

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to a return to drug court to Umatilla County.

Thanks mostly to a decline in state funding, the court, which was operated by the county community justice department, was shuttered last year. But community justice director Dale Primmer kept working to find ways to restart the program.

That restart is on its way, but it will appear a little different this time around.

The next iteration plans to be a voluntary program instituted post-conviction but pre-sentencing, so offenders can work through treatment to receive less severe sentences or even have charges dismissed. The state courts and the local public safety coordinating council will oversee it, while Community Counseling Solutions will provide treatment.

Drug court is not for everyone, and many will fall short. But it

does offer people caught in the cycle of addiction and incarceration an off ramp, an opportunity to get services and wrap-around care, while a full penalty awaits should they abandon treatment and again pose a risk to others.

For some, that balance of care and high stakes is what is needed to turn a life around.

A kick in the pants to closure of the Pendleton senior center's meal program, which has stopped serving for the second time in a year.

That's because CAPECO, which rents a kitchen at the senior center and normally serves lunch four days a week, is once again without a cook.

This is a blow for local seniors who use the meals as a place to get a tasty, affordable meal, but also an opportunity to socialize, play games and have fun.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Vivian Larson plays "Old Time" music on the piano in August for the lunch crowd at the Pendleton Senior Center. The meals have again been suspended after a cook resigned.

CAPECO says that the halt is only temporary, and that the service will be back up and running at full tilt once a new cook is located. Although, they have no date for when that will occur, nor a plan to keep the job filled for the

long-term.

If this is an important job for our community — which it is — CAPECO should create a plan (and a backup plan) so that this important job does not go unfilled again.



YOUR VIEWS

CAPECO needs to rethink its budget

I read with interest about the closing of the Pendleton Senior Center due to the employee resigning from CAPECO's food service program. Perhaps CAPECO needs to re-evaluate that amount of work that they are expecting of one person. The days of asking one employee to do that huge amount of work, and relying on volunteer staff to fill in the gaps, is over.

CAPECO decided to end its volunteer program, it appears they cut back on paid staff, and now expect the cook to handle all the aspects of preparing a meal and doing all the clean up. That is a huge task to place on one person. With the rise of minimum wage, it is unfair to expect an employee to undertake additional responsibilities of an additional person, and still be expected to do their own job and meet all of CAPECO's expectations. The employee can go to Walmart and be a greeter for similar hours without all the stress.

I know is it a sad state of affairs, and CAPECO has limited funds to use within the community. I am thinking that they need to use those limited funds to focus on a few programs and not try to expand to do as many programs as they do. Perhaps quality is more important than quantity. But again, that is just my opinion. Expanding services does not always help a community, sometimes it hurts the programs that are already established.

It appears that CAPECO needs to rethink how they choose to spend their federally allotted money. I, for one, would like to see full services restored to the Pendleton Senior Center. That would include adding back a dishwasher position and a senior service coordinator who used to be there, I believe, 32 hours a week.

Scot Jacobson
Pendleton

Better options for horses than slaughter

I grew up with horses in Eastern Oregon and understand how important they are to our culture and way of life. Pioneers and

native tribes in Oregon relied on horses as their primary means of transportation, hunting, and warfare. Today, we value our horses as our companions and partners in recreation, work, and sport. Yet sadly, too many of our horses, both wild and domestic, are ending up in the hands of unscrupulous kill buyers, who have no regard for animal welfare and see horses as a way to make a quick buck.

Horses deserve better, and that's why 80 percent of Americans strongly oppose slaughtering horses for human consumption. Because they are trained and socialized to be our friends and partners, the slaughter process involves terrible suffering for these animals who were former pets, athletes, ranch workers, and show animals. Don't be fooled by pro-slaughter claims that slaughter is "humane euthanasia" or that we need slaughter to dispose of old, sick, or lame animals. Nearly all American horses who go to slaughter are young, healthy animals perfectly capable of a new career as a companion or riding animal. And often they were given drugs and medications during their lifetime that are toxic to people who consume their flesh. This puts the reputation of all American food exports at risk.

Horse owners have plenty of options if they need to re-home their animal, and fortunately the vast majority do the right thing if their horse becomes old or sick — they call the vet and have the animal put down with kindness and respect. Only a small minority resort to taking their horses to auctions where kill buyers lurk.

