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Astoria preschool is a winning strategy

Preschool is the right decision from a progressive school board

Former Gov. John Kitzhaber talked about it. President Barack Obama has talked about it. The value of preschool is widely acknowledged. The general concept is that children begin the learning process well before they arrive in kindergarten. Children who are fortunate get a lot of this from their parents. Many other children do not.

Inside the Capt. Robert Gray School are a child care program, Head Start and an alternative school. These programs are evidence of Astoria School District's history of being innovative in response to the needs of the school-age population. Now the Astoria School Board has agreed to establish a preschool within the Gray School building.

"We have kids starting kindergarten already behind," said Astoria Superintendent Craig Hoppes. "They have a hard time catching up. We need something to catch them up."

Warrenton-Hammond and Jewell school districts have their own preschool programs.

Edward Stratton reported last Friday that, "A wide swath of Astoria east of the Astoria Bridge has been identified as a 'hot spot' by the state Department of Human Services, based on high rates of poverty, public assistance, mobility and families with school-age children."

This assessment coincides with the advent of a new state program called Preschool Promise, funded at \$17.5 million. Hoppes says the board is intent on building a financial plan to keep the preschool going past the initial state funding source.

This is the right decision from a progressive school board.

'Ag gag' laws are a mistake

The Lower Columbia region is well endowed with farmers, ranchers and family foresters who their neighbors know to be among the most conscientious stewards of the land. You don't take on a life of long hours and uncertain rewards raising crops, animals and trees — or stay in these endeavors — if you hate the natural world and all that lives there.

What is true on the local scale — that farmers and foresters are natural conservationists worthy of steadfast support — is not universally true on the larger industrial scale. There are irresponsible operators in every economic pursuit and this is also true of agriculture.

Wonderful people but a little tone deaf when it comes to public relations, agricultural producers in some states are incensed by the efforts of a few activists to bring attention to instances of malpractice and misbehavior in the industry. This has led to efforts by ag groups and supportive legislators in places like Idaho to initiate "ag gag" laws, described in our sister publication *Capital Press* as prohibiting hidden-camera filming and obtaining employment under false pretenses.

A story in the *Capital Press* last Friday reported on

just how big a blunder these laws have been in terms of confidence in farmers. A study of U.S. consumers by the University of British Columbia shows that such heavy-handed efforts to keep agricultural practices under wraps has the opposite of the desired effect.

Instead of shielding squeamish consumers from agriculture's facts of life, ag gag laws evidently leave the public assuming there is something to hide.

No industry would be happy to be targeted by "secret agents" posing as visitors or employees, but agriculture occupies a central position in people's lives, providing sustenance for purchasers and their children. Heightened scrutiny is to be expected.

Oregon and Washington state lawmakers clearly should resist the siren call of ag gag laws. Agricultural producers in our states, who enjoy public support and positive reputations, can do far better by continuing to reach out to consumers with truthful information, while working to further enhance animal husbandry and environmentally friendly practices.

The vast majority of farmers are heroes with nothing to hide. They should act accordingly.



Photos by R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
 Oregon Treasurer candidates Jeff Gudman and Chris Telfer debate, moderated by Oregon gubernatorial candidate Allen Alley.

Will the real Oregon GOP please stand up?

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

BY R.J. MARX



There's the "N" word again. "New York."

I was hanging out at lunchtime at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center on a Saturday earlier this month. The Dorchester Conference was meeting for the 52nd time, most of those years in Seaside.

In a display area filled with candidates and causes, we sidled over to the National Rifle Association booth. Unfortunately, the NRA gals couldn't speak on the record because only the national organization is authorized to communicate with the press. Shoot.

We stepped up to U.S. Senate candidate Mark Callahan's table. He was standing alone while participants in the main area were eating turkey sandwiches, tangelos and chocolate chip cookies.

Originally from Eugene and now residing in east Portland, Callahan calls himself a "can-do person" and a "troubleshooter."

He was one of the Republicans in the 2014 primary seeking to challenge U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.

During that election, he called out free-wheeling alt-press reporter Nigel Jaquiss for writing "blah, blah, blah" on a notepad during a candidate interview with the *Willamette Week*.

Callahan told Fox News he took the conservative fight "directly to the heart of Portland's liberal media establishment."

Callahan is continuing the fight, back among the four Republican U.S. Senate candidates (along with Sam Carpenter, Dan Laschober and Faye Stewart) vying for U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden's seat. Wyden, D-Ore., has been in the Senate 35 years and "spends most of his time in New York," Callahan said.

