

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Make a plan to do a good deed

Good deeds don't happen by accident. Some are jump-started by coincidence — a need presents itself and a well-meaning person responds. But most are the result of careful thought and planning, of addressing a need not as a single incident but as a confluence of circumstances that will rear their heads again and again.

The needs become a calling, and people rally together to address them.

We see the work of nonprofits year-round. It takes on many forms, from feeding hungry people to sheltering neglected animals, from offering grief counseling for hurting families to fighting illness and disease, from helping a local child learn to read or play a sport to sending gifts across an

ocean for a child in poverty.

And the work is hard because the need is great.

This is the start of the giving season, for both philanthropic and practical reasons. Because of the blessings in our own lives, we're reminded of misfortune in the lives of others and often moved to make a gift. And many are looking at their year-end accounting and looking to do some charitable giving.

Whatever the motivation, the money enables these organizations to pay their staffs and rent and buy the goods and services to accomplish their goals.

But the money isn't enough. Writing a check helps an organization balance its own bottom line, but what most of these groups will tell you is they need dedicated volunteers.

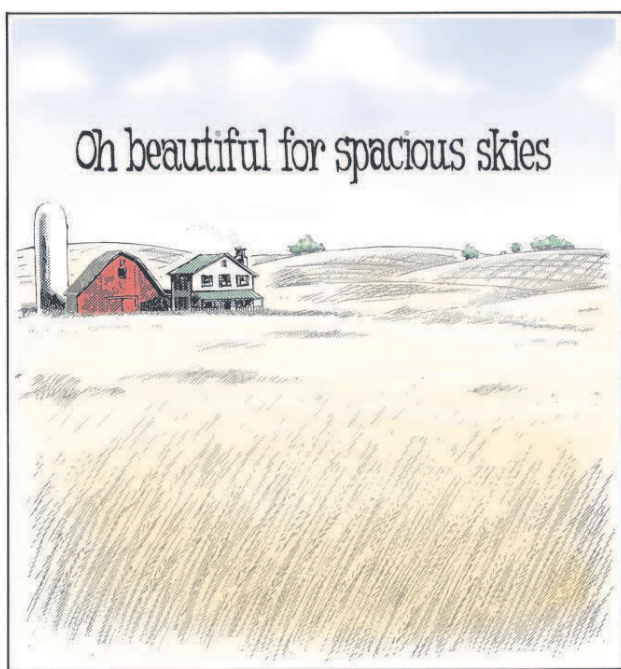


Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Volunteer Mariza Sharpe serves up salad to Mickey Morris and Shavon Slack on Oct. 25 at the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center in Hermiston.

We've highlighted a few of the people who fill that role in today's holiday edition. They exemplify the intentional effort it takes to make good deeds a common occurrence. Some volunteer in multiple places for a variety of causes.

There are many more, and there is much more to do. We thank all of our readers who use their time to make their communities better places to live, and encourage any who have not found a place to donate and serve to consider it this holiday season.



Cartoonists.com Bill Jay

For amber waves of grain...



YOUR VIEWS

Tribes should not silence differing opinions

Free speech and free expression are bedrock rights of all citizens of our great democratic country. However, free speech for Umatilla tribal members will be suppressed and censored unless we march in lockstep to the tribal government party line.

Earlier this year the *Confederated Umatilla Journal*, a publication owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, twice refused to publish my opinions on relevant tribal issues just because I had a differing opinion.

The first unjustified denial of my free speech rights occurred when I rebutted, supported with facts, an editorial on tribal education. The second came when I responded to a *CUJ* article on Cayuse Technologies, a tribally owned business, wherein I wrote, again supported with facts, that we owners (shareholders) do not benefit much from CT.

The issue I am writing about today is the lack of free speech, and the lack of transparency.

The *East Oregonian* newspaper has been the primary source of news and

information for our tribal community for generations. Thus, when the *CUJ* suppressed my two letters, I submitted the letters, verbatim and identical, to the *EO* and the letters were published in a timely manner. There was obviously nothing in my letters that was libelous, obscene, threatening, or otherwise out of line, or the *EO* never would have published them.

At any rate, I am OK that I have to use a forum or venue other than our tribal newspaper to express my opinion. Also, it is obvious that the only reason the decision-makers at the *CUJ* denied my free speech rights is they personally do not agree with the content of what I wrote.

