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OUR VIEW

Few signs drug blight is abating

Our story last week about Dave and Kerry Strickland's courageous decision to talk about their late son Jordan and the realities of drug addiction in our area deserves to be taken to heart. The death of Knappa's Whitney Ferguson generated similar introspection a year ago. There are few if any signs the drug blight is abating.

Anyone with more than cursory connections here on the coast — or just about anyplace else in rural America — is aware that serious drug problems are woven throughout our networks of friends and relations. To have a teenager or 20-something child here is, at a minimum, a window on some of his or her acquaintances' struggles with opioids, methamphetamine and other destructive substances. Such problems are certainly not confined to the young, however.

Since 2014, 12 people are known to have died in Clatsop County from prescription drugs and heroin. The nationwide overdose death rate for whites ages 25 to 34 is something like five times what it was in 1999, with similarly shocking rates among other age groups. From being rarely mentioned in small newspapers like ours, heroin came up in 213 stories in The Daily Astorian in the four years between 2012 and 2016, compared to 74 times in the four years ending in 2010. In the 1990s, it rarely was reported at all.

This is an awful problem, one very resistant to easy or quick answers. But there are points that need to be made as often as possible:

- Addiction is a disease. Treatment can help some recover. We should emphasize treatment over punishment for drug users.
 - State law encourages the reporting of overdoses. Those who either overdose or call to report them will not be charged with most lower-level drug-related crimes.
 - Police and emergency responders, along with the family members of addicts and addicts themselves, should have easy and affordable access to Narcan (naloxone), which saves lives by counteracting opioids.
 - State and federal leaders must do a better job of ensuring economic and educational pathways for rural Americans, to stem the hopelessness and tedium of dead-end lives.
 - Alcohol remains our biggest drug problem and must not be forgotten.
- Let's do whatever we must to save local people from the death and corrosive destruction of drugs.

State fire fee fiasco is a lesson in communication

In the 1967 movie "Cool Hand Luke," there's an often repeated line: "What we've got here is a failure to communicate."

That's the case between the Oregon Department of Forestry and a group of local landowners who object to a fee the state assesses for fire protection for forest and grazing land. The fee funds wildfire protection efforts.

In early January about 2,300 Astoria Fire Protection District landowners were notified that their properties, designated as forestlands last July, would be assessed an annual fee as part of their property taxes. Some, however, argue their properties should not qualify as forestland and others said they had not received proper notice their property was being reclassified. The reclassification project began in October 2013 and by May 2016 was fully public. Two public meetings and a hearing conducted in Astoria and Seaside produced no oral or written public comments and the final reclassification was recorded in July, Astoria District Forester Dan Goody said. The landowners were notified by the January letter of the property assessments.

The problem that surfaced, however, was that some property owners whose land was reclassified say they were unaware the process took place. About 70 attended a recent town hall meeting, organized by state Sen. Betsy Johnson and state Rep. Deborah Boone, and voiced objections. Also at the meeting were members of the Department of Forestry. The state had mailed postcards about the reclassification to residents 10 months prior to finalizing it, but the postcards may have been discarded as junk mail, Goody said. He said there was no intention to blindsides anyone.

While the reclassification process is finalized, the state received 29 assessment appeals before the deadline and is considering them.

But as Sen. Johnson said, "The number of people who attended the town hall meeting gave rise to the fact that there was some kind of failure to communicate. If we had this kind of disconnect in communication, something is wrong."

The Department of Forestry should consider reopening its appeal period for Clatsop County landowners, and other state and local taxing entities should learn from this lesson in communication. When it comes to people's pocketbooks there's no such thing as too much communication.



The power of disruption



AP Photo/Jim Salter

A Planned Parenthood supporter and opponent try to block each other's signs during a protest and counter-protest Saturday in St. Louis.

By CHARLES BLOW
New York Times News Service

The Trump resistance movement is stretching its wings, engaging its muscles and feeling its power. It is large and strong and tough. It has moved past debilitating grief and into righteous anger, assiduous organization and pressing activism.

