

Quick takes

Umatilla halts handouts

It’s ridiculous and is only appeasing the people who think the homeless are nothing but an eyesore. Even if they aren’t really homeless, they still have their own problems and I will still give them the benefit of the doubt.

— Anel Colmenares

These panhandlers are crooks and thugs, beware of them. One day you may find them driving a fancy car from your donations — they are not who they seem to be!

— Mark Jaeger

Bedford Bridge ordinance

So ... no more Round-Up then?

— Rachel Webb

All I see on the bridge when I walk across is a bunch of teenagers smoking. That’s the problem, they gather up there during break periods and it’s messed up. They are underage and they have been doing it for years. If the police would patrol during lunch and before and after school it would not be that bad

— Amy Engblom

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.

Requa doesn’t rise to legendary statue status

By CHARLES F. SAMS III and WIL PHINNEY

Confederated Umatilla Journal

The statues of Pendleton’s historical figures have been prominently played out in the pages of the local papers, social media and personal conversations in our community.

Over the past few years, the Pendleton Arts Commission and the city of Pendleton have approved the likenesses of figures from our most recent common history. The statues have been placed in town from the east entrance to the main street: Esther Motanic, the first Round-Up queen; Jackson Sundown, 1916 Round-Up Champion; George Fletcher, the unofficial champion of the 1911 Round-Up; and Stella Darby, a brothel madam from Pendleton’s more colorful past.

In addition, the city has approved two more statues for display; Kathleen McClintock, 1929 Round-Up queen and Don Requa, former Pendleton High School football coach from 1951 to 1986.

Out of all of these prominent figures, the one that does not really seem to fit our collective history is a statue of Don Requa. Granted, Coach Requa led Pendleton to a historical record of 301 wins, 97 losses and 6 ties. He was Oregon’s first football coach to top 300 wins, but he never coached a state champion team.

We both have known Coach Requa, as

a student at Pendleton High School and as a reporter covering his career on the sports pages of the *East Oregonian*. While Coach Requa is the stuff of legend to the Pendleton football community, he does not rise to the legendary status of the statues currently on display or the one planned. The city has approved the placement of Coach Requa’s statue at Brownfield Park on Main Street. The prominent display of a coach, who’s only really recognized by a minority of the public, does not seem befitting.

Coach Requa had his strengths and weaknesses of character, like any person. His character strengths don’t seem to rise to a status that would place his likeness in the common areas of downtown Pendleton. His statue would be better placed at Pendleton High School, perhaps near the football field, to better inspire those who play the game.

There is no doubt “Req” has his admirers and he has earned certain respect from many who learned more than football under his tutelage. They have a

right to revere the man. No one should deny them that right. All we are saying is that his 7-foot statue does not belong on Main Street with other historical figures that have earned legendary status. Unfortunately, unlike the other legends on Main Street, Requa’s status will not live on when his admirers join him in football heaven.

We think a statue of Requa belongs at Pendleton High School where students of the future can better understand who the man was and why he is being enshrined.

No offense to Requa fans. We’re not saying the man shouldn’t be honored. We’re just suggesting that it shouldn’t be downtown

on Main Street.

The Pendleton City Council should change their decision.

Charles F. Sams III is the communications director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Wil Phinney is the editor of the Confederated Umatilla Journal, a monthly newspaper.

Of sex and death and rain: teaching young people while watching salmon

By JOURDAN ARENSON

Writers on the Range

Getting teenagers to embrace environmental stewardship can be a challenge, especially when those teenagers are cold and wet. One way to grab their attention is to present a drama of sex and death.

For 21 years, that’s been the strategy of Salmon Watch, a field program that allows middle and high school students to observe spawning salmon at the height of Oregon’s autumn rains. Each November, as adult salmon finish the long swim to their natal streams, local teenagers ride buses to the Whittaker Creek Recreation Site, east of Mapleton, Oregon. There, they stand in the rain, learn about salmon ecology, and watch skateboard-sized fish spawn and die in the shallow water.

The students have been taught by a team of Salmon

Watch volunteers — all wearing heavy rain gear — who are recruited by Jennifer Weber, education coordinator at the McKenzie Watershed Council. To inspire her staff, Weber

quotes the conservationist Baba Dioum: “We will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.”

The volunteers come from the federal Bureau of Land Management, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, a municipal water and electric board, and local fly-fishing clubs. The job’s biggest hazard is facing a group of teenagers who are not just cold and wet, but also bored. So everyone has tricks. Justin Demeter,

for example, explains the function of a healthy riparian zone by asking students to imagine they are raindrops. They visualize bouncing down through the leaf canopy and filtering through

the root mass to cool and cleanse themselves before entering the stream. Demeter finds his we-are-raindrops exercise works best when it is raining.

