Angels unaware: Volunteers watching out

Sometimes we are given and blessed by miracles that we never recognize for what they are. As a member of the Astoria Senior Center, I was very disturbed by the delay in the remodel of the building at 1111 Exchange St. What a blessing that I did not recognize until I saw homeless men and women using the vacant building as shelter from the storm.

The door to the Astoria Warming Center has closed for the season and, as with all miracles, a new door will open and there will be angels looking out for human beings who appear to be, not just homeless but also, helpless. That angel will become an advocate and a voice for someone less fortunate.

There has been way too little media coverage about those angels who have volunteered above and beyond what anyone could ever imagine. These are some of the ones who need to be recognized for what they do, not for monetary gain or personal acclaim.

They see a need and a job to be done and they are first in line to help with hours of cleaning dirty and soiled clothes, floors and toilets; hours of staying awake looking after the welfare of someone who may be a complete stranger; and hours of collecting and providing nourishment for someone who is probably a stranger. When there is no warming center open, they do go out to find these strangers who are cold and hungry to see how they are holding up and providing, at their own expense, food and clothing.

Individuals in the community stepped up to the plate and provided so much in terms of clothing, bedding and money for the warming center because they heard the alarm and they cared. But, did you know about the individuals in the community who have been doing this on their own for years, using their own ingenuity and resources, when the truth be told, they sometimes live below the poverty line themselves?

They are out there not just talking-the-talk but they are also walking-the-walk. They know homeless people by their names, they shake their hands, they give them hugs and they demonstrate on a personal level that people really do care for other people. There are individuals who have for years been passing out food gift cards, not as Christmas gifts, but whenever they think someone is hungry.

We even have to give thanks to those who are disgusted by the sight of homeless people in the downtown area and have called the city and police department to complain about someone sleeping in a downtown doorway. Good for them, it has brought home, even more so, the need for a remedy to a silent social disgrace.

In 1953, Dale Evans Rogers wrote a best selling little story about losing a child and she called her book *Angel Unaware*, taking inspiration from the book of Hebrews 13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for hereby some have entertained angels unawares."

The next time you have someone over for coffee, be aware, Astoria and Clatsop County have many angels disguised as your neighbors. God Bless them All.

LARRY ALLEN
Astoria

Maybe youth will stay

Letters to the editor, such as last week's "Bigger not always better" (*The Daily Astorian,* March 13), are emblematic of a larger problem that has faced Clatsop County as a whole. As a born and raised Clatsop County resident, I interpret the article "How big can you be, Astoria" (*The Daily Astorian,* March 6) as the first step in ending a horrid tradition experienced by Clatsop County parents for generations: That is, watching their families being separated because of a lack of economic opportunities for their children in Clatsop County, thus outsourcing their children to the confines of the Interstate 5 corridor and beyond.

So, to have members of the populous who move here expressing reservations about growth in Clatsop County is interpreted by the writer of this epistle to be no less than a slap in the face to his 2-year-old son, and a derogatory gesture (involving very specific phalanges) to the generations of Clatsop County youth forced out of the area, and the pain suffered by parents.

When one walks around downtown Astoria, Youngs Bay Plaza and various parts of Seaside, it can be ascertained that Clatsop County's reliance on a tourist-driven economy is a novelty idea that has run its course. With job and business-killing legislation being pushed in the state legislature, the problem is only going to be amplified in struggling rural economies across the state and here in Clatsop County. It is time as a county we at least begin discussing bringing reliable industries to the area — industries that will provide jobs and an economic revival to Clatsop County. It will also lay the groundwork for other businesses to come to the area, giving future generations of Clatsop County youth at least the economic option to return if they wish.

In conclusion, if things do not economically change in Clatsop County in 16 years, at least I will join the past generations of Clatsop County youth and parents in a horrid tradition of exporting my child from Clatsop County. I plan to fight like hell to change that, and I urge you all to do the same. No more every couple of month weekend visits, Skyping, telephone calls and loading/watching of U-Hauls leaving for the corridor. I plan on being able to tell my son I did everything I could — will you be able to do the same?

JASON KOST
Astoria

Get your carbon rebate

The online letter, "Act on climate change" (*The Daily Astorian,* March 6) says: "A market-based carbon tax rebated to the public would be (State Rep. Greg Walden's) smartest choice" in addressing global warming.

I agree. And there's a bill already drafted and ready to be introduced in Congress, making his job easier. The volunteer Citizens Climate Lobby website has the draft of the bill, which would legislate a steadily-increasing national carbon tax on all fossil fuels, that would be rebated, 100 percent, to every American every month.

It would phase out fossil fuels, create 2.8 million U.S. jobs, add $75-80 billion annually to our Gross Domestic Product, and ordinary Americans would make a profit while transitioning to clean energy with this plan, according to Regional Economic Models Inc.

The bill could have bipartisan support in Congress because not only would it improve our economy and lower the number of premature deaths in the U.S. from carbon pollution (30,000 annually, according to the Environmental Protection Agency), it uses conservative, free-market economics, not government regulations, expansion or expense. It's revenue-neutral.

Perhaps the most important part of this bill is that it can create major carbon emissions cuts in China, which is vital if we are to really combat global warming.

As the carbon tax increased annually, people would, naturally, use their rebate checks to buy cheaper clean energy. We can put the same fee on imports from carbon polluters like China, till they cut their emissions. We'll get this import fee rebated to us too, so U.S. products will be more affordable for Americans, revitalizing our manufacturing sector.

