

The nose knows what the nose knows

Yesterday was cold. The sky stayed the color of a cloud all day long. In fact, it felt like a cloud was touching me and the world I live in most of the afternoon. It was a cold kind of cloud that hung low and seemed to press in on all of us from every side. The girls gathered in their circles watching me closely.

They always watch me closely. I used to wonder if it was because I'm the only other girl out here besides Jill the dog. Or maybe it was because I'm sort of intriguing to them, just as they are all sorts of enchanting and brave to me. I'll probably never know since "moo" isn't a language I plan on learning anytime soon. But I have to admit, I think about my relationship with these beautiful ladies a lot.

I walked through them quietly — pushing them toward the gate — guiding them away from the chaos happening on the other side of the lot. The other side of the lot is where babies are born and life suddenly changes whether you're ready for it or not. It's the side that some avoid at all cost until the last possible moment — where you're not just in the crowd anymore, you're being watched like a hawk.

You don't have to be a cow to experience this kind of pressure to perform. In fact, I'm certain that the pressure of having all eyes on us is something everyone in the world experiences at some point in their life, human or not.

Here's the thing though: Most of the time when eyes watch us closely, we immediately believe that they're watching us to criticize or critique and not



Photo by Lindsay Murdock

necessarily to compliment or, better yet, copy. We live in a world where women watch other women and secretly hope they fail at something, anything or everything. We watch women want the attention their best friend is getting. We see other women desperately wishing to be the one that everyone follows. We click through and scroll down in question of how to be that woman that seems to have everything figured out without even trying. I hate that part of this world. Hate it. And yes, I know hate is a very strong word, but it's the best I could come up with.

We don't have to be this way. We don't have to conform to anything less than just being the best daughters, wives, mothers, sisters, friends, coworkers or even neighbors that we've been created to be. We don't have to roll our eyes at posts or articles. We don't have to be jealous of

Editor's note: In an effort to get more local voices and more good writing into your newspaper, the *East Oregonian* is introducing columnists who will rotate appearances in each Saturday edition. Lindsay Murdock described herself as: Freckled. Oregon grown. Jesus follower. Teacher. Ranch wife. Mother. Chaser of light. Have feedback on the columns? Email opinion page editor Tim Trainor at ttrainor@eastoregonian.com.

manicured yards or beautiful patio sets. We don't have to unfollow or unfriend. We just have to be us. Why, though, is it so hard to just be "us?" I'm still trying to figure that one out — and I probably will be for the rest of my life.

I'm done being a watcher, and I'm done being watched. I know there are eyes on me, following me, watching me closely and maybe even critiquing me, but I don't care. I can't care if I want anything to change in this world I've found myself living in as a teacher and as a ranch wife. I'm a human, but I want to live in the herd that lives like I imagine the girls I've been watching closely for days now live. I want to surround myself with a group that fights for each other and protects each other — not competing, but complementing. I want to be alive and free to be myself in the groups of women that provide warmth to those around them when they need it most. I want to be in the middle of the circle that says it's ok if you've gained a few pounds and that they promise to walk to the water trough with you eight times each day if it



LINDSAY MURDOCK FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

would make things better. Yes, I want to be in the herd that watches closely, listens carefully and smells cautiously — only to say "welcome" when they smell me coming because they know I'm one of them.

May we all find great and beautiful ways to use senses other than our sight to see the best in others and live a little more like cows.

Lindsay Murdock lives in Hermiston.



Quick takes

Droppings don't just land in Pendleton dog park

I feared the creation of the dog park would result in a critical shortage of dog poop on the river walkway. As I made my daily stroll, I was relieved to find my worries groundless and quickly faded away. — Rick Rohde

Cascadia's effects in Eastern Oregon

Very interesting phenomenon. People should put plans in place in case this happens in our lifetime. — Jessica Purchase

I pray we never have to go through it however, having some extra ready to eat food, a way to cook, some cases of bottled water stored in your house and plenty of prescription drugs on hand is a great way to start. — Arne Swanson

The news media bringing on more fear! That's what they are good for. — Jim Garrou

Being uneducated regarding this is simply a death sentence. — Tonya Hendon

Kennewick Man reburied

I was in Columbia Park in Richland a day or so after the initial discovery. I wondered why all the people were along the waters edge. A month or so later I found out why. Pretty cool indeed. — Jeremy F Edwards

Very disturbing it took this long and there could be more than 100,000 more people who are in people's "collections." Very heartbreaking. — Stephanie Williams

Back where he should be. — Paul Word

Grocery to open in Echo

Echo has needed a place for some grocery items. — Ginger Taylor

This is so awesome! I can stay in town for milk and bread. — Shannon Powell

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.

