

## Quick takes

### Occult books flying off local library shelves

I've looked for these books and they were never on the bookshelves. I believe the problem is not book thieves but Christian Fundamentalist librarians.

— Boniface Wolfson

### Kitzhaber addresses Hayes

@govkitz: Cylvia Hayes will have no role in his administration #orpol

— @hborrud

Well, I'd say that went rather well. He should have done a mic drop at the (abrupt) end of that.

— Jeremy Clark

### Defending Tamastlikt

Tamastlikt and its leadership have been recognized regionally and nationally on more than one occasion and it is truly an institute of which we can all be proud.

—Michelle Liberty

I think the place is great. It does what it set out to do — illustrate the history of the Confederated Tribes and explain their view of the pioneers' invasion of their land.

— Dean Brickley

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim\_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

# Council invites residents to talk pot

In 1998 Oregon voters approved the use of medical marijuana which established the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP). Statewide, the program has grown from 600 registered patients in 1999 to 69,865 patients. There are currently 618 registered patients in Umatilla County. Registered patients may grow their own or designate an individual 18 years or older to act as their grower. Registered growers may grow for up to four patients. A patient may have six mature plants and 1.5 pounds of usable marijuana. There are only six full-time state employees to enforce this program, which has resulted in many abuses.

In 2013, HB 3460 directed the Oregon Health Authority to license medical marijuana dispensaries and establish standards for their operation. Local communities had several concerns implementing this action. As a result, the legislature adopted SB 1531 allowing communities to impose a moratorium on dispensaries until May 1, 2015 to adopt ordinances related to permitting and operating them. Pendleton, Umatilla County and the majority of cities across the state adopted a moratorium.

In November 2014, voters approved Measure 91 legalizing the recreational use of marijuana by a statewide margin of 56 percent to 44 percent. Voters in Umatilla County rejected the measure 63 percent to 37 percent. The measure legalizes the use of marijuana by persons 21 years or older on July 1, 2015. On that date, persons can have in their household eight ounces of useable



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Comment

marijuana, four marijuana plants, one pound of solid homemade marijuana product, and 4½ pounds of liquid homemade marijuana products. They can also deliver to another person 21 years or older, for noncommercial purposes, up to one ounce of homegrown marijuana, one pound of solid homemade marijuana products and 4½ pounds of liquid homemade marijuana products.

No consumption of marijuana is allowed in public, but possession of 1 ounce or less in public is allowed.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) is charged with licensing and regulation of recreational marijuana. OLCC has been directed to adopt rules by January 1, 2016, and will start accepting applications for business by January 4, 2016. It is doubtful they will meet these deadlines. Separate licenses will be issued for producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers. A person can hold more than one license. The state has the exclusive right to tax retail marijuana at \$35/oz. for flowers, \$10/oz. for leaves and \$5/plant, disallowing cities and counties to tax these items. Eighty percent of taxes will go to the state for schools, substance abuse and state police. Ten percent will be distributed to cities and ten percent to counties to assist law enforcement. City and county distributions are apportioned based on population in 2016 and the number of OLCC licenses in each city and county thereafter. Statewide tax revenues