This plan has worked successfully in British Columbia for six years, It's created jobs, lowered taxes and their GDP has been higher than the rest of Canada. (*The Economist,* "The Evidence Mounts")

If we act on climate change now, we can may still have time to avert the catastrophic climate change the world's best climate scientists are warning about, but scientists have recently moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock, which is used to measure our proximity to nuclear annihilation, back up to three minutes to midnight, due to the threat of global warming annihilation. Tick tock.

LYNN GOLDFARB
Northglenn, Colo.

New climate video

Thank you for publishing the piece "Polluters should pay" (*The Daily Astorian,* Jan. 16) by Camila Thorndike and Dan Golden of Oregon Climate.

Oregon Climate recently unveiled a new video from an award-winning filmmaker. The video features Oregonians from across the state explaining the need for a price on pollution and a solution that could put thousand of dollars back in residents' pockets.

Oregon Climate, a new organization working to address climate change and end free pollution in Oregon, recently premiered a mini-documentary from Director Christopher Smith. The 5-minute film explores the current ways that climate change is negatively affecting state businesses, such as oyster farmers and ranchers. The film offers a model that charges a fee to major polluters, returning all of the money to Oregonians in the form of a dividend.

The Oregon Climate video can be seen at www.oregonclimate.org

"This is a win-win solution for our state" said Oregon Climate Executive Director Camila Thorndike. "We can reduce pollution and put money back in Oregonians' pockets, modeling the national policy that can stabilize the climate."

GORDY MOLITOR
Portland

The real ag picture

I feel compelled to say that *The Daily Astorian* opinion piece celebrating Agriculture Day does a disservice to citizens, consumers and the few real farmers and ranchers left ("Agriculture matters most," March 17)

The op-ed paints an idyllic picture of farmers and ranchers tilling the soil and paving the way for civilization by freeing humans from hunting and gathering. Those farmers and ranchers are anachronisms. Today, the cultivators of food and meat do not deserve the title of farmers and ranchers. They are industrial entrepreneurs devoid of respect for living things.

Animals are penned shoulder to shoulder without room to exercise. They wallow in their own waste and are pumped full of antibiotics so they can survive their living conditions. They are fed growth hormones and grains they were never intended to eat leading them to suffer chronic diarrhea. "Ranchers" are unable to manage the amount of urine and diarrhea produced by so many animals in one place and are obliged to create massive ponds of animal waste. This waste is poorly sequestered and gradually leeches into water systems.

The rice mentioned affectionately is so full of cancer-producing arsenic that Consumer Reports recommends that rice no longer be used as a staple food. Even so-called "organic" rice is high in arsenic.

These patrons of civilization now want to splice the genes of other creatures into fruit and vegetables so the resulting Frankenfoods will not turn brown, no matter how long they sit on the counter. So they are "Roundup ready" and can withstand a thorough dousing with deadly glyphosate without visible damage.

I might celebrate more reverential forms of animal husbandry and agriculture. But they are gone. The celebration on Wednesday honored earlier times. We are not in Mayberry any more.

I will not celebrate the abuse of animals and the creation of plants that can tolerate higher concentrations of pesticide, herbicide and arsenic. I will not celebrate the trivialization of genetics. And I will not celebrate foods that must be irradiated to ensure they won't make us sick.

RODNEY MERRILL
Astoria

The real bubble

When bubbles, or excess populations of a species occur, doesn't nature respond by increasing the population of that species' natural predators? So, excess mice bring about an excess of mouse-eaters, which brings about excess eaters of mouse-eaters, etc; the population bubble passes up the food chain until it goes away.

We are inputting millions of hatchery-raised salmon into the river, which has naturally brought about increased populations of seals and cormorants, who eat them. And that makes us mad. We ourselves are the real bubble distorting the earth's population, of course. And not content to occupy the top of the food chain, we interfere in it at every level, any way in which we think we can make a buck.

Well, it's not popular to advocate reducing the human population, but I like the idea of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife introducing about a dozen coyotes out on Sand Island where the cormorants nest. In a couple of years the cormorant part of the bubble would be gone, and ODFW could return the coyotes to the boondocks. That would be much more humane, "natural" and dignified work for ODFW than shooting cormorants.

As for the seals, I guess bringing orcas into the river to eat them is out of the question. But I think maybe all we need are some recipes. I read in the paper that Kennewick Man, the 13,000 year old cadaver found way up the river, had a bellyful of not salmon or sturgeon or venison, but seal meat. I doubt he carried it up there with him. I bet he killed them in the river where they were eating salmon, just as they're doing now.

Maybe the Baked Alaska Restaurant can be persuaded to live up to its name, stand up, and put those guys on their menu.

JOSEPH WEBB
Astoria

Loss of charm

I completely agree with Terrie Powers' letter "Bigger not always better" (*The Daily Astorian,* March 13). Like many others, I retired to Astoria to escape the rat race.

Astoria is currently a relaxing and charming place to live. To allow Huy Ying Chen to convert it to a major tourist attraction, complete with an international airport would be massively destructive to the charm of Astoria ("How big can you be, Astoria?" *The Daily Astorian,* March 6).

Astoria would become the rat race of the North Coast.

KAREN ELDER
Astoria