

My kids have it pretty good

Recently, I shared some photographs with my students. They were pictures of my life. Images that held the view — the people I care most about, cows, fields, my home, and even the water trough. We were working on a lesson about words with pizzazz when we write a story, and I was excited to share my world with them.

The kids sat staring at the large screen in my room with looks of awe, helping me think of words that brought the pictures to life, but after about the fourth or fifth picture, one boy said “I feel sorry for your boys, Mrs. Murdock.”

I was completely confused as I questioned why on earth the student would feel sorry for them. And then the confusion turned to shock as he explained what he was seeing in the photographs.

“They don’t have a playground, there are no friends to play with from a neighborhood, and you said that they don’t have video games. There’s nothing to do. Don’t they get bored? I would.”

It got quiet in the room. The other kids

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looked at me, and then at him. I don’t think they knew how to feel either, but none of them were brave enough to say anything out loud. I didn’t know what to say either as I wondered how could anyone look at the pictures of my home, the view, and everything in between without seeing that it has almost “everything” a person would need in life? Without responding, I continued clicking through about four more pictures and then one of the girls toward the back of the room said all that needed to be said.

“Mrs. Murdock, I think they have a playground bigger than anything I’ve ever seen. Do your sons know how good it is? I mean they get all of this space and fields and, I’ve always wanted animals but we’ve never had enough room, and” ... after a long pause she said “well, the best part is, they get to live with you!”

The entire class erupted into a song of clapping and cheers. It was priceless. I laughed out loud thinking about the question she posed: “Do they know how good it is?” Their playground isn’t clean or fenced in

or even surrounded with lush green grass. Their life is full of weeds and wire, and a whole lot of wonderful people that often don’t have neighbors either. What more do they need?

The sun bounces and reflects more goodness than average into their world — and from their world, too. And their “playground” is never in the same place for very long. Sometimes it’s under the apple tree, and other times it’s next to the corral their dad is fixing. It’s even been inside a sale barn on bull sale day. They’ve learned to create the “magic” a playground has wherever they go, and in my mind, that’s better than any well-built structure or seesaw found in a perfect back yard or neighborhood park. So, yes, sweet girl, to answer your question, I believe they do know how good they have it and they’d share it with all of you if they could.

I don’t think I’ll ever forget that day. It was a reminder for me, from the point of view of a young boy as well as a young girl, to not feel sorry for the lack of playground equipment or people surrounding my house. Ever.

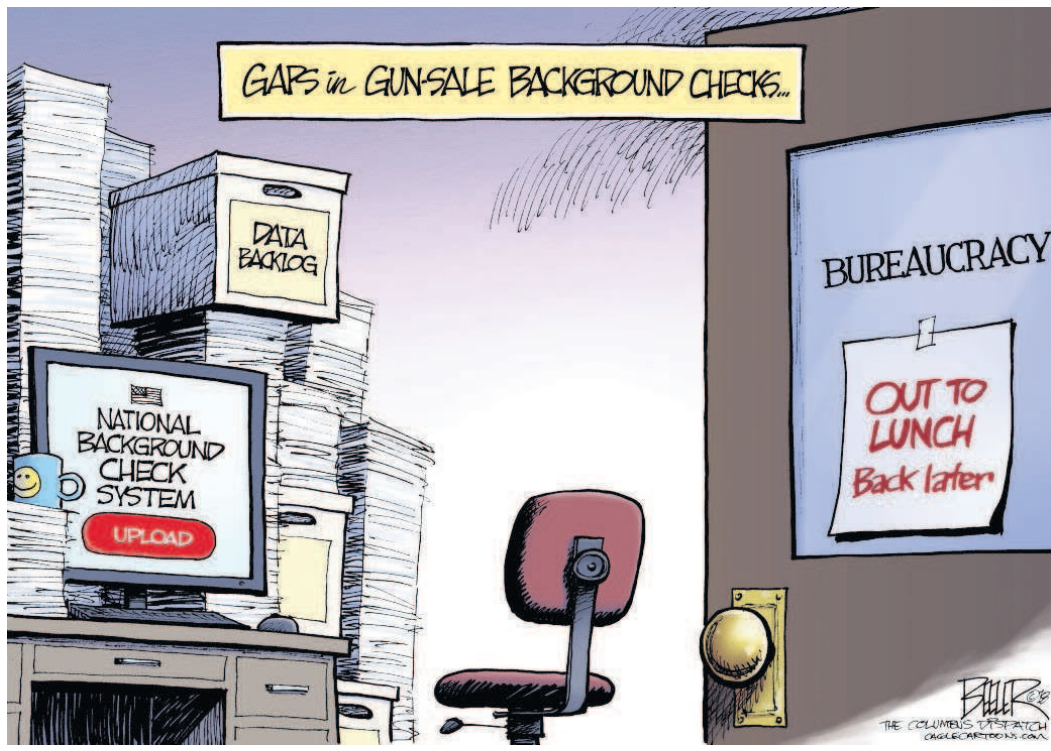
There are times when I wish for a neighborhood, for friendships in the park, and for basketball games at a hoop at the end of the block. But reality for us doesn’t include those things. And, with each passing day, I’m seeing and believing that we’re



