

# The tedious, wonderful world of 4-H

I'm sure it was the summer I was 11. I had just finished fifth grade and was going to be a 4-H exhibitor at the Jefferson County Fair for the first time with my club, the Yummy Bunch. I had spent the school year with a handful of my closest friends learning how to follow recipes, set a beautiful table, and create fun crafts and various projects that didn't require a sewing machine.

We were on our way to becoming the next Betty Crocker or Martha Stewart, without a doubt.

The club meetings and activities provided opportunities to be creative while learning new things. We memorized and recited the 4-H motto, took turns giving short presentations, assembled information for our record books, and participated in various forms of community service. Our Mother's Day tea was a huge success and the cleaning up of the Milo Gard Cemetery was appreciated.

I had grown very comfortable with being a part of the small club, and although some of the recipes were difficult and I hadn't completely mastered the whip stitch, I felt accomplished. As the county fair drew closer, my leader insisted that I enroll in the presentation portion of the week. I was not only a nervous wreck about what to give a presentation on, but I couldn't fathom doing

something in front of an actual judge. After brainstorming ideas with my mother, we decided I would be able to prepare an egg salad sandwich without much difficulty. I practiced for weeks, boiling the eggs just long enough, cracking them with ease, mixing just the right amount of mayonnaise, and spreading it across the bread perfectly. The tricky part was doing all of this while talking and maintaining eye contact, but with each practice session, my confidence was boosted.

Thankfully, the day of the presentation went well. There was a small audience, the judge, and my family cheering me on from the front row. I organized the materials, put my note cards in front of me, and gave the best smile I could. It was the longest 10 minutes of my life at age eleven, but I survived it. The judge raved about the creaminess of the egg mixture and the diagonal cut of the bread, but was most impressed with my thorough deliverance, noting that she could tell that I had practiced. Yes, repetition and practice is interwoven through everything 4-H is about. And I was just on the cusp of understanding the real worth in those traits.

As the Umatilla County Fair quickly approaches, I can't help but give thanks for that experience I had more than 30 years ago. The words of the judge confirmed that

my time had been used wisely. It proved that though I may not have maintained eye contact the entire time, and perhaps had forgotten to mention the amount of mayonnaise I was adding to the eggs, it was obvious I had practiced. Now as a parent and club leader, 4-H is at a completely different level for me, reminding me of the importance of repetition and the implications that arise when practice doesn't happen. It's no longer boiling eggs or setting the table, but tying slip knots in halters and setting up feet so that the muscle on the animal looks its best. It's starching shirts and combing hair and practicing over and over and over again. It's exhausting, it's tedious, and it can be emotionally draining. But in the end, it's worth it.

It's worth it because not only are my boys gaining character through trial and error, but they're learning that practice and hard work do pay off. They're learning that being a part of an organization whose motto is to improve life for everyone, through the head, the heart, the hands, and overall health, is growing them into young men who others look up to.

If you get the chance, watch a 4-H member at work in the next month at their county fairs. Go to the presentations, look at the table settings, check out how well they've stitched a seam, walk through the animal and livestock area. Visit with the youth that are the future of our country. Interact with them, make eye contact and question what they've done and how they've done it. I can guarantee you'll walk away feeling better about the community

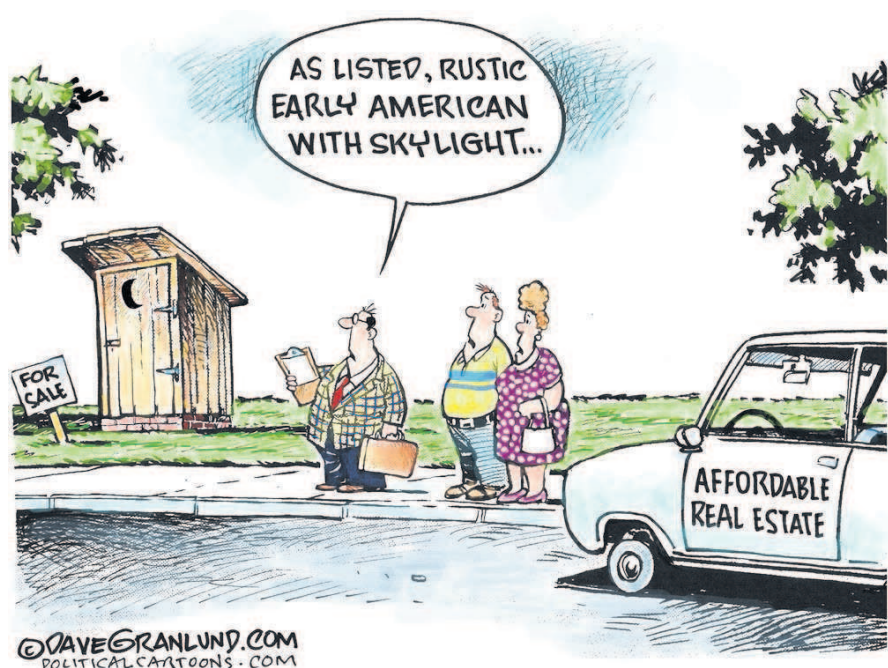
**If you get a chance, watch a 4-H member at work in the next month at their county fair.**



