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OUR VIEW

Students need online role models

Everyone remembers the first time they saw a teacher outside the classroom — at say a grocery store or the city pool.

Teachers eat food AND own bathing suits? Mind. Officially. Blown.

But students these days often run into their teachers and coaches online before they run into them on the street. And that can put both students and educators at risk.

In an article last week, this newspaper spotlighted the horror stories: Teachers who committed crimes and used technology and online communication to do so. But while we should always be vigilant about what teens are doing on the Internet, we cannot be scared away from technology by the horror stories.

Like it or not, teens and pre-teens live online. They feel comfortable there. It's a place where they can express themselves and be themselves. But it's also a place where they can be taken advantage of and hurt.

That makes it an arena where good role models are needed, not a place where we should scatter because we are worried about the appearance of impropriety.

Certainly, school districts are right to have strong, clear social media policies. There is no need for students and teachers to be texting into the wee hours of the morning, nor for them to have private conversations traveling back and forth on some of the more suspicious new messaging apps.

> Like it or not, teens and pre-teens live online. It's a place they feel comfortable.

But it shouldn't be an iron curtain. Teens must know what responsible online sharing looks like. And like every teacher is taught, we must meet our students at their level, not where we feel most comfortable.

Some teachers are using something similar to a classroom Facebook page — Mrs. Anderson's Class Page, for instance — where teens can go to get information, ask questions and form positive online relationships with classmates and teachers. There are safer, better online communities than Facebook, of course, but there is still a niche for age-appropriate social networks where education can be built right into our online worlds.

Technology can be scary, but it's best to face our fears.

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

Trying to boost rural Oregon

The Oregonian

Demographic trends are bleak for rural areas. More than 4,000 rural Oregonians moved into the Portland area between 2007 and 2010. Population in many rural counties is flat or declining and some of the hardest hit counties, such as Coos, hit their peak more than 30 years ago. Nationally, fewer than 19 percent of U.S. residents lived in rural areas in 2013, down from 26 percent as recently as 1980. One-third of U.S. counties have fewer residents than they had in 2000, and almost all of those counties are rural.

This depopulation of rural areas, coupled in many cases with economic declines, has implications for urban and rural residents alike. State economists have warned that if too many people, particularly young workers, flee less-populated towns and counties it could create a downward spiral that leaves the counties unable to support businesses and fund public services. Urban residents are affected as rural refugees seek jobs and housing in larger cities. Meanwhile, those left in rural Oregon need more taxpayer-funded services from the state.

Other states have taken a more proactive approach. South Dakota, Idaho and Wyoming are among rural states that have launched marketing programs to try to convince young people to return. Arkansas has a Department of Rural Services, which oversees programs dedicated to everything from rural economic development to rural health. Minnesota launched the Intelligent Rural Communities Initiative in 2009 with the goal of helping rural areas keep pace technologically and economically in a technology-driven economy.