Local work critical to federal fight on opioids

The recent news story (*East Oregonian*, Jan. 23) regarding Dr. Chuck Hofmann's work to help patients addicted to opioids reveals the challenges we face all across Oregon and underscores the importance of legislation I helped pass last year.

Too many patients in Oregon and across the country become addicted to opioids after receiving a prescription for pain management from their doctor. Overdoses have increased dramatically, especially in our home state where more people have died of opioid overdose than in traffic accidents.

Dr. Hofmann and others like him are leading the charge to educate members of the medical community on opioid addiction. In Congress, we took steps to empower leaders in the medical community to change the way they treat,

and think about, pain management and addiction.

A new law called the 21st Century Cures Act provides a big boost in funding for grants that states can use to hold forums like the ones Dr. Hofmann is coordinating in Eastern Oregon. This increase in funding will also help Oregon improve prescription drug monitoring programs, implement prevention activities, and expand access to treatment.

"To really address this problem, we must continue to educate doctors, nurses, and other health care providers to make sure they're managing chronic non-cancer pain in a way that doesn't lead to addiction,"

I will continue to work across the aisle to give our communities the resources they need to combat this epidemic.

Dr. Hofmann told me. "The more they know about Medication Assisted Treatment and the more innovation we have in monitoring opioid drugs and reading the signs of addiction so we can treat it, the better. The funding made available by the Cures Act will be a big help."

The Cures Act was the product of a multi-year, bipartisan effort in the House Energy and Commerce Committee which I, now, chair. In my new leadership role I will continue to work across the aisle to give our communities the resources they need to combat this epidemic and save lives.

Greg Walden is the U.S. Representative for Oregon's Second District



GREG WALDEN Comment

Oregon's wounded warriors deserve passage of Senate Bill 694

For almost 100 years, Oregon has honored its wounded warriors — our disabled veterans — with a property tax exemption. At one time, research shows, this exemption was more than 100 percent of the value of a median single family dwelling in Oregon. This is fitting, as our wounded warriors have given a portion of their body; a part of their being in the service of our country.

But, this exemption has been reduced to less than 10 percent of the value of a median priced single family home. This is an unfortunate result of not reviewing old laws and updating them to meet current needs.

The original Oregon statute that authorizes this property tax exemption references Civil War disabled veterans and their surviving spouses. This demonstrates our state's long standing commitment to our disabled veterans. This law has been modified only a few times since 1953.

When real estate values started escalating in the late 1970s, the disabled veterans property tax exemption started to dwindle. The exemption amounts remained the same while the assessed valuation of properties grew. The amount

exempted became less and less. The Oregon statute controlling the amount of disabled veteran property tax exemption was not updated during the time that property values soared in the 1980s and 1990s.

Over the past several years, there have been attempts to correct this situation. But it appears that politicians decided not to maintain a reasonable exemption for our wounded warriors.

The 2005 legislature did make some amends: a 3 percent annual increase was added to the disabled veterans property tax exemption. A disabled veteran inferred in a 2015 testimony that the 3 percent increase would not even buy a dinner for two. In other words, this is not enough.

Do we still care about our disabled veterans? They made a sacrifice for all of us. We must make sure they are appropriately honored.

Because political sentiment identifies that a 100 percent exemption would be too costly, Senate Bill 694 is a compromise. The end result of passing this bill is that most disabled veterans

qualifying for this exemption would receive a property tax exemption closer to 25 percent of the value of a median priced home in Oregon.

This bill also addresses the severely disabled veteran. It creates a new category that would allow an even greater property tax exemption if certain requirements are met. Senate Bill 694 gives the local county commission the option to control the levels of this exemption.

It will not be 100 percent. But 25 percent is better than 10 percent. This is a compromise that should be nonpartisan.

Senate Bill 694 is doing something. Previous legislative sessions have come and gone and the politicians did nothing. Something is better than nothing.

Let Oregon once again stand for our wounded warriors. Let us increase the disabled veteran property tax exemption this year. Let us work with our state legislators to pass Senate Bill 694.

A retired businessman, Steve Bates served as the Chair of the Boring Community Planning Organization and is currently Chair of the Committee on Memorials and Remembrance.

Something is better than nothing.

LETTERS POLICY

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