

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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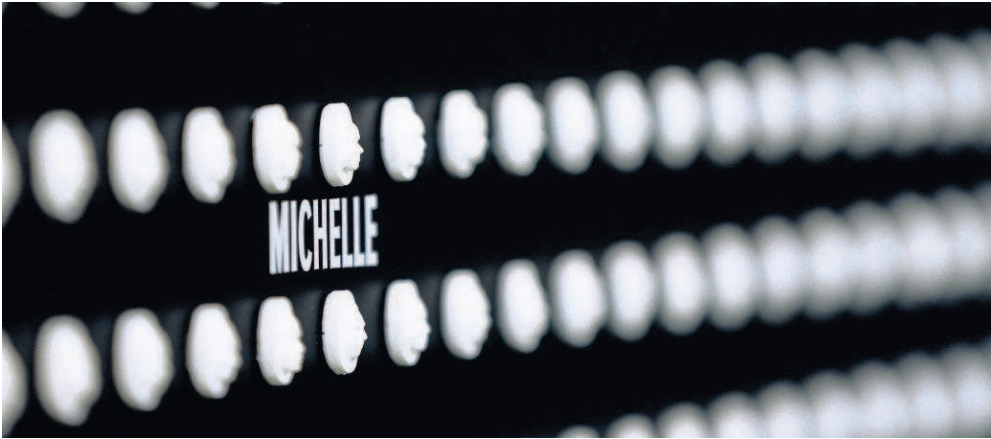
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OUR VIEW

Opioids and us

Opioids have arrived in Eastern Oregon. In all honesty, they’ve been here for decades. But it’s only now that we are learning of the full extent of their long-term effects, and the dangers they carry long after their usefulness has expired. To learn about opioids we must first unlearn a few things we thought we knew. For decades, drug companies claimed their synthetic, prescription products were not addictive and were not dangerous. We were told they were the best remedy for pain in a variety of circumstances, and there was little to no downside to their use. We now know that to be incorrect, though U.S. courts have yet to decide if there is any negligence or criminality to those claims. Too many doctors passed along that misinformation, or did not properly inform patients of the dangers of the drugs. The statistics are alarming: According to Dwight Holten, CEO of Lines for Life, an organization that works to prevent suicide and drug addiction, if a patient uses opioids for 30 days, there’s a 47 percent likelihood that the patient is still using them three years

on. And if a patient uses opioids for 90 days, that increases the likelihood to 60 percent that the patient is still using them five years on. The 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health showed 116 Americans died each day from opioid overdoses and 11.5 million people misused prescription opioids. Before we go any further then, let’s learn some simple facts about opioids: According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, opioids are a class of drugs that includes the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and pain relievers available by prescription such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine and many others. All opioids are chemically related and interact with nerve cell receptors all over our body. They make us feel better after a surgery, for instance, but our brain gets used to that feeling of euphoria and can begin to demand it. Dr. Joel Rice, an addiction counselor who is busy as soon as he arrives to his Pendleton office until he turns out the light at the end of the night, says everyone is affected by this. He spoke of wheat farmers and single mothers,



AP Photo/Keith Srakocic
Some of the 22,000 pills in a memorial by the National Safety Council have a name under it. The exhibit featuring the wall with the carved medicine pills, each representing the face of someone who fatally overdosed, was launched in November.

high-functioning businessmen, nurses and homeless addicts. NFL players like Brett Favre battled pain pill addiction and rock star Tom Petty died from a fentanyl overdose just last year. But we all must understand the new truth: Opioids are inherently dangerous. They have medicinal uses and people with terminal conditions should absolutely have the ability to use them. But those of us who hope to recover from whatever our medical setback and get back to our normal life, opioids should be kept to an absolute minimum. And doctors and drug companies should promote that theory of recovery. Umatilla County has tapped into \$200,000 in federal funds through the

Oregon Health Authority to combat addiction. The grant is funding prescription drug overdose prevention coordinator Mike Stensrud and will pay for community forums and educational programs through the Umatilla County Health Department. That kind of help is important in Umatilla County, a high-intensity drug trafficking area where illegal drugs are too easy to find once a valid prescription expires. Let us start from that baseline as we continue to report on this problem, debate possible policy fixes, research life-saving medical care (such as Naloxone) and how best we can counsel those afflicted to beat their addictions.



YOUR VIEWS

What is FARM II’s mission?

Thank you for shining a brighter light on the efforts regarding BMCC’s FARM II. Attracting potential events and uses of a Round-Up-located animal science center comes at a cost of potentially throwing others to the side. It is clear from the information made available to the public that the primary use would be animal science education that by appearance would function year-round as other BMCC programs do. Folded in is the purported benefit to the BMCC rodeo program. Not mentioned in the dialogue is what happens to the Junior Livestock Show, Rodeo Bible Camp, Pendleton Cattle Barons Weekend, general riding, cruise line shows, and Round-Up’s current use of the indoor facility. There is also the consideration of the occasional livestock traveler (horse and otherwise) that find overnight haven at the Round-Up Grounds and how the new facility will impact this use. Likewise, what is the impact to Fallen Field and its use by the youth sports of Pendleton and the availability of the same field for parking for events like Whisky Fest and Round-Up competitors? Also is the apparently forgotten Phase II of the Wildhorse expansion and the inferred possibility that it will add a third conflicting indoor/outdoor facility to the area, too. While some will deflect the mention of EOTEC as a red herring to FARM II’s success, it is not. As a collaborative effort, the reasonable question to ask is what will be done to make FARM II different? The missions of FARM II’s major players have to be clarified so the public understands why BMCC now has to be an economic driver rather than an educator, why the city and even the county have to be an educator rather than providing safe and efficient services to its citizens, and why the Round-Up has to be an educator rather than conducting an annual event of frontier sports and pastimes. The collaboration has to be more than the hope that the back pocket check will be spent. Scrutiny of all these considerations is

especially important when you look at the full picture where the city, the county and BMCC exclaim the lack of adequate funds for everyday operations and the Round-Up’s publicly disclosed less-than-positive bottom line in the most recent years. The taxpayers and the supportive citizens of the community must be engaged with details rather than the simple assurance that it’s a great thing to do. FARM II’s success depends on it.