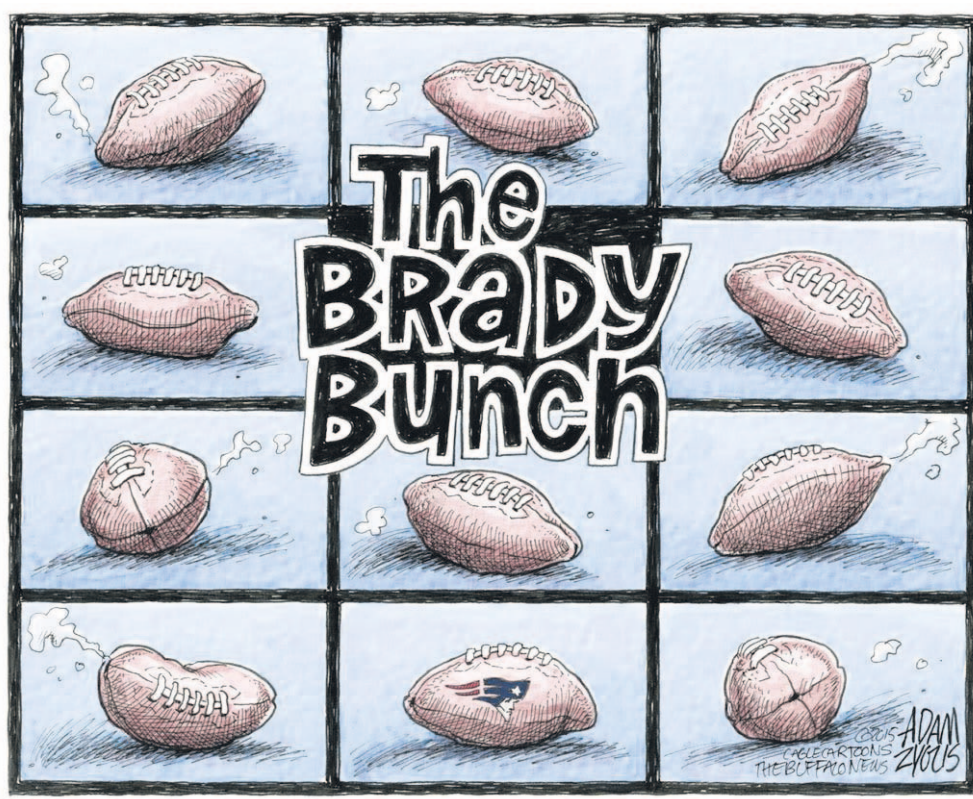
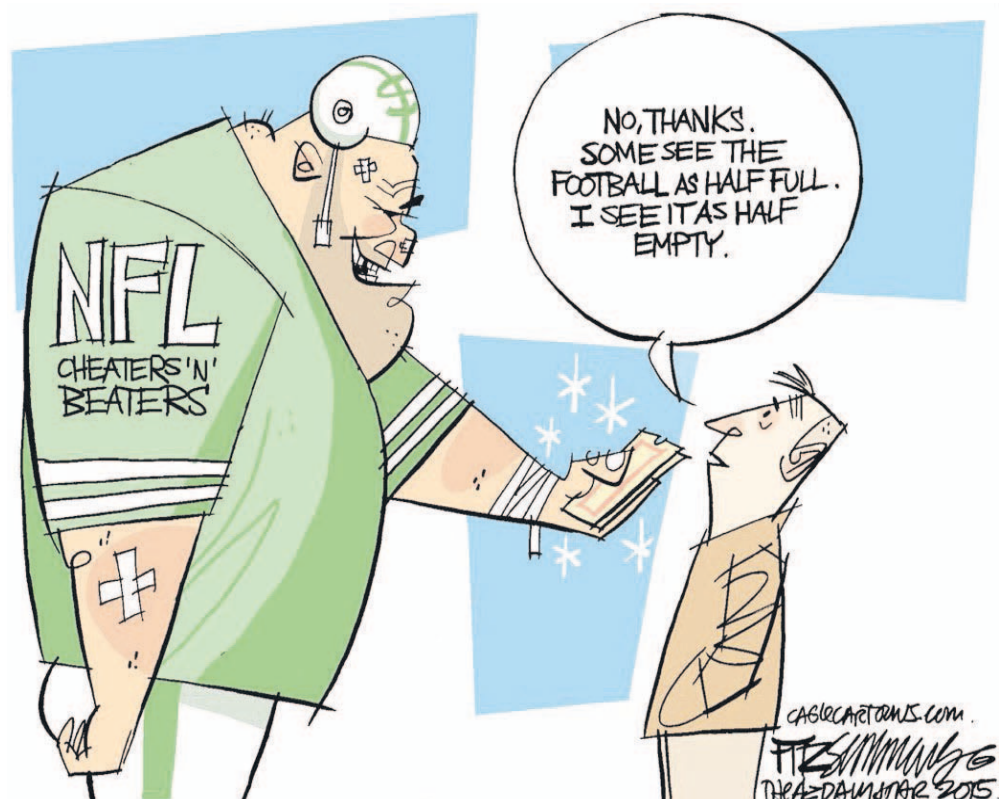
are projected to be \$9.4 million for 2016 and \$20 million/year for 2017/18. The measure also allows local jurisdictions to opt out of legalized marijuana, but only through the initiative process signed by 10 percent of voters and approved in a general election beginning November 2016. Cities and counties who opt out will lose their share of this tax revenue. Many believe there will be inadequate local and state tax revenue to offset the health and safety expenses related to the recreational use of marijuana.

