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OUR VIEW

Positivity, and a little sweat, can make a difference

Spreading positivity. Seems like a good goal and one we should all strive for, and an antidote to the ugliness that can creep in.

Yet while many of us like the notion of distributing encouraging words, recently some local youth and volunteers plunked down time and effort to make a difference.

Pilot Rock students — spearheaded by high school track coach Kimee Haguewood — banded to clean up Pendleton’s Community Park after it was damaged by the rising water of McKay Creek in April.

Ten students from Pendleton High School also participated in the effort. Community members, volunteers and staff from the Pendleton Parks and Recreation Department pitched in as well.

The volunteers hauled away debris left in the wake of the high waters such as rocks, trees and other debris last week.

Community Park, which also showcases the Pendleton Rotary Disc Golf Course, needed some tender loving care and the volunteers and city staff who came out to spruce it up deserve praise.

Making a difference is never an easy task. It takes time, effort and a kind of dedication that can be seemingly hard to come by in our modern world.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Pilot Rock High School students freshman Coen Little, left, and senior Carly Smethers move wooden debris while working on a cleanup project at Community Park on Thursday in Pendleton.

That’s why the effort at Community Park is so significant and should be inspiring. The park itself is a bit of a local landmark and to see it damaged by flood waters was a discouraging incident.

It is often easy to dismiss or overlook volunteer efforts like the one to enhance Community Park. But we shouldn’t. The park project illustrates clearly that there are people — including youth — in our community that care about it and want to make it better.

The organizations that prompted the Community Park effort — Pendleton Parks and Recreation, Pilot Rock High School, Pendleton High School and local brokers from Keller Williams Realty — deserve a thank you from all of us.

Stepping up to help out the community should be a priority. Spending time — and some sweat and elbow grease — is a small price to pay for the luxury we enjoy to live in this great area.

Hermiston residents will soon have

the opportunity to show their love for community and neighbors at the Funland playground at Butte Park.

Much of the playground, part of Hermiston’s recreation area surrounding the Butte, was irreparably damaged by fire last week, the result of suspected arson.

It’s easy to curse the nameless and faceless perpetrator. Why someone would intentionally and anonymously cause so much destruction to a place of fun and joy for children is a mystery. But rather than letting that negativity control the community, we believe the community will respond with kindness and determination.

As police do what they can to solve the crime (similar to the one two decades ago with no culprit found), the rest of us can set to cleaning up the mess and building anew.

Mayor Dave Drotzmann in a video message said he was resolved to make sure the park is rebuilt. We know Hermiston citizens will join in the effort.

Spending a day, or even a few hours, to help beautify our community is more than just a good way to get some sun. It is the best kind of civic service. We can all take notice of the effort and use it as a guide to stepping up to make a real difference.

Kudos to all of those who helped tidy up Community Park. You earned and deserve our praise.

OTHER VIEWS

Trump is terrible for rural America

Economists, reports Politico, are fleeing the Agriculture Department’s Economic Research Service. Six of them resigned on a single day last month. The reason? They are feeling persecuted for publishing reports that shed an unflattering light on Trump policies.

But these reports are just reflecting reality (which has a well-known anti-Trump bias). Rural America is a key part of Donald Trump’s base. In fact, rural areas are the only parts of the country in which Trump has a net positive approval rating. But they’re also the biggest losers under his policies.

What, after all, is Trumpism? In 2016 Trump pretended to be a different kind of Republican, but in practice almost all of his economic agenda has been GOP standard: big tax cuts for corporations and the rich while hacking away at the social safety net. The one big break from orthodoxy has been his protectionism, his eagerness to start trade wars.

And all of these policies hurt farm country.

The Trump tax cut largely passes farmers by, because they aren’t corporations and few of them are rich. One of the studies by Agriculture Department economists that raised Trumpian ire showed that to the extent that farmers saw tax reductions, most of the benefits went to the richest 10%, while poor farmers actually saw a slight tax increase.

At the same time, the assault on the safety net is especially harmful to rural America, which relies heavily on safety-net programs. Of the 100 counties with the highest percentage of their population receiving food stamps, 85 are rural, and most of the rest are in small metropolitan areas. The expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, which Trump keeps trying to

kill, had its biggest positive impact on rural areas.

