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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the Pendleton Round-Up, which was named winner of the best outdoor rodeo by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association for the second year in a row.

As we note in today's paper, Round-Up publicity director Randy Thomas attributed the win to the Round-Up board deciding to be better than best. The rodeo had already secured the top spot in 2015, but looked for ways to continue improving.



The work paid off. Votes for the award come from cowboys and cowgirls, rodeo committees and livestock contractors — the insiders who see how things are run, how people are treated and how competitors are remunerated. In each area, voters thought the Round-Up stood above the rest.

It's hard to stay on top. Other rodeos are studying how the Round-Up does things and how they can incorporate those same best practices into their own arenas and events. That's good for the sport, but also means the Round-Up must continue innovating and perfecting in order to lead the field. Here's to doing it again next year and bringing home more hardware.

A tip of the hat to Simmons Insurance Group, which invested hundreds of thousands of dollars for renovations to the landmark brick building on the corner of Main and Northeast Second Street in Hermiston.



The former RoeMarks building sat vacant for several years, but Tuesday's ribbon cutting marks a new era for the 109-year-old structure, which will house both Simmons Insurance and Bloomz Coffee and Floral.

It's wonderful to see a 42-year-old local family-owned business — now managed by Larry Simmons' son Justin and son-in-law Jacob Neighbors — succeed and share their success by investing in Hermiston's Main Street.

We also tip our hat to the Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency, which provided a \$10,000 grant to improve the building's façade.

All together, it makes Hermiston a better place — economically and aesthetically.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

How to help students pay for college

The Albany Democrat-Herald

We understand that legislators will be under some severe financial constraints when they gather for the 2017 session.

But here's hoping that they can find the funds, and the time, to fine-tune the Oregon Promise program, which is intended to help state students pay for the costs of attending community colleges.

The program originally was touted as a free ticket to community college for qualifying students. It hasn't worked out that way, for a variety of reasons, even though students who receive grant money through the Oregon Promise presumably still are grateful for the help.

That's one area that legislators will want to review during the 2017 session, even though it's likely that some potential changes (such as eliminating the 12-credit ceiling for the program and taking into account the difference in tuition fees among the state's community colleges) would add to the costs.

There is another broad area that would be worth legislative scrutiny: Is there any way to adjust or add to the Oregon Promise program so that it consistently includes the type of support to students that came with the so-called fifth-year programs offered by mid-valley K-12 school districts?

Until last year, many districts in Linn and Benton counties offered these programs, which allowed students to put off receiving their high school diplomas and continue as fifth-year students, taking community college courses that were paid for by their school districts because they hadn't officially left.

Supporters said the programs were invaluable, especially for students who didn't come from families with a college background or who needed extra support for their first year of higher education. Students remained connected with counselors who guided them through registration, helped them plan their courses and checked up on them. And,

in fact, evidence suggested that students who had that additional help stayed on track with their college work at a higher rate than did students who enrolled on their own.

But the use of state funds for an extra year in high school raised legitimate questions with some Oregon lawmakers who felt it wasn't fair to take money from K-12 programs.

So, a compromise bill from state Sen. Sara Gelsler established a "postgraduate scholar" program. Students can become postgraduate scholars only if they have all their credits for a diploma; have filled out the federal financial aid form known as a FAFSA; have applied for and accepted all the grant-based aid for which they are eligible, such as a Pell Grant; and have applied for the new Oregon Promise community college grant.

Part of the idea pushing the compromise bill is that it would put sideboards on the fifth-year programs, and it certainly has done that: In the mid-valley, the number of students enrolled as postgraduate scholars is considerably less than the number of students who were in the fifth-year programs.

But the requirements to qualify for Oregon Promise grants seem almost certain to keep community college out of reach for certain students, especially those who would be the first members of their family to attend college.

What's missing from the program is the type of consistent support system that helped to keep students on track during that first critical year of taking college courses. With community colleges increasingly focused on getting students to graduation (not to mention the state's own educational goals), this is a critical piece.

Can the piece consistently be replicated in the Oregon Promise program? Despite the tight budgets they will face next year, legislators would do well to ask that question and to search for answers.

YOUR VIEWS

Trump the predator we had been warned about

One minute I open the *East Oregonian* to find Stuart Dick sounding the alarm that men disguised as transgender women are going to sexually assault our precious wives and daughters in public restrooms.