Meeting is Tuesday at 6 p.m. at city hall.

Pendleton and most other Oregon cities and counties face the challenge of promulgating workable rules within their jurisdiction to deal with permitting medical marijuana dispensaries, and with individuals who will be allowed to have large quantities of legalized recreational marijuana on July 1, 2015. Other than growing their own, recreational users have no legal means to purchase product until at least six months later when OLCC promulgates rules in 2016. Furthermore, communities wishing to opt out of legalized marijuana will not be allowed to do so until November 2016, eighteen months after it is legalized statewide.

The Pendleton City Council will have a workshop at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, February 3 to discuss these issues in council chambers. These are critical issues. Citizens are strongly encouraged to attend.

Chuck Wood, retired, is a Pendleton city councilman.



## Jump on the bandwagon

For every true fan rooting for the Seahawks on Super Sunday, there are at least 11 bandwagon jumpers, only joining the party in the last few years as the team has become a force on the field.

That's the narrative you'll hear, anyway, from both the most obnoxious in the navy blue, gray and green and those bitter outsiders (mostly 49ers fans) who like to think of sports fandom as something sacred.

The truth is, it's not.

If the Seattle Seahawks could get every person in America to root for them, buy their apparel and show up to their games, they would be one happy franchise. And the fans who work hard to discourage that kind of conversion must be frustrating to ownership.

So it seems to be with the Republican party in Oregon, which is doing its best to shrink its base to a small, righteous core of true believers. They're treating politics as something sacred. Also false.

Government is about making rules we can all live by to create a society we would all like to live in. Because our individual views on rules and the ideal society differ, we elect politicians who roughly approximate our beliefs to have a hand in that process. We don't elect the smartest candidate, or the handsomest, or the strongest or even the best. We elect the one that most people believe thinks like them.

Enter the party system — a way for generally like-minded people to talk about ideas and cultivate candidates to carry those ideas before an electorate and on to the capitol. At its best, the party crafts its arguments and presentation to bring as many people on board as possible.

Instead, the Republican party in this state has made it a mission to keep the club exclusive. That means excommunication of those who would dare don the red sash of the Grand Old Party without pledging allegiance to the tea party. Who would ever vote the same way as their colleagues in blue. Who would listen to all their constituents, then speak their own mind.

There is a need to demand elected



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### Now is the time to start widening the base of Oregon's Republican Party, not dwindling it.

leaders do what they say they'll do, and the party should help facilitate that accountability. But more importantly, the party should pride itself in finding and growing candidates who can present the platform in a way that gets people on board. On the bandwagon, so to speak.

In the last two election cycles, which Republican candidates or party leaders in Oregon have expanded the party? Who has

been the most effective at convincing independents, conservative Democrats and otherwise uninterested parties that a vote for a Republican is a vote for a better future?

We've seen two seemingly winnable governor's races go to the blue team. We've seen a local, well-liked and well-funded Republican narrowly lose his U.S. Senate seat to an unpolished but willing-to-learn Portland Democrat. Then we watched that same Democrat make easy work of his far-right Republican adversary the second time around.

We've seen turmoil in the Oregon Republican Party's office with four chairs elected since 2009. The current chairman, Art Robinson, holds a wide array of controversial and conspiratorial views that have clearly hurt his credibility. He has been defeated by increasingly wider margins in three consecutive races against Peter DeFazio in the southern Oregon Congressional district after facing no Republican challenger the last two times out.