When Steve Liebhart begins his lecture on fish biology, he points upstream

to a decomposing salmon carcass. “You can gawk at the dead fish while I talk.” He then conjures the plight of a baby salmon’s swim to the ocean. “You want to be a bigger fish because bigger fish swim faster and fit in fewer mouths. You have to eat enough ... to

get fast enough ... to avoid being eaten ... so you can eat more.”

Later, students examine the aquatic bugs that make up salmon baby food. They use a turkey baster to suck up the bugs and spit them into an ice cube tray. Liebhart explains that aquatic bugs gorge on the decomposing flesh of adult salmon, and discloses a rather alarming fact about their circle of life: “The baby salmon get to eat the bugs that ate mom and dad.”

Other volunteers use a more literary approach. When Bob Bumstead, a former English teacher, leads high-schoolers along the spawning beds, he recites an original poem:

*A frenzy of salmon
In an agitation of water
Fighting,
Digging,
Laying,
Sperming,
Quivering as no human
thigh
Could quiver,*

*Pure orgiastic excess
So full of life
And death
That it hurts to watch.
Even the field-tripping
Adolescents
Paused their singular
Preoccupations
To watch in slack-jawed
Wonder*

Bumstead doesn’t read this poem to middle-schoolers. Still, the younger kids know what’s going on. After seeing two males slash at each other in the shallow water, a boy asks his friend, “Are they playing tag?” “No,” his friend answers. “They are playing, ‘I want the female.’”

Sometimes, volunteers need to set the stage to enhance the drama. One year, the salmon ran late, and Weber found no dead fish for streamside dissection. So she stopped by the state hatchery to borrow a few carcasses. She stored them in her fridge and, next morning, drove one out to the creek so a volunteer could dissect it for

the students.

The dissection usually gets some kind of rise out of even the most blasé teenagers. In the history of the program, volunteers can recall only one instance where a student fainted when a fish stomach was slit open. But ideally, the experience plants the seed for a future in biology. While dissecting a female fish, a volunteer stretches open the slimy body cavity to reveal several remaining eggs. A girl asks, “Do we really have to do this before lunch?” But a middle school boy wants to see one of the eggs. The volunteer drops an egg from tweezers onto the boy’s palm, where it shines like a pale pink jewel. The boy asks, “Can I keep it?” When the volunteer says he can, the boy slips the egg into his pants pocket.

Jourdan Arenson is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News.

YOUR VIEWS

Schools levy will plug hole left by state

Why do we need to vote on the Pendleton school levy again? You may be wondering, “Haven’t we already done this?” The law requires us to vote every five years to affirm the levy funding path we chose in 2000. Our local levy is an example of our community rolling up our sleeves to pay for local teachers when the state is not providing enough resources to do the job.

We all want adequate funding from the state to operate our schools. But Salem is not going to fix that problem in the next few days before our local ballots are due.

A yes vote means we put some money on the table (\$300,000 per year) and in turn the state will kick in \$170,000 per year. A no vote means we take away the \$470,000 our local schools are counting on because we have voted in support of this approach every five years since 2000.

Please remember the levy is Pendleton’s homegrown solution to help our schools. Join us to vote yes for Measure 30-105.

Steve and Jane Hill
Pendleton

Pendleton levy will not raise tax rates

As we all sit down to fill out our ballots, I’d like to urge you to vote yes on the renewal of the Pendleton School District local option levy.

By voting yes we can continue to provide our schools with the necessary operating funds that are not provided by the state — \$2.25 million over the next 5 years.

By voting yes we can prevent cutting teacher positions, increasing class sizes and the elimination of additional programs. By voting yes we can continue to support our district as they build new academic programs, expand classroom technology and build a brighter future for our kids and community.

Since this levy is a continuation, there will be no tax increase and therefore no added cost to the taxpayer. The levy was originally passed in 2000, and renewed

in 2005 and 2010. If the levy is approved again, the maximum tax rate would be 40 cents per \$1,000 assessed value. This is a renewal of the same tax in place since 2000, and does not increase the tax rate.

Our district and our students need our support — I urge you to vote yes on the local option levy, measure 30-105, on the May 19 ballot.

Jill Gregg
Pendleton High School ASPIRE
coordinator

Levy an important moment for Pendleton

This is an important month for all Pendletonians who support the Pendleton School District. The 2010 local option expires this year and a renewal, ballot measure 30-105, is on the election ballot due May 19. We can approve this ballot at no additional cost. This is a “win-win” opportunity.

We are the responsible, voting citizens of today. Students who have our support and example now can become the responsible, voting citizens of our future.

As you prepare to vote, please take time to turn your ballot over and vote yes to continue your support of Pendleton schools.

