

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Leading a newspaper in changing times

By KATHRYN BROWN
East Oregonian Publisher

Being in the newspaper business is always fascinating, but 2017 was the most interesting and challenging in my memory.

In 2017, we heard the word “media” used more frequently than ever before. Some people used it disparagingly, as if much of the news media — including newspapers such as ours — are part of some vast “mainstream media” conspiracy.

The reality is that the *East Oregonian* is an independent newspaper, part of the family-owned EO Media Group of publications in Oregon and southwest Washington.

Over the last 110 years, four generations of my family have published the *EO* and over time invested in other community newspapers in Eastern Oregon, around the mouth of the Columbia River and down the Oregon coast. We also own the regional agricultural newspaper, *Capital Press*, which is produced in Salem and printed here in Pendleton.

The local news you read in the *EO* is written by our reporters who live in Umatilla County. Much of the state news out of Salem is written by reporters from our Capital Bureau, which is a joint effort between our company and

Pamplin Media Group. You’ll see stories from Grant County or Wallowa County from our sister papers. Much of our agriculture news comes from reporters for the *Capital Press* (including George Plaven, who moved from Pendleton to Salem last month).

Our perspective is that we are fulfilling several roles. One is the newspaper’s most important role

as a watchdog over public institutions, including city and county governments and schools, to inform the public about decisions made that may affect them for good or ill. Another is our role as a source of information that helps our readers know what is happening in the community around them, including sports coverage, entertainment, local business news and human interest stories.

We play a role in helping local businesses succeed by advertising their goods or services to a wide audience, through

display advertising, classified ads or preprinted inserts. Our classified pages help connect buyers and sellers, and find willing employees for employers. Legal notices alert the public to hearings and other actions being taken by government bodies.

The national and international news in the *EO* comes from the Associated Press, which is a nonprofit cooperative news agency that many newspapers and other news organizations around

“What we’ve seen this year is that ‘mainstream media’ has changed from a general description into a term of abuse. We’ve seen trust in media ebb and flow over many years but there’s been nothing like this before. There is now a completely different way of self-manufacturing and distributing news outside of the mainstream. These new outlets can be very diverse and exciting, but they exist outside any conventional sense of journalistic principles — of fact-checking and at least trying to get it objectively right.”

— Veteran media commentator Raymond Snoddy, as quoted in *The Guardian*, Aug. 6, 2017.



The East Oregonian newsroom in Pendleton, circa 1979.

EO file photo

the country belong to. It is a long-established and highly regarded source of news.

Our opinion pages are a mix of opinions from our editorial board (myself and two editors), nationally syndicated columnists, other newspapers and local citizens. This is a page anyone can contribute to, as long as you have a reasonably informed opinion and are willing to put your name to it. When the *EO* is accused of being biased — whether that’s too liberal or too conservative is in the eye of the beholder — it is usually because of something on our opinion page, which our editorial board may or may not even agree with.

Because we do all this, we are recording the history of Umatilla and Morrow counties in every issue. This is a big responsibility, and one we take seriously. And we must be “mainstream” to accurately reflect what is happening around us. We check our facts, correct them when we get them wrong, and we try to get it objectively right every day.

Our challenge in 2018 and beyond is to keep doing what we are doing — and do it better than ever, while adapting to changing technologies and news consumption patterns. The days of

every household subscribing to their local newspaper are long over. The expectation that news should be free in the age of the internet has harmed and even killed many independent newspapers all over the country. Our financial reality is that we are constantly looking for ways to cut our costs as subscribers and advertisers migrate to Facebook and other online media sources. Our change to all-mail delivery in 2017 was part of that effort.

In order for the *East Oregonian* to continue and thrive, we need your help. If you need to advertise your business or your organization’s goods or services, recognize that there is a cost to newspaper advertising, but also a significant benefit in reaching thousands of potential customers who live and shop here.

If you depend on us for news, we need you to subscribe — in print or online or both, whichever works for you. We know it’s easy to share online login information with family, friends or work colleagues — but at \$14.50 per month, a daily newspaper subscription is one of the best bargains around and is an investment in your community.

Happy New Year to all!

OTHER VIEWS

How best to say thank you?

The Hermiston Police Department and city of Hermiston just concluded the 48th annual Christmas Express program. Each year since I took over in 2004 we have tried to fine tune and make the operation as efficient and effective as possible with the incredible amount of donations that come from the community. I have ensured a thank you note is sent to everyone we know to have donated money, equipment or services.

This year I was approached by a community member who asked if I ever thought about recognizing those people who donate to the program. I was a bit taken back because I do try to recognize the people who make the machine run.

