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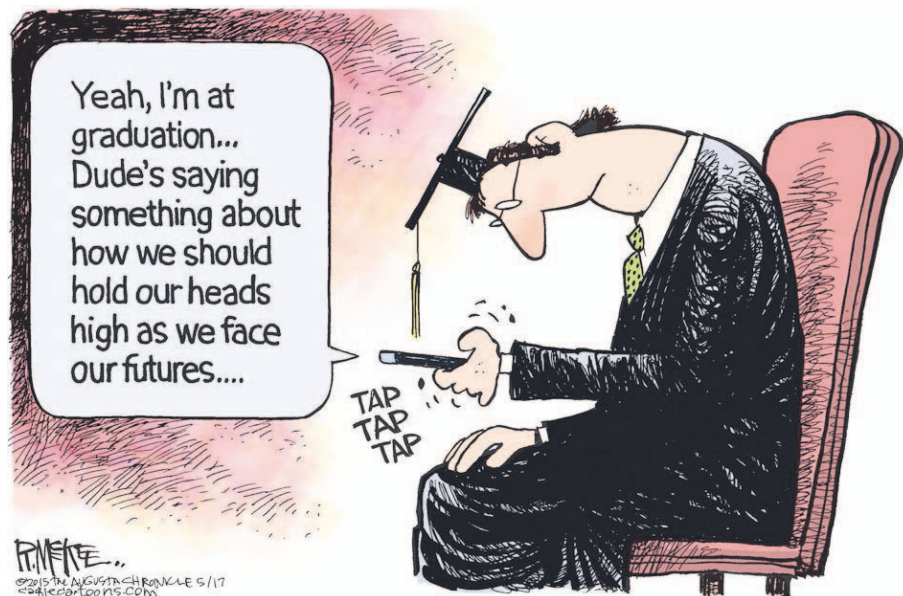
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**OUR VIEW**



**Get advice from — don't give advice to — this year's grads**

It's that time of year again. People we know and love (and maybe birthed) are dressing up in funny hats and ill-fitting gowns and walking across a big stage.

They've done something great, these young men and women, and they deserve some praise. Graduation is an accomplishment and an important step on the road to adulthood.

When people we love reach these milestones, we often feel obligated to give them advice. We've already lived this thing they are about to live, and we sure wish someone pulled us aside and told us the way the world really works before we spent all that energy tilting at windmills.

Of course, the people we are trying to teach are teens. They're not very open to our olden day advice, and besides, everyone has to make their own mistakes. This year's graduates are no different.

So why fight it? Instead of giving advice that isn't going to take, let's try getting some advice instead. Here are a few things we think we could learn from the class of 2015.

**Make technology serve you.** This generation was born into technology like none before. They have screens around them all day, digital mailboxes that are always open, friends and enemies at the touch of a button, and ways to be educated and entertained at all times.

But technology is nothing if not constantly changing.

And what many middle-aged people see as "email" or "Facebook" or "Skype," young people see as an imperfect product that should keep up with them as they grow. What many middle-aged people see as quirks of technology, young people see as an entrepreneurial niche.

Young people don't long stand for quirks, or products that don't give them what they want. The world bends to their whims, of course. Generations prior never got

Parker Brothers to change the rules to Monopoly, no matter how many times we stuck money under Free Parking. But if young people want Facebook to list dozens of gender options, it's on their homepage the next morning.

**Be adaptable.** Technology may have taught them that, too.

They're never in a rut, these kids, no matter how much they look like they are when their heads are craned over their phones. Young people are used to change, aren't intimidated or threatened by it.

It's a good trait in a recent graduate. Things are going to come at them, things they haven't encountered yet and aren't prepared for. They'll be fine. We, on the other hand, are freaked out every time anything new happens. A man becomes a woman on a magazine, for instance. Teach us how you do it, young people.