If tribal government allows them to do this, it raises the legitimate question: Do we have a democracy if free speech rights can be denied on the whims of people working in tribal government? Genuine products of journalism, like the *East Oregonian*, do publish opinions from their readership that may differ from theirs.

Tribal leaders have always welcomed input and viewpoints from the tribal membership. And that is all my two letters are — input from a tribal member.

Bob Shippentower
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

Fighting the spiritual void

Wherever I go I seem to meet people who are either dealing with trauma or helping others dealing with trauma. In some places I meet veterans trying to recover from the psychic wounds they suffered in Iraq or Afghanistan. Sometimes it is women struggling with the aftershocks of sexual assault. Sometimes it is teachers trying to help students overcome the traumas they've suffered from some adult's abuse or abandonment.

Wherever Americans gather and try to help each other on any deep level, they confront levels of trauma that their training has often not prepared them for.

Our society has tried to medicalize trauma. We call it PTSD and regard it as an individual illness that can be treated with medications. But it's increasingly clear that trauma is a moral and spiritual issue as much as a psychological or chemical one. Wherever there is trauma, there has been betrayal, an abuse of authority, a moral injury.

Medication can rebalance chemicals in the brain, but it can't heal the inner self. People who have suffered a trauma — whether it's a sexual assault at work or repeated beatings at home — find that their identity formation has been interrupted and fragmented. Time doesn't flow from one day to the next, but circles backward to the bad event.

People who endure trauma sometimes say that they feel morally tainted. They have the same plaintive mindset as the old man at the cemetery in "Saving Private Ryan," who says to his wife, "Tell me I'm a good man."

As a culture we're pretty bad at dealing with moral injury. Sometimes I look at the rising suicide and depression rates, the rising fragility and distrust, and I think it all flows from the fact that we've made our culture a spiritual void. When you privatize morality and denude the public square of spiritual content, you've robbed people of the community resources they need to process moral pain together.

The good news is that the people who are addressing trauma most directly are reviving a moral language and developing a moral curriculum. Edward Tick is a therapist who has been working with survivors of wars for decades. In his book "War and the Soul," he writes that PTSD is best understood as a "soul wound, affecting the personality at the deepest levels."

One of his patients, Art, told Tick, "My soul has fled." He felt it leave his body at Khe Sanh. Art was a machine-gunner repelling wave after wave of North Vietnamese' assault, killing them by the score.

One day the North Vietnamese overran his position, and while he was sprinting away in retreat, expecting to

die at any second, he felt his soul run out of his body. It stayed out, traumatized, on red alert, for decades.

Tick told Art: "We can try to make your body and this life a safe place for your soul to move back into. If we can get you off combat alert, if you can learn to trust a little bit ... maybe we can bring you two closer together."

People who are recovering from trauma often embrace the language of myth, which offers us templates of moral progress. Recently, in New Orleans, I met the founder of a community of vets called Bastion. The men and women there are taught to see their lives as a hero's journey with three stages: from Separation through Initiation, and then back to Return.

When we see our lives in mythic terms, we can see that life still offers a chance to do something heroic. "Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life," Joseph Campbell wrote.

Tick points out that most ancient cultures put returning soldiers through purification rituals. The men came back from battle and the terrible things they had done there, and they were given a chance to cleanse, purify and rejoin the community. The community would take possession of the guilt the soldiers may have felt for the things they had to do on its behalf.

The Tohono O'odham, a Native American people from the Sonoran Desert, once practiced a 16-day purification ceremony.

These ceremonies had, Tick writes, what most rites of passage have: a sacred space, training by the elders, ordeals that prepare and test the initiate, rituals that symbolize the transformation taking place. After the cleansing, the blood-soaked soldier was now known as a warrior, a positive leader in the community.

I wish our culture had many more rites of passage, communal moments when we celebrated a moral transition. There could be a communitywide rite of passage for people coming out of prison, for forgiveness of a personal wrong, for people who felt they had come out the other side of trauma and abuse. There'd be a marriage ceremony of sorts to mark the moment when a young person found the vocation he or she would dedicate life to.

It'll take a lot to make our culture a thick moral culture. But one way or another, nations and people have to grow a soul big enough to enclose the traumas that haunt them.

David Brooks has been a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*, a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, and he is currently a commentator on "The Newshour with Jim Lehrer."



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