But the question itself is still a good one. Is there a best way to recognize and thank people for the good they do to make Hermiston a welcoming and diverse community? To be quite honest, my greatest fear in attempting something like that is two-fold: one, some people may not want to be recognized and two, I may forget someone.

Cash donations for the 2017 program came in at a staggering \$15,651. This included a \$9,000 donation from the Hermiston Rotary International Club (the largest monetary contributor to the program each year) and other donations ranging from \$10 to \$3,500. The gentleman who donated \$3,500 this year, donated the same amount last year. We had an anonymous \$500 cash donation this year and clubs such as the Umatilla Lodge of Perfection for Scottish Rite, The Funrunner ATV Club, and both the Big River Men’s and Ladies Golf Clubs each donated. I’m going to opt not to name the individual donors, but you know who you are and you know if it wasn’t for each of you, our program would eventually wither away.

Each year when I give presentations and talk about our program, I always say despite being born and raised here, it wasn’t until I started working this program that I realized how generous our area farmers are. Make no mistake, this program would not be successful if it weren’t for people like John and Skip Walchli with donations of food and

equipment from both their farms, Troy Betz and Greg Juul of Bud Rich Potato, and Alan Cleaver of Columbia Basin Onion.

We have other partners that donate services and equipment as well. This includes the Walmart Distribution Center, Sanitary Disposal, Living Faith Church, Hammell Transport, and of course perhaps our biggest partner, Dave Hughes and his staff at the Agape House.

Presents flood the lobby of the police department and the overwhelming majority of those come from people unknown to us, at least by name. Altrusa International consistently donates an incredible amount of

toys, and the KOHU staff to include sports announcer Erick Olson do a great job of creating competition that goes for a good cause — a child having the opportunity to open a present Christmas morning. The tenants at Desert Sage Manor spend all year making dozens and dozens of beautiful quilts that are given away during our program. We have received hygiene products from local dentists as we know there

is a direct correlation between hygiene and self-esteem, especially with our youth.

Lastly, I would like to thank Ric Sherman, not only for his 30 years of service as an educator in Hermiston, but the non-stop work he puts into this program each year assisting and reminding me about various things. Ric is instrumental in energizing the second group I’d like to thank, that being the students and staff of the Hermiston School District. The amount of food (nearly 14,000 cans) and presents collected during the canned food drives ensures we are able to push out food boxes weighing nearly 100 pounds once all the produce and turkeys are added.

I pray I have not inadvertently forgotten someone, but this is my humble attempt to remind people that we here at the Hermiston Police Department know the silent majority is out there doing good things for all the right reasons and we appreciate it.

Jason Edmiston is the chief of the Hermiston Police Department.



JASON EDMISTON
Comment

Despite being born and raised here, it wasn’t until I started working on Christmas Express that I realized how generous our area farmers are.

YOUR VIEWS

Measure 101 keeps important services in place

More than one in ten Wallowa County residents has health insurance because of Medicaid expansion. These are working people — ranchers and farmers, store clerks and contractors — who cannot otherwise afford health care coverage. These are the people whose access to health care, and whose health itself, could be severely impacted if Measure 101 fails.

A yes vote on Measure 101 supports the assessment of a fee on large hospitals and health insurers in the State and brings in three times that amount in Federal funds. It is a way to maintain the State’s Medicaid program at its current level for two years, giving the Legislature time to work out a long-term solution.

Here in Wallowa County, providers will

continue to care for our families, friends and neighbors regardless of the outcome on Measure 101.

However, a no vote may require cuts in services currently offered by local health care providers, including the hospital and the full range of medical, dental and mental health clinics in the County. Our local providers, due in part to Medicaid expansion, are working together to provide some of the most innovative health care in the state of Oregon. A yes on Measure 101 continues that good work.

Please vote Yes on Measure 101 so that hard working folks in Wallowa County can continue to access essential healthcare for themselves and their families.

Nick Lunde
Wallowa County Healthcare District
Liz Powers
Winding Waters Community Health Center

EDITOR’S NOTE

Welcome to the newly redesigned *East Oregonian* opinion page.

You’ll still find opinions from a variety of viewpoints, including the voices of the *East Oregonian* editorial board, local readers and community leaders, other newspapers and columnists, and cartoons from all over the world.

But we hope the new look makes the wide range of opinion easier to read and consider, while at the same time differentiating this page from the news pages elsewhere in the paper. The opinion page is a place for all kinds of commentary, but shouldn’t be read as strictly news. While news and opinion have merged in some places, we aim to keep a clearly drawn line in our paper and website.

As always, we welcome your letters and will dedicate as much space in this new format as we need to facilitate local discussion of local topics, which is our top priority.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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. 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.



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