The next minute he's praising a guy who openly brags about walking into dressing rooms at beauty pageants to ogle half-naked girls not even a third of his age. He always has the best logic.

Women of God: Armor up indeed!
Peter Walters
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

Gifts with meaning

Sure, you can buy your uncle a necktie that he won't wear, or your niece an Amazon certificate that she'll forget to use. Or you can help remove shrapnel from an injured child in Syria, or assist students at risk of genocide in South Sudan.

The major aid organizations have special catalogs this time of year: You can buy an alpaca for a family for \$150 at Heifer International, help educate a girl for \$75 at Save the Children or help extend a much-admired microsavings program for \$25 at Care. But this year my annual holiday gift list is special. I've tied some items to the election of Donald Trump, and I've looked for organizations that you may not have heard of:

— One battle over the coming four years will involve family planning, because of Republican efforts to defund Title X family planning programs and repeal Obamacare, which provides free birth control. So consider a donation to one of the most effective counterforces: the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, thenationalcampaign.org.

The campaign takes no position on abortion (except to note that family planning reduces abortions), and it has bipartisan leadership, so it is more likely to get a hearing in a Republican-controlled Washington.

— As Syria and Russia commit war crimes in Aleppo, heroic physicians from America and other countries are traveling secretly to rebel-held areas of Syria to treat the wounded in underground hospitals and call attention to the carnage. They work through the Syrian American Medical Society, SAMS, sams-usa.net, which supports more than 100 medical facilities in Syria.

— Human rights and press freedoms seem likely to get much less attention from the next administration, which makes this a good time to support the Committee to Protect Journalists, cpj.org. The CPJ speaks up for imprisoned journalists worldwide and tries to end impunity for those who murder journalists (at least 40 journalists have been killed worldwide so far in 2016 for their work).

In the same vein, consider buying a gift subscription to a reliable news organization for yourself or a friend — as an investment in a robust civil society.

— The recent hurricane in Haiti was devastating, and one of the most effective aid organizations in Haiti is Fonkoze, fonkoze.org, which has adopted a "graduation model" that has been particularly successful at combating global poverty.

Founded by a local Catholic priest, Fonkoze works with the most impoverished women in Haiti over 18 months to get them earning regular incomes through raising



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

livestock or selling merchandise. It's about teaching people how to fish, not handing out fish. I've seen it in action. It's terrific.

— Congo is home to probably the most lethal conflict since World War II, and it is sometimes called the rape capital of the world. One of the heroes there is Dr. Denis Mukwege, who founded the Panzi hospital to treat injured women and risks his life to stand up to warlords. He has survived an assassination attempt and some

day will get the Nobel Peace Prize — but in the meantime, you can support his hospital at panzifoundation.org.

— Criminal justice may suffer setbacks in the coming years, which makes this an excellent time to support groups like Equal

You can do a world of good this Christmas season.

Justice Initiative, EJI.org, founded by a legendary lawyer named Bryan Stevenson. If attorney general nominee Jeff Sessions has an opposite, it is Stevenson.

EJI fights for indigent defendants and has won the release of inmates who were falsely arrested. It battles mass incarceration and is a voice for racial justice. And Stevenson's memoir, "Just Mercy," also makes a great gift.

— I've reported on crimes against humanity unfolding in South Sudan, one of the world's poorest countries, and now the United Nations is warning of the risk of full-blown genocide. In this impossible situation, a South Sudan-born American named Valentino Deng is running a high school, one of few still functioning. It needs support so students can get an education and build their country (vadfoundation.org).

You may remember Valentino: He's the "lost boy" at the center of Dave Eggers' best-selling book "What Is the What." What he has done since, in founding this school, is even more impressive.

It's time to announce my annual win-a-trip contest, in which I choose a university student to accompany me on a reporting trip looking at global poverty and justice issues. I'm thinking about a 2017 trip to Liberia and Sierra Leone, or perhaps to Bangladesh. Information about how to apply is on my blog, nytimes.com/ontheground, and thanks in advance to the Center for Global Development in Washington for helping me pick a winner.

The win-a-trip journey is exhausting and may involve bedbugs, rats and the worst food you've ever eaten. But it is a chance to help shine a light on important and neglected topics, so if you know students perfect for the trip, encourage them to apply.

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 in 1990 and 2006.



LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.