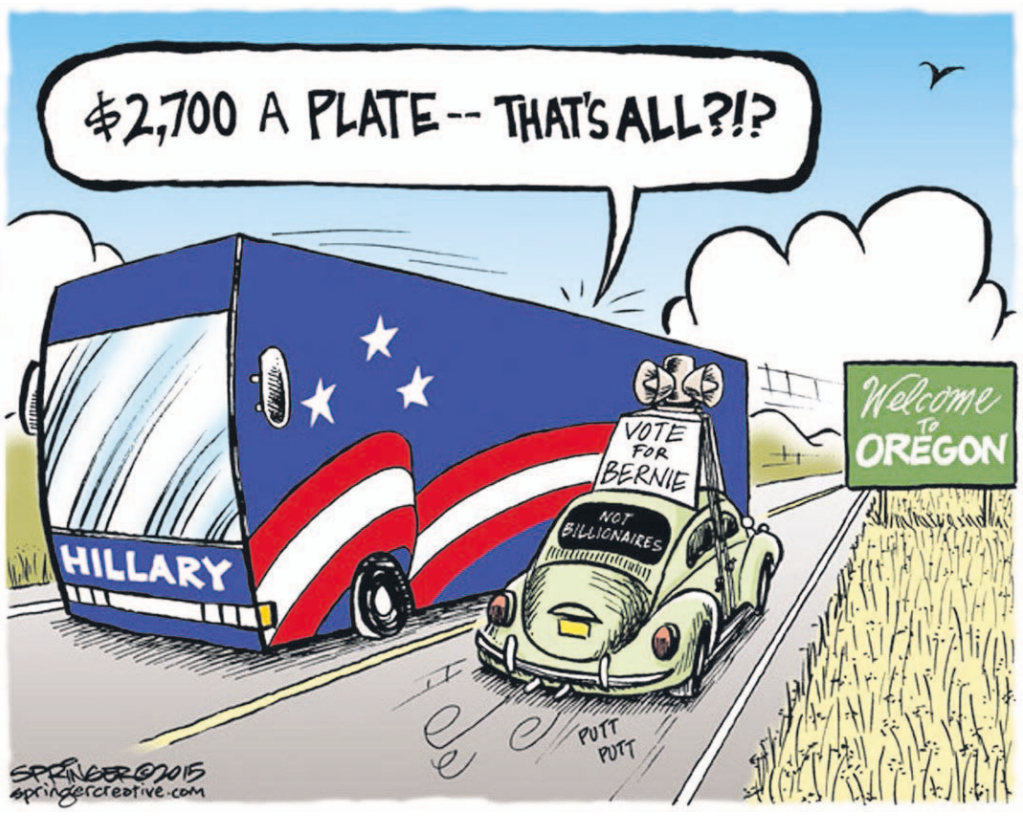
Those are just a few of the more ambitious efforts across the country. It's possible that none of the initiatives will significantly alter the demographic trajectory of rural areas. But, at the least, those states are more likely to improve the living conditions of current rural residents than states, like Oregon, whose governments have been reluctant to commit significant time and resources to non-urban areas.

The efforts that have been made in Oregon have been led mostly by nonprofit groups and local governments. The Ford Institute Leadership Program has trained more than 6,000 rural leaders, including about one-third of the state's county commissioners, "in how to work together, build agreement, identify assets, leverage resources and take action to make measurable change," said Craig Smith, executive director of Rural Development Initiatives, which developed the program. The Oregon Entrepreneurs Network has teamed up with Business Oregon, a state agency, to offer programs aimed at rural businesses. RDI has worked with some small Oregon towns on exploring ways to entice young residents to stay.

Those programs, commendable as they are, will not be enough to halt rural Oregon's slide, much less reverse it. Even increased logging on federal lands — the number one policy change on many rural leaders' wish list — would fall short of the economic boost needed to stabilize downtrodden counties such as Josephine and Curry. Oregon's non-urban counties, with the exception of those in the Columbia River Gorge, need help across a range of policy areas — from schools to economic development to infrastructure. That's why the types of initiatives moving forward in other states are so important.

Before Oregon's rural areas can make real progress, the state must move past the political polarization that was evident in the 2015 legislative session and re-establish bridges between urban and rural areas. Those ties must go beyond farmers markets, the only window some urban dwellers have into rural living. As Oregon Agriculture Department Director Katy Coba pointed out at a recent public meeting in Portland, people living in Oregon can't consume everything Oregon farmers grow.

The necessity of getting products to market makes the loss of container shipping service at the Port of Portland as disruptive in rural Oregon as in the Portland metro area. But perhaps the Port woes also will remind some urban residents, including Portland-area legislators, that the entire state still is interconnected in many ways.



OTHER VIEWS

Three U.S. defeats: Vietnam, Iraq and now Iran

DAVID BROOKS
Comment

The purpose of war, military or economic, is to get your enemy to do something it would rather not do. Over the past several years the United States and other Western powers have engaged in an economic, clandestine and political war against Iran to force it to give up its nuclear program.

