

EAST OREGONIAN

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the class of 2017, and particularly the hundreds of students in our communities who will accept their diplomas in the coming weeks.

For the last 13 years these students have been enrolled in our schools, learning both the academic lessons of the classroom and the life lessons that come with growing up among peers.



The diploma is a tangible token of this accomplishment, and the pomp and circumstance that surround the ceremony are a fitting tribute to the students. Shaking the hand of the superintendent, tossing your square cap in the air and getting a lot of unsolicited advice from strangers is a rite of passage.

So here's a bit more. (We'll keep it short).

Expect life to get harder, more exciting and more rewarding all at once. The training wheels are off, so to speak. Your victories through formal education so far will pale in comparison to what is in store in the wider world.

Don't fear the challenges, skip out on the adventures or settle for mediocrity. Best of luck.

A tip of the hat to the Pendleton Foundation Trust and the volunteers who keep the charitable group running year after year.

They do critical work in the Pendleton area, pumping more than \$4 million dollars into nonprofits and goodwill projects in the past decade alone.

It takes some combination of money and manpower to make a community work, and the Trust frees up many hours of fundraising by local groups by wisely selecting worthy projects.

There are examples all over town of the good work funded by the Trust (see the story on Page 3A for a few), but one way to remember what they do is the new bench at Pioneer Park, dedicated Wednesday to 43-year board member John McBee Sr. Next time you're up at the park, have a seat on the bench and think about how you can pitch in to make this community a better place.

A kick in the pants to Senate Democrats for standing against an impeachment resolution in Oregon.

Ours is the only state that doesn't have a mechanism for the legislature to remove a governor, which is an important failsafe in state government.

At the very least voters should have choice of whether to empower lawmakers to impeach if worse comes to worse.

A House resolution passed this week 51-6, earning bipartisan support, and even Gov. Kate Brown has spoken in favor of such a measure. But the Senate has shown little interest.

Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick holds much of the power as the resolution will likely come through rules committee she chairs. The Portland Democrat has said she thinks the state's recall procedures are strong enough.

We disagree. Voters can retain the power to remove elected leaders, but the legislature should also be given the tools to be an effective check and balance to the governor's office.



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

Help Spray rent some portable toilets for eclipse

In your article "Spray Grapples with Predicted Influx of Eclipse Tourists" (May 12) the article you presented by Aaron Scott of Oregon Public Broadcasting summarized the concerns of Spray with three specific questions. You presented the article with questions 1 and 2, however, the *East Oregonian* missed the most important third question.

This final question regarding "port-a-potties" is most essential and is the focal point of our small town budget in Spray. Port-a-potties and garbage removal are not revenue producing services for any town.

As the *EO* represents news and concerns of all Eastern Oregon, we would greatly appreciate you partnering with us to advance our GoFundMe page to invite others to invest in helping Spray offset the anticipated expenses associated with the Great Eclipse of 2017.

Debbie Starkey
Spray City Council member
Wheeler County commissioner, Spray

Time for a fresh look at priorities

Available energy and water are the keys to economic development. Both are conspicuously absent for developers of the industrial property on the road to nowhere. Recently it's been reported that on completion, the new Yellowhawk Clinic with an advanced heating and cooling system and a solar carport will "operate at least 40 percent more efficiently than required by Oregon efficiency code." CTUIR should be commended for their efforts at developing alternate sources and conservation.

I wonder how the energy efficiency of those new Pendleton Heights duplexes, backed by the city and lacking gas and

central heat and air conditioning system, compare to the standard. Expected high electric bills kinda kill the whole concept of affordable housing when you consider \$1,000 for rent.

Umatilla Electric Co-op continues to make the news leading the way in solar farms. Meanwhile, the city of Pendleton, though claiming to lead in per capita solar participation, has chosen the most inefficient means of generation by selecting individual home owner systems verses the solar farm approach. An independent business has been attempting to construct a solar farm on city property that is essentially unusable for other development. This project as well as any significant development along the road to nowhere has been stymied, I believe, by our friends at PP&L. Perhaps it's time to follow the example set by Hermiston and consider dumping PP&L altogether.

The mayor and city council have finally completed their blueprint for the city's goals and a rating system to measure their progress. Looks like it's up to the city manager to implement the programs despite the distractions that have currently limited any progress.

Though the Pendleton Fire Department has been pleading for replacement of worn out emergency equipment, grant requests to local foundations for funding has been conspicuously absent. Evidently, grant writing skills are lacking, so an outside agency has been paid \$50,000 to write those grant requests with an expected 10 to 1 return on the investment. With those expected returns, it looks like the fire station bond request could have been considerably less. I often wonder if the funds spent on outside grant writers, consultants, and PDA projects would have covered the cost of their new equipment. I guess we'll never know.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

A road trip through rusting and rising America

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. — In his dystopian Inaugural Address, President Donald Trump painted a picture of America as a nation gripped by vast "carnage" — a landscape of "rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones" that cried out for a strongman to put "America first" and stop the world from stealing our jobs. It was a shocking speech in many ways and reportedly prompted former President George W. Bush to say to those around him on the dais, "That was some really weird (stuff)." It was weird, but was it all wrong?

I just took a four-day car trip through the heart of that landscape — driving from Austin, Indiana, down through Louisville, Kentucky, winding through Appalachia and ending up at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee to try to answer that question.