Carl Culham
Athena

Too many conservative columnists in newspaper

A day to remember: The legislative branch just broke existing standards and practices by releasing a memo criticizing the effort put forth by the law enforcement arm of the government. The memo itself is just opinion; the intelligence it is based upon is valuable in the hands of the enforcement branch and investigative arm of the government. Our country is a nation based in law. The subversion of law for political benefit harms each of us. As we search for answers and news in regard to the ongoing situation, it would be nice to find factual sources in our local paper. Each area served by a paper is often at the mercy of what is printed as important or factual. The opinion page has selectively featured columnists who lean toward the conservative point of view and question some of the existing checks and balances at play in the political investigation into the election of 2016. I would expect the local editorial board to do better than to print another Bret Stephens column that harps on the “what if” non-circumstances of imaginary scenarios in his mind. None of the column offered sound or factual basis, it was just his imagination stoking political fires that don’t exist. Where have Nicholas Kristof, Timothy Egan, Thomas Friedman or Paul Krugman been? They are often informative and frequently upbeat; will they be appearing again in this paper?

Colleen Blackwood
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

The Stormy Daniels presidency

Well before *The Wall Street Journal* reported that a porn star with the meteorological name of Stormy Daniels was paid \$130,000 to keep quiet about sex with Donald Trump, it was clear that a bigger and more crass proposition would be emerging from the White House. Going into the midterm elections, Trump is offering this deal to his supporters: Say nothing about the lies, the bullying, the accusations of sexual misconduct from more than a dozen women, the undermining of the rule of law, the abdication of basic decency — and in turn he will make you rich. Essentially, it’s a payoff. Trump himself has framed it this way. When asked about his coming health exam last month, he said, “It better go well, otherwise the stock market will not be happy.” He used the same phrase when talking about his hard-line position on immigration. Both Barack Obama and Bill Clinton oversaw spectacular gains in the stock market — among the best in history. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 227 percent during Clinton’s eight years and 149 percent under Obama. Yet, neither of those men held the market out as hostage to a backward agenda and a deranged personality. Trump is running a bottom-line presidency — as soulless as a Kremlin bot on Facebook — in which people who know better are asked to stay quiet in exchange for a short-term payoff. Modern presidents, dating at least to Ronald Reagan, have urged voters to ask one question going into pivotal elections: Are you better off than you were before? It’s a reasonable standard. But it has never been the leverage for allowing a democracy to collapse. You heard some uplifting words during the State of the Union address, words with all the staying power of vapor from a sewage vent. But a more honest assessment of what this presidency represents came from Trump when he was in his element, surrounded by Mar-a-Lago cronies. “You all just got a lot richer,” he told a bejeweled and pink-faced crowd just a few hours after signing the \$1.5 trillion tax cut in December. Even as Trump spoke before Congress on Tuesday, he monetized the speech, with donors paying to have their name live-streamed across a Trump campaign web page. A cartoon in Politico showed a naked Trump with a king’s crown and a golf club walking down a red carpet. “I know, I know,” one man says to another. “Just keep thinking about your stock portfolio.” The question for those yet to join the enablers is: What’s the price — a record



TIMOTHY
EGAN
Comment

stock market in which 10 percent of Americans own 84 percent of the market wealth, a tax cut that burdens the working poor in years to come — for saying nothing? Evangelical Christians were among the first to sign on to a Stormy Daniels proposition. In the infamous words of Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, Trump gets a “do-over” for the infidelity allegation. Yes, because nothing says family values like a thrice-married man who allegedly cheats on his latest wife just after she gives birth to their son. And Pat Robertson, the mush-headed moralist who still fogs up many a television screen with his gaseous utterances, told Trump last summer, “I’m so proud of everything you’re doing.” For these self-appointed guardians of the soul, the bargain is bigger than 30 pieces of silver: It’s a promise that Trump will continue to protect their tax-exempt empires, in the name of religious freedom. For Republicans in Congress, the pact is more consequential. They will ignore the pleadings of career law enforcement officials in order to stoke fantasies of a deep-state coup against the president. These politicians are counting on a base that will look the other way as they undermine Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian tampering with the election. It’s a good bet. After Trump called the American justice system “a joke” and “a laughingstock,” after he fired the FBI director because he would not pledge loyalty to him, after he told another top lawmaker that his wife was “a loser,” after he referred to members of the intelligence community as “political hacks,” it was all quiet on the Republican front. He can falsely say that his State of the Union speech drew the highest audience in history — in fact, it ranked ninth since 1993 — because this president has told more than 2,000 lies in a year and hasn’t been called out for them by the people who signed on to silence. But what happens if the bargain crumbles? What if the market tanks — as the Dow did in losing more than 500 points a few days ago? Do the sycophants bail? Or do they hold out for something more — like the lobbyists now drafting legislation and gutting regulations that affect the companies that pay them? Beware, those of you who have made your deal with the Stormy Daniels presidency. You can take your settlement money — as the people who signed up for the fraudulent Trump University did — but you still got suckered. ■ Timothy Egan worked for 18 years for *The New York Times*, first as the *Pacific Northwest* correspondent, then as a national enterprise reporter.

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