

OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

Zero tolerance for school hooliganism

There are troubling signs of aggression and discord in schools and between students away from school grounds.

This led to a quickly arranged all-day faculty meeting at Ilwaco High School on Dec. 8. The meeting generated more community concern than apparently was intended, after the school district made reference in an online post to the students recently murdered in a school shooting in Oxford, Michigan. There was no immediate threat of deadly violence in Ilwaco.

There are, however, gravely concerning behaviors. In November, for example, police dealt with a report of three teenage girls threatening to beat up another girl and telling her to kill herself.

Ilwaco isn't the only local campus with problems. Parents cite bullying issues at Hilltop Middle School. The Seaside School District suspended classes on Dec. 7 out of an abundance of caution in response to a possible shooting threat at Seaside High School, which police determined was not credible. A Seaside Middle School student is facing discipline after a bomb threat on social media on Sunday.

There have been heated disagreements at school board meetings in Pacific and Clatsop counties — and across the nation — about pandemic precautions. These arguments happen within the context of bitter national political disputes, which overlap into bad behavior between students. Nor is this toxicity limited to students and their



Paul Sancya/AP Photo

People attending a vigil embraced at LakePoint Community Church in Oxford, Michigan, in November after a school shooting.

parents — some school faculty members and staff also fall into opposing camps.

For decades, factors like the seasonality of jobs, alcohol and drug abuse and the divide between economic classes have spawned problems in local schools. Much as most of us love it here, we see some of the same societal challenges as metropolitan regions. But we are perfectly capable of being a kind, supportive and reasonably smooth-functioning place.

Our nation is built on a founda-

tion of strong opinions. It would be naive and unhelpful to pretend we're going to agree on all important matters. Although it is in some ways astounding that Americans would lock horns over virus hygiene and vaccinations, nothing excites stronger pushback than dictates affecting our children. Ongoing public-health education and sympathy may gradually achieve what shaming will not.

Tolerance for differing opinions is one thing. Tolerating hooliganism is something else entirely.

School administrators are right to draw a hard line against feuds that threaten to turn violent.

But it isn't the job of schools to raise decent, respectful and law-abiding children and teens; that vital mission is up to parents and the wider community. Students unable to get along in classrooms and schoolyards must face appropriate consequences — consequences that also make it crystal clear to parents or guardians that we will not put up with disruptive delinquents.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Be grateful

Thank you, Dick Hughes, for your guest column, "There is no back to normal" (Nov. 30)! Like you said, there is no going back.

I'm grateful for that, while I do grieve the many worldwide who have been lost and affected by COVID-19 and its variants, lost jobs and businesses closing. Sadly, too many are acting like the ongoing pandemic is over by not wearing masks in crowded venues; too many aren't getting vaccinated, fueling the pandemic.

Ironically, the pandemic has done us some favors by helping people to slow down, stay home, set or remember priorities and millions have developed a love for gardening, bird-watching, being grateful.

Pre-pandemic normal was driving nature off the mountainside. If we continue to burn fossil fuels, pollute the oceans, spray poisons and cut down our air-producing trees, how will we slow the loss of wildlife that has been normal for centuries?!

Let's focus on new paths of sustainability that are anything but what the past normal has been. Reduce use of plastics; reuse, repair, repurpose; buy in thrift stores and antique malls, and thank those folks in service and in stores by name; plant trees; drive less; live in kindness and patience; focus on family, friends; and support those in need of mental health, food and clothing.

Erase prejudice and live in truth, not by political party lines. There is no going back to normal. Be grateful for that, learn from the past and find the good in your new paths forward.

ROBIN RODGERS
Astoria

Common ground

The Cannon Beach community desperately needs to heal and overcome the divisions created by special interests regarding the food tax vote.

Despite the Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association's substantial financial activity, Cannon Beach citizens voted with their hearts to support enhanced infrastructure and improved public safety. I am personally grateful that our hardworking first responders will have adequate equipment and personnel to keep us safe!

Some people have concerns about the Cannon Beach ballot box, but let's think logically about the events and consequences. Notably, city staff immedi-



LETTERS WELCOME

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let's give staff credit for trying to do the right thing.

We clearly have an engaged and passionate community. But it is my hope that now we can turn our shared passion toward finding common ground, and creating a shared vision for the future.

MICKEY MORITZ
Cannon Beach

Mixed bag

Voting left-of-center most of the time, and voting far-right the rest of the time, does not make a politician a centrist. It makes them a mixed bag.

Being willing to sacrifice children to the gun lobby is not centrist. Being willing to sacrifice continued life on Earth for the sake of business interests is not centrist.

And, playing both sides against the middle is not the same as being the middle.

RODNEY MERRILL
Astoria

ately disclosed everything to city, county and state officials, knowing they might be blamed for any irregularities.

And could city staff have realistically altered the outcome? Would they have sifted through ballots to remove likely "no" votes when every voter can call the county elections division to ask if their ballot was received? No.

Would city staff have opened ballots and changed votes when county officials would have noticed disturbed envelopes and contacted the voter? No.

Common sense suggests that city staff did exactly as they claimed in trying to save ballots — either "yes" or "no" votes — from becoming soaked and unusable. We may disagree with their choice, but