LINDSAY MURDOCK
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

meant to have something different than average or normal. And I’m more than OK with that.

Lindsay Murdock lives in Echo and teaches in Hermiston.



New research on forest health and public perceptions

By **PAUL OESTER AND NILS CHRISTOFFERSEN**

OSU Forest Extension Willowa Resources

In the West, forest fires have become more frequent and intense in the past 50 years. Willowa Resources, based out of Enterprise, has partnered with Oregon State University, University of Colorado, University of New Hampshire, and University of Louisville to create an innovative research collaboration — Communities and Forests in Oregon (CAFOR). This collaboration was created to better understand these changes and learn how Northeast Oregon communities can adapt.

Representatives from CAFOR will share the results of their long-term study April 25-26 in Enterprise and Pendleton. Their findings explore the connections between forest health, wildfire risk and economic vitality.

For their study, CAFOR conducted household surveys across Eastern Oregon to better understand concerns of residents in the region. Primary concerns reported were: 1) overstocking of trees; 2) wildfire, and 3) slow but steady increases in summer temperatures. These surveys confirmed strong public support for active restoration and management on public and private forest lands.

CAFOR also conducted an analysis of long-term weather datasets, confirming that wildfires and temperatures will continue to increase four-to-five fold over the next 50 years. Based upon these anticipated increase in summer temperatures and wildfires, restoration is critical to the health of our forests and the well-being of our communities.

Forest management — particularly on federal forests — is often divisive. General agreement exists about reducing wildfire risk and maintaining forest health, but opinions differ greatly as to what constitutes appropriate action. CAFOR’s research can serve as the foundation for getting multiple groups to the table to discuss options on federal lands.

There are already existing groups that work in this effort, such as county governments, local landowner and community initiatives, and the Willowa-Whitman and Umatilla Forest Collaboratives. However, these groups need more support and more voices to engage in solutions that meet all of our needs.

A lot of investment has been made in seeking to advance solutions on federal

forest land, but it is also critical that similar effort is directed toward private lands. Across Eastern Oregon, more than 25 percent of our forested lands are owned by private landowners, and half of these are owned by individual families. These forests influence wildfire risk, forest health, and wildlife habitat across the landscape and are a foundational part of a forest-based economy.

Private landowners in Eastern Oregon are knowledgeable and care about the health of the forests, water and lands they manage. Public and private owners can work together to keep these lands, forests, and water healthy and sustain local jobs.

These emerging local partnerships and collaboration between landowners are a hopeful sign. They highlight unique and effective progress in northeast Oregon:

- The Lostine Canyon Community of small woodland owners is the first community in Willowa County to begin the process of becoming a “Firewise” community. Becoming a Firewise Community is an effective way to bring neighborhoods together, prepare for a wildfire, and increase overall forest health.

- Partnerships between local landowners with the United States Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon State University and local non-profits have secured over \$5 million from the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program to support fuel, wildlife habitat, and improved water quality in Baker, Union and Willowa counties.

- Family forest landowners in Baker County formed the Blue Mountain Forest Cooperative in response to the high cost of harvest and transportation from smaller isolated properties.