Sylvia Clawson
Pendleton

School levy a way to offer local support

Please support our children by voting yes on Measure 30-105, the local option tax renewal. This is one of the few places where local citizens can support their children directly rather than have the money flow through Salem.

As I have traveled around the state I am reminded of how the citizens of Pendleton have always supported our schools. We were one of the first districts to pass a local option tax, back when a double majority was required. In the 15 years since then the citizens have renewed the option twice, resulting in \$500,000 per year in operating funds.

Please turn your ballot to the back side and vote yes on 30-105.

Dave Krumbein
Pendleton School Board member

Plass will bring fresh perspective to BMCC

For those of you who haven’t yet voted, please join me in supporting Susan Plass for the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Directors. She will bring to the college a fresh perspective, new ideas and a wealth of experience in higher education.

Vote Susan Plass for BMCC Board.

Clark Hilden
Pendleton

BMCC faculty leader encourages yes vote

As president-elect of the Blue Mountain Faculty Association, I am encouraging you to vote yes on the Blue Mountain Community College bond.

Faculty voted overwhelmingly to endorse the bond because it will bring to our communities programs that will provide affordable education and family wage jobs. It also provides much needed information technology upgrades.

Additionally, it will secure a safe learning environment for our students through increased access and safety upgrades, with the added benefit of reducing operational costs through increased energy efficiencies.

We believe that these projects are vital as they will enhance the quality education that BMCC provides to students and our communities.

Bob Hillenbrand
Pendleton

BMCC grads make region a better place

I’m writing in support of the Blue Mountain Community College bond. One important aspect that BMCC provides to our area is the opportunity to improve our lot in life. For many that started at BMCC.

Chances are if you have a mechanic working on your car, an electrician repairing the wiring in a home or office, a nurse or dental hygienist at a local clinic or a small business owner providing important service jobs to our community, they most likely got

additional training or skills through BMCC directly or through an apprenticeship program or the Small Business Development Center.

BMCC has been a stepping-stone for countless friends and neighbors that live and work in our communities everyday. For over 50 years BMCC has provided an opportunity to help us support ourselves in Eastern Oregon. We face many challenges in our community, our state and our country, but it is critical that we stand together to support what directly helps and benefits us individually and collectively.

Your support of the BMCC bond will help the next generation of Eastern Oregon families and friends develop a living wage job that helps our entire region and maintains Eastern Oregon as a great place to live and work.

The ballots have been delivered in the mail. It is time for us to deliver a yes vote for BMCC and for ourselves.

Thank you.

Kevin Hale
Pendleton

BMCC bond expands government power

Some voters on the BMCC bond will consider what the college’s needs are and how best these needs are met. ‘New comfortable buildings are one of the most important assets of attraction for new students to BMCC.’ I actually heard this almost word for word in one of the BMCC levy presentations.

Wow! How did we ever get Einstein, how did we ever get Harvard, MIT and Stanford? It was the quality of education that attracted their national attention, not the buildings.

So why are we taking out a loan for deferred maintenance? Why are we not using existing abandoned storefronts? Why are we building a permanent classroom, that will deteriorate, for classes that will benefit a specific industry, when that industry could provide trailers or modular classrooms with completely up-to-date training equipment? (And replace them as needed.) Why is this \$4

million early education, birth-to-kindergarten teacher training center not added into the new Pendleton early education behemoth?

Another group of voters are those who adamantly, respectfully, disagree with some of the apparent operational principles of BMCC. Has anyone over 45 years of age noticed that a sign of our times is the breakdown of the family and its subsequent consequences? Many of us have noticed.

We do not want BMCC in the maternity ward at the birth of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We do not want to pay teachers substituting for the mothers in the first 15 months of a child’s life.

The April 29 *East Oregonian* had a front page article that brings this all together. It was entitled “Relief nursery grapples with funding shortfall.” The United Way contributions have significantly shrunk in recent years.

We heartless folks, as some would call us, believe that the Pioneer Relief Nursery in Pendleton is a worthy good representative of an agency for a needed solution to a “real” societal problem. It deserves to be supported by the community.

It is not government’s job to solve that problem. It is not government’s job to continue to manage family life and child rearing. It is not government’s job to raise children from birth in a “cookie cutter” environment. Just because we let governments do these things doesn’t mean that we should not stand up and say stop going down this path. We also need to get our so-called collective responsible heads out of the sand and come up with healthy solutions — not passing the buck to government.

Larry and Jean Nye
Athena

Editor’s note: From here on out, letters to the editor regarding the May ballot that do not bring up new issues will run solely online. Feel free to continue to submit your thoughts and read them in their entirety at eastoregonian.com/eo/letters. Letters to the editor on other subjects will continue to be run in print as space allows.