Now is the time to start widening the base of the party, not dwindling it. There are ways of strongly defending Second Amendment rights, making a case for tax cuts and arguing that life begins at conception and ends at natural death without just playing to the crowd that's already bought in. Every Republican acting on behalf of the party should aim to spread and defend the platform, not pick at the nuances among fellow members.

Don't treat those on the fence as outsiders — welcome them in.

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## How do we increase empathy?

In my last column, I wrote about a high school buddy, Kevin Green, a warm and helpful man who floundered in a tough job market, hurt his back and died at the age of 54. The column was a call for empathy for those who are struggling, but, predictably, scolds complained that Kevin's problems were of his own making.

Grrrr. So what do we know about empathy and how to nurture it?

First, it seems hard-wired. Even laboratory rats will sometimes free a trapped companion before munching on a food treat.

"Probably the biggest empathy generator is cuteness: paedomorphic features such as large eyes, a large head, and a small lower face," Steven Pinker, the Harvard psychologist, tells me. "Professional empathy entrepreneurs have long known this, of course, which is why so many charities feature photos of children and why so many conservation organizations feature pandas. Prettier children are more likely to be adopted, and baby-faced defendants get lighter sentences."

Not much we can do about looks — although criminal defense lawyers try, by having scruffy clients shave and dress up before appearing in court.

There's also some research suggesting that wealth may impede empathy. One study by psychologists at the University of California at Berkeley finds that drivers of luxury cars are more likely to cut off other motorists and ignore pedestrians at a crosswalk. Likewise, heart rates of wealthier research subjects are less affected when they watch a video of children with cancer.

Granted, skepticism is reasonable any time (mostly liberal) academics reach conclusions that portray the wealthy in a poor light. But these experiments also find a measure of backing in the real world. For example, among Democratic politicians, personal wealth is a predictor of supporting legislation that would increase inequality, according to a journal article last year by Michael W. Kraus and Bennett Callaghan.

Likewise, the wealthiest 20 percent of Americans give significantly less to charity as a fraction of income (1.4 percent) than the poorest 20 percent do (3.5 percent), according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

That may be partly because affluence insulates us from need, so that disadvantage becomes theoretical and remote rather than a person in front of us. Wealthy people who live in economically diverse areas are more generous than those who live in exclusively wealthy areas.

Wealth may also turn us inward. Some



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experiments manipulated research subjects to think of money — such as by having them gaze at a pile of Monopoly money and imagine great wealth — and found that when a person then "accidentally" spilled pencils nearby, those thinking of great wealth were less helpful than those imagining tight budgets and picked up fewer pencils from the floor.

So how do we increase empathy? Dacher Keltner, who runs the Greater Good Science Center at

University of California at Berkeley, says that having people think about suffering activates the vagus nerve, which is linked to compassion. He also cites evidence that uplifting stories about sacrifice boost empathy, as do various kinds of contemplation — prayer, meditation, yoga.

Keltner says that going out into nature also appears to encourage greater compassion. Feelings of awe, such as those generated by incredible images from space, seem to do the same thing, he says.

Pinker, in his superb book "The Better Angels of Our Nature," explores whether the spread of affordable fiction and journalism beginning in the 18th century expanded empathy by making it easier for people to imagine themselves in the shoes of others. Researchers have found that reading literary fiction by the likes of Don DeLillo or Alice Munro — but not beach fiction or nonfiction — can promote empathy.

I used to be cynical about student service projects, partly because they seemed so often to be about dressing up a college application, and trips so often involve countries with great beaches. (Everyone wants to help Costa Rica!) Then there was *The Washington Post's* report about the Mexican church that was painted six times over the course of a summer by successive waves of visitors.

Yet I've come to believe that service trips do open eyes and remind students of their good fortune. In short, they build empathy.

So let's escape the insulation of our comfort zones. Let's encourage student service projects and travel to distant countries and to needy areas nearby. Whatever the impact on others, volunteering may at least help the volunteer. Let's teach Dickens and DeLillo in schools, along with literature that humanizes minority groups and builds understanding.

Above all, let's remember that compassion and rationality are not effete markers of weakness, but signs of civilization.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. He has been a *New York Times* columnist since 2001.