And these programs are crucial to rural Americans even if they don’t personally receive government aid. Safety-net programs bring purchasing power, which helps create rural jobs.

Medicaid is also a key factor keeping rural hospitals alive; without it, access to health care would be severely curtailed for rural Americans in general.

What about protectionism? The U.S. farm sector is hugely dependent on access to world markets, much more so than the economy as a whole. American soybean growers export half of what they produce; wheat farmers export 46% of their crop. China, in particular, has become a key market for U.S. farm products. That’s why Trump’s recent rage-tweeting over trade, which raised the prospect of an expanded trade war, sent grain markets to a 42-year low.

It’s important to realize, by the way, that the threat to farmers isn’t just about possible foreign retaliation to Trump’s tariffs. One fundamental principle in international economics is that in the long run, taxes on imports end up being taxes on exports as well, usually because they lead to a higher dollar. If the world descends into trade war, U.S. imports and exports will both shrink — and farmers, among our most important exporters, will be the biggest losers.

Why, then, do rural areas support Trump? A lot of it has to do with cultural factors. In particular, rural voters are far more hostile to immigrants than urban voters — especially in communities where there are few immigrants to be found. Lack of familiarity apparently breeds contempt.

Rural voters also feel disrespected by coastal elites, and Trump has managed to channel their anger. No doubt many

rural voters, if they happened to read this column, would react with rage, not at Trump, but at me: “So you think we’re stupid!”

But support for Trump might nonetheless start to crack if rural voters realized how much they are being hurt by his policies. What’s a Trumpist to do?

One answer is to repeat zombie lies. A few weeks ago Trump told a cheering rally that his cuts in the estate tax have helped farmers. This claim is, however, totally false; Politico-Fact rated it “pants on fire.” The reality is that in 2017 only about 80 farms and closely held businesses — that’s right, 80 — paid any estate tax at all. Tales of family farms broken up to pay estate tax are pure fiction.

Another answer is to try to suppress the truth. Hence the persecution of Agriculture Department economists who were just trying to do their jobs.

The thing is, the assault on truth will have consequences that go beyond politics. Agriculture’s Economic Research Service isn’t supposed to be a cheering section for whoever is in power. As its mission statement says, its role is to conduct “high-quality, objective economic research to inform and enhance public and private decision making.” And that’s not an idle boast: Along with the Federal Reserve, the research service is a prime example of how good economics can serve practical purposes.

Now, however, the service’s ability to do its job is being rapidly degraded, because the Trump administration doesn’t believe in fact-based policy. Basically, it doesn’t believe in facts, period. Everything is political.

And who will pay the price for this degradation? Rural Americans. Trump’s biggest supporters are his biggest victims.

Paul Krugman is a columnist for the New York Times.



YOUR VIEWS

Cleanup story missed key volunteers

I would like to thank everyone involved in the Community Park cleanup on May 9. I both appreciated and was appalled by Phil Wright’s reporting of the event. It is great to see students working for the community and being recognized. However, the students did not “ditch” classes as reported, nor did they know it would be “the nicest day.” It was a rain-or-shine event, many weeks in the planning. These hard-working student volunteers arrived by school bus with school endorsement and school supervision during the cleanup. They are great citizens and deserve our thanks.

In my opinion, the citizens of our area should know that Academy Mortgage sent a volunteer and Oxford Suites of Pendleton paid two of their employee volunteers to work. Several local citizen volun-

teers responded to RED DAY posters around town. Thank you all for your hard work.

Additionally, the reporter completely failed to mention that the project, initiated by three local Keller Williams Realty brokers, was their annual RED DAY event. They coordinated with Parks & Recreation, who provided lunch and equipment, but it was the RED DAY local folks who recruited and organized volunteers, gave everyone RED DAY T-shirts and labored alongside them.

Every year RED DAY gives back a day of labor for their community. Thank you.

It is this citizen’s opinion that this “reporting” is both financially and politically biased. Selective omissions of the news only add to media mistrust. Partial truth in reporting and mis-reporting news is unacceptable.

Kelly Henderson
Pendleton

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