

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the community movement around Kathryn Youngman, the Pendleton High School teacher who is battling cancer for the third time.

Education compatriots, community organizations, friends and neighbors have all supported Youngman's wish to meet Ellen Degeneres and be a guest on Youngman's favorite television show.



Toward that end, people have been doing more than just liking and sharing social media posts with the hashtag #YoungmanOnEllen.

They have been showing up and proclaiming their appreciation for an inspiring teacher. They are donning pink. They are laughing and cheering, making short videos and painting their car windows.

And it's not just happening in Pendleton. The movement is strong in Hermiston too,

where Youngman taught and has plenty of connections. Heck, even All-Star New York Yankee Jacoby Ellsbury retweeted our story and the hashtag to his 317,000 followers. So have Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and Sen. Ron Wyden.

It's a great tale of love overcoming hardship, and goes to show the effect a great teacher has on her community.

We hope Youngman gets her wish and gets on Ellen (things are looking good), but we imagine seeing the outpouring of community support is just as sweet, and just as thrilling.

A kick in the pants to the disingenuous attempt to recall Pendleton city councilor Al Plute.

It probably won't amount to much, because 705 signatures are needed to kick the recall process into motion. And we know how hard it has been to find a single, solitary person to write their name down to take an active role in council business.

There is nothing behind the vague, sinister accusations in the recall petition. Plute, like many businessmen, was sued. He lost a trial and settled out of court. City and private business goes on.

And as for his support of the gas tax and vote to institute a utility fee increase, there are five other city councilors who did the same. If an elected officeholder was recalled for every vote they made that someone disagreed with, no one would ever finish a term.

The recall attempt reeks of a personal vendetta and an anonymous attack, rather than substantive political action. Plute won the election fair and square, and unless he knowingly and intentionally does something to harm the city or its reputation, he should continue to serve until someone garners more votes than him.

A tip of the hat to Fox News and popular evening anchor Megyn Kelly for standing their ground against bully Republican candidate Donald Trump.

Trump, who has a sizable lead in the Iowa polls, decided to back out of Thursday's Fox News debate on the cusp of the Hawkeye cauc. It was a hard decision for Trump, I'm sure. Everyone knows the man loves a camera, and it was tough to keep him away from the stage.

For now, we take him at his word. He skipped the debate because he doesn't like Kelly, and because Fox News poked fun at him for it.

Trump seems way too naive about the difficult job of being president, and the unending raft of anger that always flows toward the leader of the free world. It will never end, and you won't be able to pick and choose the journalists who cover you, nor the opponents who attack you.

In journalism, we've often found that those who talk toughest seem to have the thinnest skins. Trump is a clear example of that, but media should not cater to his sensitive ego. Voters shouldn't either.

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.

Boardman tree farm good for view, Earth

I'm going to miss the Boardman Tree Farm. It was funny-looking at first — basically a gigantic row crop of tall skinny poplars.

But over the decades I liked watching the leaves fill out and change colors, the young plants replacing the old ones as they were harvested. They also broke up the flatness of the scenery while driving along Interstate 84.

Those trees also sucked up a lot of carbon out of the atmosphere and converted it to useful lumber, including the new fence in my back yard.

I find it ironic that the trees will be partly replaced with cattle, notorious for pumping carbon back into the atmosphere.

Terry Templeman
Pendleton

Great teachers are a gift to a community

A lump swelled up in my throat as I read the story in the January 22 *East Oregonian* about the battle Kathryn Youngman is fighting with cancer. I pray God will restore her health.

One of her students, who attends to my church, shared with me the love she has for this most remarkable teacher. She told me she is involved in the fundraising effort to help cover additional costs connected with the cancer treatments.

I don't know Kathryn personally, but through her student I know that in addition to being an outstanding Spanish teacher, she is also a remarkable role model who makes her students feel special; they know she cares about them.

Kathryn was born with a passion to teach and has earned the love of her students. Thank you, Kathryn.

Al Olson, Pendleton

College bowl system is a broken mess

The college bowl system is broken. If my counting is correct there were 41 bowl games this year.

Bowl games have been diluted so badly now even losing teams get invited. There were three teams chosen to participate in bowls with 5-7 records?