These types of collaborative landowner-led partnerships are an important way to address concerns identified in CAFOR’s research: increasing wildfire risk, rising temperatures, and sustaining natural resource-based jobs. Communities throughout Eastern Oregon are working to expand these innovative efforts to ensure the future of our forests and the people who care for them. We encourage you to attend these events to learn more about Eastern Oregon forests and the people who care for them, and to become engaged in these efforts.

For more information on CAFOR visit www.cafor.weeb.com

Paul Oester works at OSU Forest Extension and Nils Christoffersen works for Willowa Resources.

Across Eastern Oregon, more than 25 percent of forested land is owned by private landowners.

Facts about the OSU 4-H, Extension and agricultural research service

We appreciate the opportunity to provide a short list of facts about the service district. Voters in Umatilla and Morrow counties are being asked to consider adding two new service districts to support staff and operations of the Oregon State University Extension Service programs in 4-H, nutrition education, master gardeners and agricultural research. The election deadline is May 15.

As public employees of Oregon State University, we cannot advocate for or against any ballot measure or candidate. We can share the following facts to our communities about what the proposed service district would do.

If approved, the service districts would mean:

1. A stronger 4-H Youth Development Program. 4-H in Umatilla and Morrow counties helps thousands in and outside of our cities, through clubs, after-schools activities and events to be successful in school, and to prepare them with life skills. 4-H is an Extension program and not a private or standalone entity. We provide supplies, teaching materials, trainings, volunteer screenings and management, facilities and more — all led by youth development professionals and supported by our support staff.

2. Healthy diet and healthy lifestyles. Extension programs promote and support good nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices for thousands of youth and adults in Umatilla and Morrow counties through nutritional education and Master Gardeners.

3. A strong billion-dollar regional agricultural industry. Thousands of residents and families throughout Umatilla and Morrow counties regularly use Extension and research services to support and build the regional agricultural economy. Agricultural production and food manufacturing represent 17,607 jobs, or about 37 percent of the regional workforce.

4. More for our money. For every local dollar invested, Umatilla and Morrow County Extension and agricultural research currently brings an additional \$5 from state, federal grants and contracts to the counties.

5. This is dedicated funding only for Extension activities in the counties where the funds would be collected. This would stabilize funding and secure funding for the future. The fiscal oversight and budgeting processes will be directed by the county commissioners.

6. OSU does not take an administrative overhead fee on county service district dollars. This will not pay for OSU positions located in Corvallis or anywhere else in the state.

7. The rate of 33 cents per \$1,000 of

assessed value was determined by citizen leaders in the county after a careful and thoughtful analysis of budget needs and projected revenues. That is the maximum rate and can never change.

8. Unique to Umatilla and Morrow counties is the location of two research centers in the two-county region. The Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center focuses on dryland agriculture while the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center focuses on irrigated agriculture.

9. The numbers of scientists located at these research centers is equal to if not greater than in 2000. Most research conducted by these faculty is done in Umatilla and Morrow counties.

10. Approximately 30 percent of the proposed funds would support 4-H programs.

11. Due to state budget cuts, local research centers were required to find 25 percent of their base operational budgets from local sources.

12. Subsequently, following these budget cuts, support funding came from many sources that have

proven not to be sustainable and upon the advice of the Citizens Leaders Committee the service districts have been proposed because of the wide impact Extension and agricultural research has in both counties.

13. Twenty-five other counties in Oregon have established similar Extension Service Districts.

14. Where Service Districts support both Extension and research centers in other counties such as Malheur, Klamath and Jackson counties, funding has been maintained and not cut by the university.

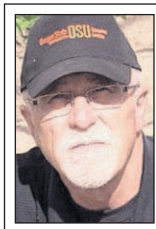
15. Extension has four offices and two research centers in these two counties, with staff numbers approaching 60-80, depending on time of year. There are about 1.5 full time employees in administration to oversee these operations.

You have arrived at the end of a list of 15 facts about current Extension programs and the proposed service districts. We appreciate that you are still reading. We value your desire to be fully informed. For 100-plus years, Extension has partnered with Umatilla and Morrow counties to provide programming and agricultural research. This work contributes to residents’ ability to remain competitive in a global economy and live healthy lives. And those are the facts.

Mary Corp is a professor of crop and soil science and director of the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research Center. Phil Hamm is a professor emeritus of plant pathology and director of the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center.



MARY CORP
Comment



PHIL HAMM
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