**LINDSAY MURDOCK**  
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

we live in and the kids we're raising, and they'll feel better about the adults who are raising them. They're not perfect, but they've put in the hours of practice. It would be a honor to hear from not just the judges, but from others like you, that their efforts are seen and they're making all of us proud.

*Lindsay Murdock lives and teaches in Echo.*



## Include the community in hiring a new NORCOR administrator

Last year, local citizens began picketing at the Northern Oregon Correctional Facility when immigration detainees held at our local jail had initiated a hunger strike over conditions there. These detainees are housed under contract with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The group that formed around that effort, Gorge ICE Resistance, voiced concerns that our jail is not appropriate for housing immigration detainees.

As we learned more about the complexities, a new group emerged from GIR to focus on the governmental structure behind NORCOR and how it operates. The NORCOR Community Resources Coalition began to interview key community leaders about their perspectives and knowledge of the jail and details on budgets, policies and procedures, and resources.

We met with Wasco County Administrator Tyler Stone, NORCOR board chair Tom McCoy, Wasco County Commissioner Scott Hege and Wasco County Sheriff Lane Magill. We learned much about how the jail operates and what the four counties and their sheriffs have done to try to secure stable funding.

Meeting with more leaders was stopped abruptly when, due to a taxpayers lawsuit filed in July 2017, the board's attorney advised members and other county officials not to speak with anyone privately about the jail.

Since January 2017, *The Dalles Chronicle* has reported on a number of events that have tarnished the image of NORCOR and its management. In part, we have read about two hunger strikes, a \$40,000 legal settlement for detaining a man beyond his release date at the request of ICE, and a very critical review of the juvenile detention facility by Disability Rights Oregon. Last week, we learned of an federal report issued in 2017 that listed 81 violations of ICE rules for detention.

Volunteer attorneys and clergy have been visiting and interviewing as many detainees as possible. While the details of such visits are confidential, they have heard multiple reports of inadequate clothing, exercise and food, expensive phone rates, no visitation, poor access to legal representation, strip searches and more. Some detainees have been held in NORCOR for many months. All of this was under administrator Bryan Brandenburg's watch.

While ICE determines who is sent to NORCOR, conditions at the jail are were



**TERESA HEPKER**  
Comment

under the direction of Brandenburg. As more details come to light, we questioned his competency and integrity as a manager. Otherwise, why would such reports continue to surface after 14 months of community effort to get improvement?

Now Brandenburg has resigned and the jail is seeking a replacement. It came as a shock to see that, as outgoing administrator, he will be involved in hiring his successor — which is unheard of in the professional world. Previously, a recruiting firm was used to replace the prior administrator. This time around, it seems that Brandenburg is in charge of the process.

His resignation was accepted in executive session of the board on June 21. He apparently presented the board with a hiring plan that included an application deadline of July 20 and minimum requirements for the position, which are lower than in previous postings. Even Sherman County Sheriff Brad Lohrey has expressed concern that there is too short a timetable in which to find top quality candidates, conduct interviews and allow time for the chosen candidate to leave a current job and transfer to a new one.

Given the problems that have occurred under Brandenburg's watch, is it wise to give him this power and responsibility? The county governments, through their representatives on the NORCOR board, are responsible for setting the standards and hiring a replacement.

We ask county leaders and the NORCOR board to intervene now. Hire an interim administrator and allow a longer period in which to recruit and hire a permanent replacement. Include members of the public and staff in the process. And we advise that Brandenburg be removed from the process.