Congress is currently considering legislation to bring the suffering to an end. The Safeguard American Food Exports (SAFE) Act, HR 113, will ban slaughter and export for slaughter, and force the breeding industry to stop relying on slaughter to clean up their excesses. I urge Congressman Greg Walden to join the bipartisan group of US House members who are sponsoring the SAFE Act, and I hope my fellow eastern Oregonians will do the same. You can reach Rep. Walden's office at (202) 225-6730.

Kaye Killgore
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

How to win an argument about guns

Tragically, predictably, infuriatingly, we're again mourning a shooting — this time at YouTube's headquarters — even as the drive for gun safety legislation has stalled in Washington. Polls show that nine out of 10 Americans favor basic steps like universal background checks before gun purchases, but the exceptions are the president and a majority in Congress.

Usually pundits toss out their own best arguments while ignoring the other side's, but today I'm going to try something new and engage directly with the arguments made by gun advocates:

You liberals are in a panic over guns, but look at the numbers. Any one gun is less likely to kill a person than any one vehicle. But we're not traumatized by cars, and we don't try to ban them.

It's true that any particular car is more likely to be involved in a fatality than any particular gun. But cars are actually a perfect example of the public health approach that we should apply to guns. We don't ban cars, but we do work hard to take a dangerous product and regulate it to limit the damage.

We do that through seat belts and air bags, through speed limits and highway barriers, through driver's licenses and insurance requirements, through crackdowns on drunken driving and texting while driving. I once calculated that since 1921, we had reduced the auto fatality rate per 100 million miles driven by 95 percent.

Sure, we could have just said, "cars don't kill people, people kill people." Or we could have said that it's pointless to regulate cars because then bicyclists will just run each other down. Instead, we relied on evidence and data to reduce the carnage from cars. Why isn't that a model for guns?

Because of the Second Amendment. The Constitution doesn't protect vehicles, but it does protect my right to a gun.

Yes, but courts have found that the Second Amendment does not prevent sensible regulation (just as the First Amendment does not preclude laws on defamation). There is no constitutional objection to, say, universal background checks to obtain a gun. It's crazy that 22 percent of guns are obtained without a check.

We all agree that there should be limits. No one argues that there is an individual right to own an anti-aircraft gun. So the question isn't whether firearms should all be sacrosanct but simply where we draw the line. When more Americans have died from guns just since 1970 (1.4 million) than in all the wars in U.S. history (1.3 million), maybe it's worth rethinking where that line should be.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

Whoa! You're inflating the gun violence numbers by including suicides. Almost two-thirds of those gun deaths are suicides, and the blunt reality is that if someone wants to kill himself, he'll find a way. It's not about guns.

Actually, that's not true. Scholars have found that suicide barriers on bridges, for example, prevent jumpers and don't lead to a significant increase in suicides elsewhere. Likewise, almost

half of suicides in Britain used to be by asphyxiating oneself with gas from the oven, but when Britain switched to a less lethal oven gas the suicides by oven plummeted and there was little substitution by other methods. So it is about guns.

No, it's more about our violent culture. The Swiss and Israelis have large numbers of firearms, and they don't have our levels of gun violence.

Yes, there's something to that. America has underlying social problems, and we need to address them with smarter economic and social policies. But we magnify the toll when we make it easy for troubled people to explode with AR-15s rather than with pocketknives.

You liberals freak out about guns. If you have a swimming pool or a bathtub, that's more dangerous to neighborhood kids than a gun is. Kids under age 14 are much more likely to die from drowning than from firearms. So why this crusade against guns, but not against bathtubs and pools?

Your numbers are basically right, but only because young children routinely swim and take baths but don't regularly encounter firearms. But look at the picture for the population as a whole: Overall, 3,600 Americans drown each year, while 36,000 die from guns (yes, including suicides). That's one reason to be talking more about gun safety than about pool safety.

Note also that a backyard pool isn't going to be used to mug a neighbor, or to invade a nearby school. Schools don't have drills for an "active pool situation." And while some 200,000 guns are stolen each year, it's more difficult to steal a pool and use it for a violent purpose.

Moreover, we do try to make pools safer. Many jurisdictions require a permit for a pool, as well as a childproof fence around it with self-locking gates. If we have permits and safe storage requirements for pools, why not for guns? What's wrong with trying to save lives?

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, writes op-ed columns that appear twice a week. He won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.