**Be real.** The world is moving online, and the online world lacks actual real things.

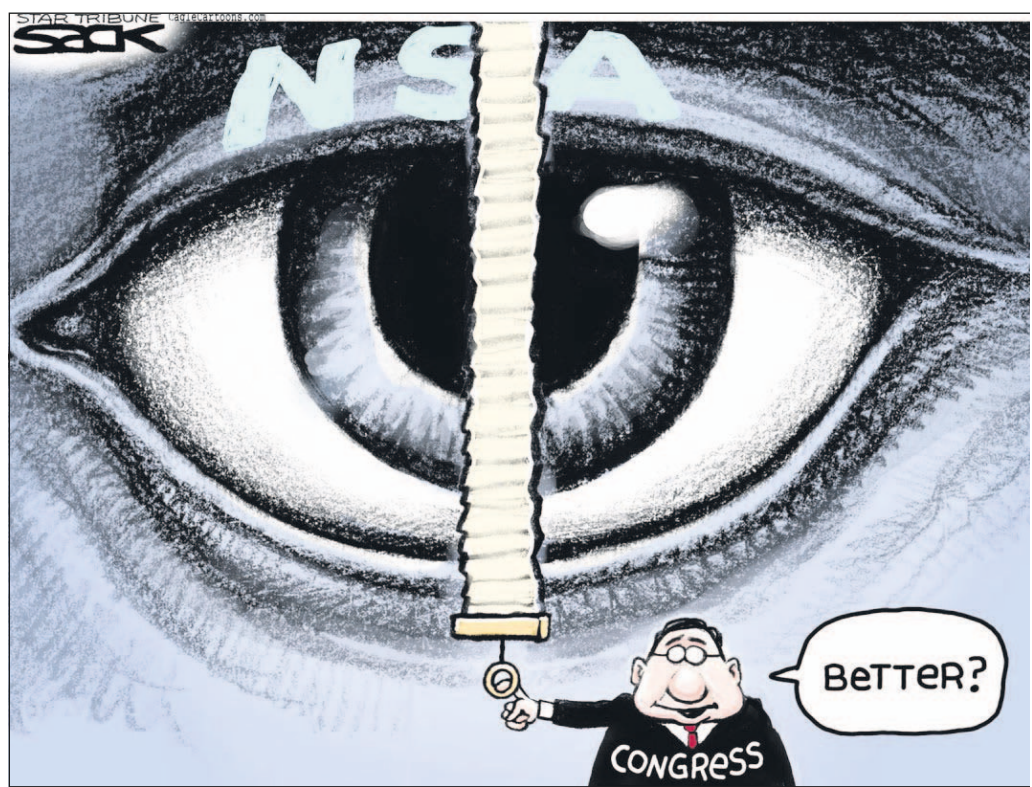
Compliments might not be compliments in that digital realm, sarcasm is overwhelming and so are disguised advertisements for money and sympathy. Also, there is no dirt and grass and trees.

Young people can identify real things, probably because they are more rare now than ever before. That includes products, but it also includes emotion. It's hard for a young person to be honest, forthright and genuine. They appreciate it when they see it, they value it when they come across it, they feel relieved when they get to be it.

That desire for real things has already helped society. We've begun the slow processes of de-engineering our processed foods, of localizing our economies and downsizing our lives and admitting the real effects we have on our on our planet.

We have much to learn!

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



**OTHER VIEWS**

**Chemicals in your popcorn?**

What do a pizza box, a polar bear and you have in common?

All carry a kind of industrial toxicant called poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances, or PFASs, that do two things: They make life convenient, and they also appear to increase the risk of cancer.

The scientists I interviewed say that they try to avoid these chemicals in their daily lives, but they're pretty much unavoidable and now are found in animals all over the planet (including polar bears in Greenland and probably you and me). PFASs are used to make nonstick frying pans, waterproof clothing, stain-resistant fabrics, fast-food wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, firefighting foam and thousands of other products. Many are unlabeled, so even chemists sometimes feel helpless.

This should be a moment when government steps up to protect citizens. But from tobacco to lead paint to chemicals, industry has used donations, obfuscation and lobbying to defer regulation until the human casualties are too vast to be hidden.

PFASs are "a poster child" for what's wrong with chemical regulation in the United States, says John Peterson Myers, chief scientist of Environmental Health Sciences, a research and publishing group in Virginia. PFASs are just about indestructible, so, for eons to come, they will poison our blood, our household dust, our water and the breast milk our babies drink.

Warnings of health risks from PFASs go back half a century and are growing more ominous. In May, more than 200 scientists released a Madrid Statement warning of PFASs' severe health risks. It was published in Environmental Health Perspectives, a peer-reviewed journal backed by the National Institutes of Health.

