue to see changes that are not in the interest of the majority. Increasingly, it’s corporations and not governments that are determining how the world works. As unrepresentative as government might seem right now, there is at least a chance of improving it, whereas corporations will always act in their own interests.

It’s been adequately demonstrated that more than minor tweaks are needed to improve life for most people. Let’s try to make sense of where the world is now instead of relying on outdated doctrines like “capitalism” and “socialism” created by people who had no idea what the 21st century would look like. Let’s ambitiously and publicly philosophize — as the conservatives do — and think about what shape a sensible political economy might take.

The big ideas and strategies for how we should manage society and thrive with the planet are not a set of rules handed down from on high. To develop them for now and the future is a major challenge, and we — progressives and our allies — have to work harder at it. No one is going to figure it out for us.