NORCOR is the only jail remaining in Oregon to house ICE detainees. Others have stopped doing so under legal advice and in response to community demand. It's time to make our jail into a true correctional institution, not a punitive holding facility. Inmates need help to overcome addictions, deal with mental health issues and learn new ways to live in society peacefully and productively. With whole-community cooperation, we can make positive changes at NORCOR that will benefit everyone involved — the public, law enforcement, staff and inmates.

*Teresa Hepker is a member of the NORCOR Community Resources Coalition.*

## Let's decide to get the lead out

Hunters and anglers put tens of thousands of tons of lead in our environment annually, and it is estimated that between 10 and 20 million birds and other animals — representing more than 130 species — die each year from lead poisoning. What's almost worse is that we could get the lead out, if we wanted to.

When it comes to some of my fondest outdoor memories, lead has played a leading role. When I reeled in my first bluegill, a lead split-shot hung between my hook and bobber. When I killed my first deer, 120 grains of lead brought it down. And when I caught my biggest fish to date, a four-ounce lead sinker weight held my bait deep enough for that big red grouper to find it.

But those days are over for me. These days, I think our constant use of lead in the outdoors must end. Every time we field-dress an elk or snag a lure on an unseen stump, we leave behind traces of lead that almost invariably end up in some animal's digestive tract. And the scientific evidence is unequivocal: Ingesting lead greatly harms wildlife.

Birds of prey are particularly hard-hit. Ninety percent of the bald eagles the University of Minnesota raptor rehab center admits have elevated levels of lead in their blood. A quarter of these birds suffer from full-blown lead poisoning that usually leads to death. Seventy-five percent of all bald and golden eagles in or near Yellowstone National Park have elevated blood lead levels, with around 14 percent exhibiting levels high enough to cause lead poisoning. And as anyone who has ever followed the issue is aware, lead poisoning is the primary threat to the continuing existence of California condors.

Beyond raptors, lead poisoning from fishing tackle has been identified as a large factor in the decline of New Hampshire's loons. Among game birds, 8 percent of chukars tested in Utah had elevated blood lead levels from ingestion of lead shot, and 2.5 percent of doves in a nationwide study were found to have lead pellets in their gizzards. Waterfowl still have problems with lead ingestion, and scavenging mammals like raccoons have been known to develop lead poisoning, too.

If wildlife conservation is not reason enough to reduce lead use in sporting gear, we also know that lead is equally bad for human health. Nearly every box of ammo and fishing tackle carries a warning label for a reason. Even at sub-lethal levels, lead damages organs, compromises immune systems, and triggers neurological damage and high blood pressure.



**JESSE ALSTON**  
Comment

My fellow hunters should be aware that if we hunt with lead ammo, we're almost certainly feeding it to our families. Lead bullets fragment on impact, and many of those fragments remain in the meat no matter how carefully we process it. A study conducted by the North Dakota Department of Health found that 59 percent of ground venison provided to food pantries contained lead fragments. Another study found that about a third of the venison from a sample of rifle-killed deer was contaminated. Wild game is a great source of lean protein, but it's also, unfortunately, a great source of lead when we don't use non-toxic ammunition.

These days, it's not hard to cut back on lead in our sporting gear. Nontoxic ammunition and fishing tackle are now readily available at most outdoor retailers, and they perform comparably to lead equivalents — often even better. It's also not much more expensive, especially considering that it ensures the health of both wildlife and the folks around our dinner tables.

When the United States banned lead shot for hunting waterfowl under the first President Bush, sportsmen's groups worked successfully to reduce the amount of lead used in our outdoor pastimes. I like to think we'd have gone further had we realized the extent of the problem back then. Now, however, we do know, so we face a crossroads: Do we move forward and follow the lead of past conservationists, or do we keep buying lead-based sporting gear because it's marginally cheaper and easier?

California has taken the lead: Lead ammunition will be fully illegal there starting next year. Five Northeastern states have also banned or restricted lead fishing tackle. But the rest of the nation lags well behind. We've even reversed some progress, as when Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke made the decision last year to repeal a prohibition on using lead ammo on national wildlife refuges.

I'm not waiting around for government to take action. Personally, I've stopped using lead ammo on my hunts, and I'm sorting through my tackle box to get all the lead out of there, too. I hope more Westerners join me, and I encourage those who don't hunt and fish to take action as well. It's going to take a lot of us working together to ensure the health and safety of the wildlife and people we love.

*Jesse Alston is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News. He lives in Laramie, Wyoming, with his wife and dog.*