The new criterion for being chosen for a bowl seems to be "your team must have tried to win at least one game during the season." That results in productions such as the "Royal Purple Las Vegas Bowl," the "San Diego County Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl," and don't forget the "Raycom Media Camellia and Taxslayer Bowls."

Of course, the overdose of bowls is fueled by greed and money. In 2012 ESPN paid \$7.3 billion to broadcast college football playoffs for 12 years.

When you hear the terms

Alabama, Texas or even Oregon, many automatically think "football," not how good their physics program is.

Yes, it is also true that college enrollments go up when the school has a great football team.

However, only the top few teams actually make a profit and little of that is ever returned directly to help the students who will go on to have meaningful jobs in the real world.

The NCAA is competing now with FIFA to become the most corrupt organization in the history of sports. No team should be allowed to play in a bowl with a losing record. Bowl game names should be limited to no more than three words. Colleges should get more of the money that goes to "nonprofit" bowl organizations and excess.

The mythical term "student-athlete" should be eliminated. College football players spend 40-60 hours a week studying plays, practicing, in team meetings,

media events, travel and playing in games. There is little time left for studies.

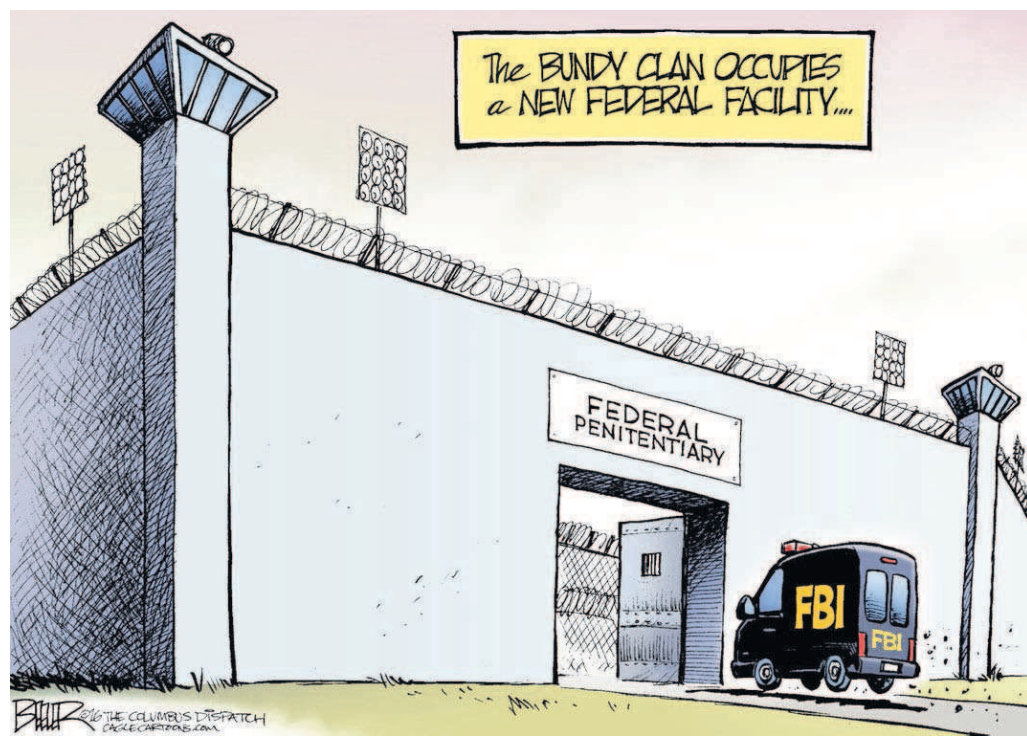
One report claimed up to a third of Division I players never graduate. Alabama spends \$37 million every year on football, including the highest paid coach in the nation.

The IRS is even involved now investigating certain bowls that claim to be nonprofit organizations but spend lavish amounts of money on gifts, free cruises, golfing fees, and millions on salaries and other "business expenses" for top bowl executives.

These fat cats do one thing a year — organize a single game — yet some are paid between \$400,000-\$600,000 a year.