Welcome to the dawn of the fighting-mad majority: The ones who didn't vote for Trump and maybe even some who now regret that they did.

They are charging forward under the banner of sage wisdom that has endured through the ages: Show up, get loud and fight back. Do it with your body and words, with your time and money, with every fiber of yourself. They see what this dawning regime means and they don't intend, not even for a second, to wait around to see what happens. "What happens" is happening right now and it's horrific.

Donald Trump is a vulgar, uninformed, anti-intellectual, extremely unpopular grifter helming a family of grifters who apparently intend to milk their moment on the mount for every red cent.

Trump still hasn't released his taxes or fully disconnected from his businesses. His wife is suing The Daily Mail because she believes the newspaper may have injured her "unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to "have garnered multimillion-dollar business relationships for a multiyear term." When his daughter Ivanka's clothing line was dropped by Nordstrom, Trump lashed out at the retailer on Twitter, citing Ivanka as something of his moral compass: "My daughter Ivanka has been treated so unfairly by @Nordstrom. She is a great person — always pushing me to do the right thing! Terrible!" This begs the question: "Why do you need someone to push you to do the right thing?"

Then, top Trump adviser Kellyanne "QVC" Conway, from the confines of the White House briefing room, said during a televised interview: "Go buy Ivanka's stuff is what I would say." She

continued: "I'm going to give a free commercial here: Go buy it today, everybody; you can find it online."

Unethical is too kind a word for these classless cretins. Furthermore, Trump has nominated, and his Republican conspirators in the Senate have confirmed, a rogues' gallery of some of the least qualified, most questionable appointees in recent memory. Aside from some of them being the fiercest critics of the very agencies they are charged with leading, some have also been accused of bigotry, plagiarism, insider trading and overall vacuousness.

Trump's Muslim ban has also been an absolute disaster and has met some much-applauded resistance in court, most recently with the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rebuking the administration's lawyers like children.

What is there to wait and see? A rose will never bloom from a weed; you must snatch that thing up at first sight, by the root.

This administration is manifesting as the disaster we knew it would be; the stench of its rot surrounds us. What is there to wait and see? A rose will never bloom from a weed; you must snatch that thing up at first sight, by the root.

That is why you are seeing so much grass-roots resistance from a multiplying array of groups. One of the most prominent is called "Indivisible." The Nation interviewed Ezra Levin, a former Democratic staffer and co-founder of the project and reported on the exchange: "Levin says that Indivisible built on the Tea Party's model of 'practicing locally focused, almost entirely defensive

strategy.' This, he adds, 'was very smart, and it was rooted in an understanding of how American democracy works. They understood that they didn't have the power to set the agenda in Washington, but they did have the ability to react to it. It's Civics 101 stuff — going to local offices, attending events, calling their reps.'"

I would add that these groups are practicing one of the most effective tactics of confronting power: disruption. Town hall meetings have been disrupted; protesters disrupted Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' plans to enter a Washington school.

Disruption works! When Frederick Douglass attacked Abraham Lincoln by saying that he "seems to possess an ever increasing passion for making himself appear silly and ridiculous, if nothing worse," Douglass was being disruptive.

When women suffragists paraded through Washington, they were being disruptive.

When Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat, she was being disruptive.

When civil rights activists marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were being disruptive.

When LGBT people fought back at The Stonewall Inn, they were being disruptive.

When Act Up flooded Times Square, they were being disruptive.

When Occupy Wall Street refused to move from their parks, they were being disruptive.

When Black Lives Matter took to the streets and ground traffic to a halt, they were being disruptive.

When Native Americans stood in resistance at Standing Rock, they were being disruptive.

When Elizabeth Warren persisted, she was being disruptive.

Disruption is not a dirty word; in this environment, it's a badge of honor.

Yes, it's important to show up on Election Day, but it is also important to show up on the hundreds of days before and after. This is where the resistance movements are saying to Trump and his America: Buckle your seat belts, because massive disruption is in the offing.

Trump is not normal. He is not competent. And we will not simply sit back and suck it up.