We heard that Wyden had a place in Gearhart. Gearhart residents are proud of it. He's got a place in Portland, too. His wife Nancy, whom he married in 2005, has a place in New York. That's where she's from. Her family owns the city's most famous bookstore, The Strand.

But those words — "New York" — are anathema to some Republicans, despite it being the birthplace of one Donald Trump.

Just like Portland. "Keep Portland Weird" is the cry. Just keep it in Portland.

When we asked Callahan if he was a social, political or economic conservative, he said: "All of the above."

Sam Carpenter of Bend makes Callahan look like Harry Reid.

"I'm kind of a constitutional guy," Carpenter said at the *Seaside Signal* office this month. "I'm a limited government, grassroots kind of guy."

Carpenter said he likes to go back to the "original documentation," the U.S. Constitution.

"I'm a businessman, and most businesses don't have documentation," Carpenter said. "Try to keep it simple. Things have gotten too complex."

"Government's in our face everywhere," Carpenter said. "People can't



The NRA maintained a presence at the Dorchester Conference.



Dorchester President Tom Simpson at the Dorchester Conference in Seaside.



U.S. Senate primary candidate Mark Callahan of east Portland at the Dorchester Conference.

The GOP is at a crisis between elites and grassroots. Between ranchers and bankers. Between Constitutionals and neocons.

move sideways. It's the sea lions on the coast, wolves over here. ... I'd like to see the federal government pull out their tentacles from the poor fishermen."

Faye Stewart's campaign stresses a "common sense reform agenda" to promote individual freedoms, expand economic opportunity and protect American security at home and abroad.

Seth Allan, whose motto is "send a conservative to D.C.," urges a "steadfast defense of religious liberty" in his campaign to unseat U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore.

We liked Tom Simpson, the president of this year's Dorchester Conference. We could almost hark back to the halcyon days of Bob Packwood, Mark Hatfield and Gov. Tom McCall, all Oregon Republicans, in an era when the GOP owned the state. It was McCall, a Republican, who fought to keep the beaches public.

Dorchester keynote speaker Tucker Carlson of Fox News provided insight, Simpson told us.

"Carlson was fabulous," Simpson said. "He really unpacked Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders."

Trump and Sanders are tapping into the same emotions, Simpson said, describing Carlson's message. "There's an underlying anger people get behind at the establishment. I think that's the same on the left as on the right."

"It used to be the Republicans who were the superrich," Simpson added. "Now, the Democrats are the superrich, and the poor."

The poor, he said, are Democrats because they benefit from federal policies.

On the Republican side, "it's sort of a big mess," Simpson said. "You have the Republican elite who are completely out of touch with the people, and they're not only out of touch but they're saying different things."

Trump's success is the businessnessman's ability to "pivot on his positions."

"He's a negotiator, so he pivots on his positions pretty regularly," Simpson said. "He doesn't say, 'This is the way it's going to be and I'll send you back in the corner.' He'll pivot off that

and say: 'You'll like this way better.' So you think of Trump as a negotiator instead of as a politician. That kind of explains why you can't nail him down. He's just trying to find a place he can get to agreement."

In Dorchester's straw poll, Gov. John Kasich of Ohio, considered the most moderate of GOP presidential candidates, was the big winner with 46 votes. Trump came in third with 33.

Nationwide, the divide between left and right is getting wider and the differences more extreme. Yet at Dorchester, the conversation ultimately represented a degree of moderation. *The Daily Astorian's* Edward Stratton wrote, "Even Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders managed three votes between them."

If national races remain competitive, Oregon could be among the deciding states for the primaries on May 17.

I think Carlson and Simpson are right. The GOP is at a crisis between elites and grassroots. Between ranchers and bankers. Between Constitutionals and neocons. Between Portland money and rural poverty, high-tech versus vanishing manufacturing. Mitt Romney in contrast to Sarah Palin. George H. Bush could get elected as an Ivy Leaguer from Connecticut. George W. Bush had to move to Texas to win. The "liberal media establishment" pivots to "fair and balanced" to win ratings.

"Pivoting" in this election year will be no easy strategy for members of the GOP seeking good governance in our state.

Another New Yorker, Joe Franklin, was a pioneering radio and TV talk-show host for decades. He was what they call a "schmoozer," someone who cozies up to someone — anyone — and wins them over with a friendly word, a clap on the back, praise for their kids and grandkids.

"Sincerity," he used to say, "Once you can fake that, you've got it made."

Trump and Franklin were pretty good friends.

R.J. Marx is *The Daily Astorian's* South County reporter and editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*.