I am a fan and look forward to college football as much as the next person, but the bowl system has to undergo major change and stop the rampant corruption that has overtaken the system now.

David Burns
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

Compassionate conservatives, hello?

Back in 2000, George W. Bush did something fascinating: On the campaign trail he preached "compassionate conservatism," telling wealthy Republicans about the travails of Mexican-American immigrants and declaring to women in pearls that "the hardest job in America" is that of a single mother.

Those well-heeled audiences looked baffled but applauded.

That instinct to show a little heart helped elect Bush but then largely disappeared from Republican playbooks and policy. Yet now, amid the Republican Party's civil war, there are intriguing initiatives by the House speaker, Paul Ryan, and some other conservatives to revive an interest in the needy.

Liberals like myself may be tempted to dismiss these new efforts as mere marketing gestures, meant to whitewash what one of the initiatives acknowledges is "the long-standing view of a mean-spirited conservatism."

Maybe the liberal skeptics will be proved right. But we should still all root for these efforts, because ultimately whether the poor get help may depend less on Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders than on Republicans at every level. Whether Medicaid is expanded, whether we get high-quality pre-K, whether we tackle addiction, family planning and job training, whether lead continues to poison American children — all these will depend mostly on Republicans who control Congress and most states.

Moreover, Democrats are too quick to assume that they have a monopoly on compassion. Bush, for example, didn't govern nearly as compassionately as he campaigned. Yet his program against AIDS saved millions of lives. He did a stellar job battling malaria and pressing the fight against sex trafficking.

This will be even harder for Democrats to accept, but Republicans have also sometimes been proved right on poverty issues. They were right that the best way to spell aid is often j-o-b. They were right on the importance of strong two-parent families: We now know that children in single-mother families are five times as likely to live in poverty as those in married households.

So I'd be thrilled if Republicans participated in debates about poverty, rather than forfeited the terrain. A real debate would also elevate issues that are largely neglected, and it would create an opening to hold politicians' feet to the fire: If Ryan cares, then why did he try to slash budgets for evidence-based programs that help children?

One of the new initiatives is "Challenging the Caricature," based on a document that will be presented at an event at Stanford's Hoover Institution next week. Written by Michael Horowitz, Michael Novak, John O'Sullivan, Mona Charen, Linda Chavez and other



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

prominent conservatives, it calls on the right to tackle human rights issues so as to shatter "the caricatures that define conservatives as uncaring."

"Our values are regarded by millions of Americans as inconsistent with theirs and with America's inherent decency," the document warns.

Ryan this month moderated a forum on poverty that drew six Republican presidential hopefuls and tried to frame a GOP perspective on the issue. "We now have a safety net that is designed to catch people falling into poverty," Ryan said, "when what we really need is a safety net that is designed to help get people out of poverty."

One reason for skepticism that any of this will get traction: Among the candidates who skipped the forum were the front-runners,

Donald Trump and Ted Cruz. Neither seems interested in this arena.

A final initiative is an excellent plan to reduce poverty put together by a team from the conservative American Enterprise Institute and the liberal Brookings Institution. The report pushes work requirements for government benefits but also a modest rise in the minimum

Democrats are too quick to assume they have a monopoly on compassion.

wage. Instead of increasing public funds for higher education, it suggests taking financial assistance that now goes to higher-income families and redirecting it to the neediest.

This report emphasizes that one way to bridge the political divide is to focus on evidence. We now have robust results showing that vocational programs like career academies help disadvantaged young people get jobs and raise their marriage rates. Parent-coaching programs improve disadvantaged children's outcomes so much that they save public money.

If you're a liberal, you may be rolling your eyes. You're sure that Republicans are just layering compassion camouflage over policies meant to benefit billionaires. Sure, be skeptical. But at least now there can be a debate about how to help, about what the evidence says, about whether Ryan and others act the way they speak.

The parties see each other as the root of all evil. But when they have cooperated on humanitarian efforts, real progress has been made: on AIDS, on prison rape, on the earned-income tax credit.

The sad truth is that neither party has done enough to address the shame of deep-rooted poverty in America. So let's hope for a real contest in this area, because everybody loses — above all, America's neediest — when most of the time one party doesn't even bother to show up.

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

YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS POLICY

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