Over the course of this siege, U.S. policymakers have been very explicit about their goals. Foremost, to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. Second, as John Kerry has said, to force it to dismantle a large part of its nuclear infrastructure. Third, to take away its power to enrich uranium.

Fourth, as President Barack Obama has said, to close the Fordo enrichment facility. Fifth, as the chief U.S. negotiator, Wendy Sherman, recently testified, to force Iran to come clean on all past nuclear activities by the Iranian military. Sixth, to shut down Iran's ballistic missile program. Seventh, to have "anywhere, anytime 24/7" access to any nuclear facilities Iran retains. Eighth, as Kerry put it, to not phase down sanctions until after Iran ends its nuclear bomb-making capabilities.

> The big question is: why did we lose?

As a report from the Foreign Policy Initiative exhaustively details, the U.S. has not fully achieved any of these objectives. The agreement delays but does not end Iran's nuclear program. It legitimizes Iran's status as a nuclear state. Iran will mothball some of its centrifuges, but it will not dismantle or close any of its nuclear facilities. Nuclear research and development will continue.

Iran wins the right to enrich uranium. The agreement does not include "anywhere, anytime" inspections; some inspections would require a 24-day waiting period, giving the Iranians plenty of time to clean things up. After eight years, all restrictions on ballistic missiles are lifted. Sanctions are lifted once Iran has taken its initial actions.

Wars, military or economic, are measured by whether you achieved your stated objectives. By this standard the U.S. and its allies lost the war against Iran, but we were able to negotiate terms that gave only our partial surrender, which forces Iran to at least delay its victory. There have now been three big U.S. strategic defeats over the past several decades: Vietnam, Iraq and now Iran.

The big question is, Why did we lose? Why did the combined powers of the Western world lose to a ragtag regime with a crippled economy and without much popular support?

The first big answer is that the Iranians just wanted victory more than we did. They were willing to withstand the kind of punishment we were prepared to mete out.

Further, the Iranians were confident in their power, while the Obama administration emphasized the limits of America's ability to influence other nations. It's striking how little Obama thought of the tools at his disposal. He effectively took the military option off the table. He didn't believe much in economic sanctions.

"Nothing we know about the Iranian government suggests that it would simply capitulate under that kind of pressure," he argued.

The president concluded early on that Iran would simply not budge on fundamental things. As he argued in his highhanded and counterproductive speech Wednesday, Iran was never going to compromise its sovereignty (which is the whole point of military or economic warfare).

The president hoped that a deal would change the moral nature of the regime, so he had an extra incentive to reach a deal. And the Western, Russian and Chinese sanctions regime was fragile while the Iranians were able to hang together.

This administration has given us a choice between two terrible options: accept the partial-surrender agreement that was negotiated or reject it and slide immediately into what is in effect our total surrender — a collapsed sanctions regime and a booming Iranian nuclear program.

Many members of Congress will be tempted to accept the terms of our partial surrender as the least bad option in the wake of our defeat. I get that. But in voting for this deal they may be affixing their names to an arrangement that will increase the chance of more comprehensive war further down the road.

Iran is a fanatical, hegemonic, hate-filled regime. If you think its radicalism is going to be softened by a few global trade opportunities, you really haven't been paying attention to the Middle East over the past four decades.

Iran will use its $150 billion windfall to spread terror around the region and exert its power. It will incrementally but dangerously cheat on the accord. Armed with money, ballistic weapons and an eventual nuclear breakout, it will become more aggressive. As the end of the nuclear delay comes into view, the 45th or 46th president will decide that action must be taken.

Economic and political defeats can be as bad as military ones. Sometimes when you surrender to a tyranny you lay the groundwork for a more cataclysmic conflict to come.

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David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

LETTERS POLICY

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