The scientists cited research linking PFASs to testicular and kidney cancer, hypothyroidism, ulcerative colitis and other problems.

Arlene Blum is a chemist whose warnings about carcinogens have proved prophetic. In recent years, she has waged an increasingly successful campaign against modern flame-retardant chemicals because of evidence that they also cause cancer, but she told me that PFASs "are even a bigger problem than flame retardants."

The chemical industry acknowledges that older, "long-chain" PFASs are a problem but says that it is replacing them with "short-chain" versions that should be fine. It's true that there is less evidence against the short-chains, but that's perhaps because they have been studied less.

Americans expect that chemicals used in consumer products have been tested for safety. Not so. The vast majority of the 80,000 chemicals available for sale in the United



States have never been tested for effects on our health.

Any testing is being done on all of us. We're the guinea pigs.

Congress may finally pass new legislation regulating toxic chemicals, but it's so weak a bill that the chemical industry has embraced it. The Senate version is better than nothing, but, astonishingly, it provides for assessing high-priority chemicals at a rate of about only five a year, and it's not clear that the House will go that far.

Yes, of countless toxicants suspected of increasing the risk of cancer, obesity, epigenetic damage and reproductive problems, the United States would commit to testing five each year. And that would actually be progress.

For safety reasons, Europe and Canada already restrict hundreds of chemicals routinely used in the United States. Perhaps the danger of tainted brands and lost sales abroad — not the risk to Americans — will motivate U.S. companies to adopt overseas limits.

**Warnings of health risks of PFASs go back half a century and are growing more ominous.**

Scientists are already taking precautions and weighing trade-offs in their personal lives. R. Thomas Zoeller, a biology professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, says he now avoids buying nonstick pans. Rainer Lohmann, an oceanographer at the University of Rhode Island, told me that he is replacing carpets in his house with wood floors in

part to reduce PFASs. Simona Balan, a senior scientist at the Green Science Policy Institute, avoids microwave popcorn and stain-resistant furniture.

Blum says she avoids buying certain nonstick products and waterproof products, but reluctantly uses a glide wax for backcountry skis that contains PFASs. "Every time I spray it on, I realize the chemicals will be in my body for a very long time and on the planet for geologic time, perhaps longer than mankind," Blum said. "But I do enjoy a good glide when I ski."

Some brands, including Levi's, Benetton and Victoria's Secret, are pledging to avoid PFASs. Evaluations of the safety of products are available free at the GoodGuide and Skin Deep websites.

The chemical lobby is following the same script as the tobacco and lead lobbies a generation ago, throwing around campaign donations and lobbying muscle to delay regulation. The chemical industry spent \$190 million lobbying in the last three years. If only it would devote such sums to developing safer products, rather than to defending its right to produce suspected carcinogens.

*Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. A columnist for The New York Times since 2001, he won the Pulitzer Prize two times.*

**YOUR VIEWS**

**Taking plants from cemeteries is heartless grave robbing**

I would like to tell the people who feel it is their right to go to a cemetery and help themselves to potted plants or flower arrangements that people have paid sometimes a lot of money for them, and have put these items out for their loved ones.

You might have to face someone one of these days and answer to why you feel it is necessary to steal from the departed. Are you that cheap that you can't buy these items yourself, and feel the need to go to a cemetery and steal from a grave?

I know this happens everywhere in every cemetery (this was in Hermiston). Rest in peace does not seem apply to a cemetery; there are bad people no matter where you are.

I promised my mother when she was alive I would keep flowers on her grave, as she

always loved her beautiful yard, and I kept that promise for almost four years. And then just two days before Memorial Day weekend this year, her planter with her favorite flowers were stolen off her grave. My mother would be the first one to say if they are that hard up to rob a grave, let them have them.

So enjoy your stolen graveyard plants, I hope you enjoy them. I will not be putting flowers on my mother's grave again as I promised. I will not supply your yard with her plants.

If you are unable to read, have someone read this for you — not that it will make a difference to someone like you. You will probably just laugh. But one of these days you are going to get a big surprise with a stolen item.

Think before you steal!

Nancy Patrick  
Hermiston

**LETTERS POLICY**

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