Trump is half right in his diagnosis, but his prescription is 100 percent wrong. We do have an epidemic of failing communities. But we also have a bounty of thriving ones — not because of a strongman in Washington but because of strong leaders at the local level.

Indeed, this notion that America is a nation divided between two coasts that are supposedly thriving, pluralizing and globalizing and a vast flyover interior, where jobs have disappeared, drug addiction is rife and everyone is hoping Trump can bring back the 1950s, is highly inaccurate.

The big divide in America is not between the coasts and the interior. It's between strong communities and weak communities. You can find weak ones along the coast and thriving ones in Appalachia, and vice versa. It's community, stupid — not geography.

The communities that are making it share a key attribute: They've created diverse adaptive coalitions, where local businesses get deeply involved in the school system, translating in real time the skills being demanded by the global economy.

They also tap local colleges for talent and innovations that can diversify their economies and nurture unique local assets that won't go away. Local foundations and civic groups step in to fund supplemental learning opportunities and internships, and local governments help to catalyze it all.

The success stories are all bottom-up; the failures are all where the bottom has fallen out.

I started in one of the bottomless places: Austin, Indiana, a tiny town of 4,000 off Interstate 65, which was described in a brilliant series in *The Louisville Courier-Journal* "as the epicenter of a medical disaster," where citizens of all ages are getting hooked on liquefied painkillers and shooting up with dirty needles.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed that Austin "contains the largest drug-fueled HIV outbreak to hit rural America in recent history." Its 5 percent infection rate "is comparable to some African nations." Austin, the newspaper noted, doesn't just sit at the intersection between Indianapolis and Louisville but at the "intersection of hopelessness and economic ruin."

I chose to go there to meet the town's only doctor, Will Cooke, whose heroic work I learned of from the *Courier-Journal* series. Cooke's clinic, Foundations Family Medicine, sits at 25 West Main St. — opposite Marko's Pizza & Sub, a liquor store and a drugstore. Down the street was a business combination I'd never seen before: Eagle's Nest Tanning and Storage. It's the Kissed by the Sun Tanning Salon and a warehouse — both of which seemed to be shuttered, with the space available for rent.

For generations Austin's economy was anchored by the Morgan Foods canning plant, but, as *The Courier-Journal* noted, "then came a series of economic blows familiar to many manufacturing-based communities. The American Can plant next to Morgan Foods shut its doors in 1986 after more than 50 years in business. A local supermarket closed. Workers

left along with the jobs and poverty crept up among those who stayed."

Austin, Cooke explained to me, got caught in the vortex of declining blue-collar jobs, leading to a loss of dignity for breadwinners, depression and family breakdown, coinciding with doctors' and drug companies' pushing painkillers, and with too many people in the community failing to realize that to be in the middle class now required lifelong learning — not just to get a job but to hold one.

"Thirty percent of students were not even graduating from high school," said Cooke. "Then you take high unemployment, generational poverty, homelessness, childhood abuse and neglect, and cloak that within a closed-off culture inherited from Appalachia, and you begin to have the ingredients that contributed to the HIV outbreak."

Austin's insularity proved deadly for both jobs and families. "The close-knit, insular nature of the community worked against it, with the CDC later finding up to six people shared needles at one sitting, and two or three generations — young adults, parents and grandparents — sometimes shot up together," *The Courier-Journal* reported.

Lately, though, Cooke told me, the town's prospects have started to improve, precisely because the community has come together, not to shoot up but to start up and learn up and give a hand up.

"The local high school has introduced college-credit classes and trade programs so people are graduating with a head start," said Cooke. Faith-based and civic groups have mobilized, celebrating social and economic recovery, providing community dinners called "Food 4R Soul" and even installing community showers for people without running water.

Addiction is often a byproduct of social breakdown leading to a sense of isolation. Cooke feels hopeful because he sees the tide slowly shifting as "social isolation gives way to community."

"Only a healthy individual can contribute to a healthy family, and only a healthy family can contribute to a healthy community — and all of that requires a foundation of trust," said Cooke. "That kind of change can't come from the outside, it has to be homegrown."

Just 40 minutes down the highway from Austin, I interviewed Greg Fischer, the mayor of Louisville, a city bustling with energy and new buildings. "That 'Intifada' you wrote about in the Middle East is happening in parts of rural and urban America — people saying, 'I feel disconnected and hopeless about participating in a rapidly changing global economy.' Drug-related violence and addiction is one result — including in a few neighborhoods of Louisville."

But Louisville also has another story to tell: "We have 30,000 job openings," said Fischer, and for the best of reasons: Louisville has "a vision for how a city can be a platform for human potential to flourish." It combines "strategies of the heart," like asking everyone to regularly give a day of service to the city; strategies of science, like "citizen scientists" bearing GPS-enabled inhalers that the city uses to track air pollution, mitigate it and warn asthma sufferers; and strategies for job creation that leverage Louisville's unique assets.

One job-creation strategy led to creation of a slew of businesses that make "end of runway" products for rapid delivery by leveraging the fact that Louisville is UPS' worldwide air hub; "bourbon tourism" that leverages the fact that Kentucky is the Napa Valley of bourbon; and a partnership with Lexington, home of the University of Kentucky, has created an advanced manufacturing corridor.

Show me a community that understands today's world and is working together to thrive within it, and I'll show you a community on the rise — coastal or interior, urban or rural.

Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist, was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting in Beirut and Israel and one for commentary.



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

The big divide in America is not between the coasts and the interior. It's between strong communities and weak communities.

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.