

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Volunteer to help your community

In a perfect world children would not go hungry.

We don't live in one of those, so that's why local free lunch programs — becoming, thankfully, a summer feature — are so important.

Free lunch programs — sponsored by entities such as the Hermiston Recreation Department or the Umatilla-Morrow Head Start — fill a vital need even as the local economy seems stabilized. Child poverty is down — from 26.3 percent in 2017 to 19.1 percent in 2018 — but the decline is hardly a cause for rejoicing. A 19 percent child poverty rate is still dismal and troubling. How to solve it, though, is the difficult question. To answer the child poverty rate requires the kind of thinking-outside-the-box behavior that isn't always readily available. It isn't just a Umatilla County problem, either. Other counties in Eastern Oregon — Malheur County comes to mind — also face a lingering problem with childhood poverty.

Until a wide-sweeping solution is discovered, entities such as Umatilla-Morrow Head Start are essential. Far too many children rely on the free lunch program to find a mid-day meal. Without such programs, it is hard to understate the potential damage to young people in our great county.

The damage, of course, not only occurs now but manifests itself in the future. After all, it is hard to concentrate and be productive in any endeavor if you are wondering where your next meal is coming from.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The summer lunch program at the Umatilla-Morrow Head Start will feature a range of lunchtime activities for participants. Previous years featured rock painting, water balloons, visits from the mayor and fire department, and even the occasional dunk tank.

The number of students who qualify for reduced or free lunch hovers near 60 percent in Umatilla County. That means the poverty-hunger issue here isn't going to go away anytime soon.

That means all of us should find a way to help such organizations as Umatilla-Morrow Head Start. While most of us do not have access to a

crystal ball where a solution to childhood poverty and hunger is readily available, we all have the capacity to volunteer or help in other ways.

Volunteering to help your community — in any form — is a special kind of civic virtue. Chances are, if you look closely at many local organizations you'll see a core of volunteers who make it successful. Volun-

teering to help the Umatilla-Morrow Head Start or any other local group that provides a free lunch program during the summer is a noble act. Volunteering to help with a free lunch program also provides residents the opportunity to engage with young people in a positive way.

So if you have the opportunity, lend a hand. You won't regret it.

YOUR VIEWS

Use for fire station proceeds a no-brainer

The council needs to move on ASAP with the sale of the old fire station and rental homes. No more hearings, etc., on who the buyers should be — list it and get it sold! Be done with it!

Now the most important ending to this deal: All proceeds, not a portion of, will be placed in the street repair fund. Funds can not be used for anything else — street repairs only.

It's a no-brainer.

Dennis Moffit Sr.
Pendleton

OSP car helps foster partnership with LGBTQ community

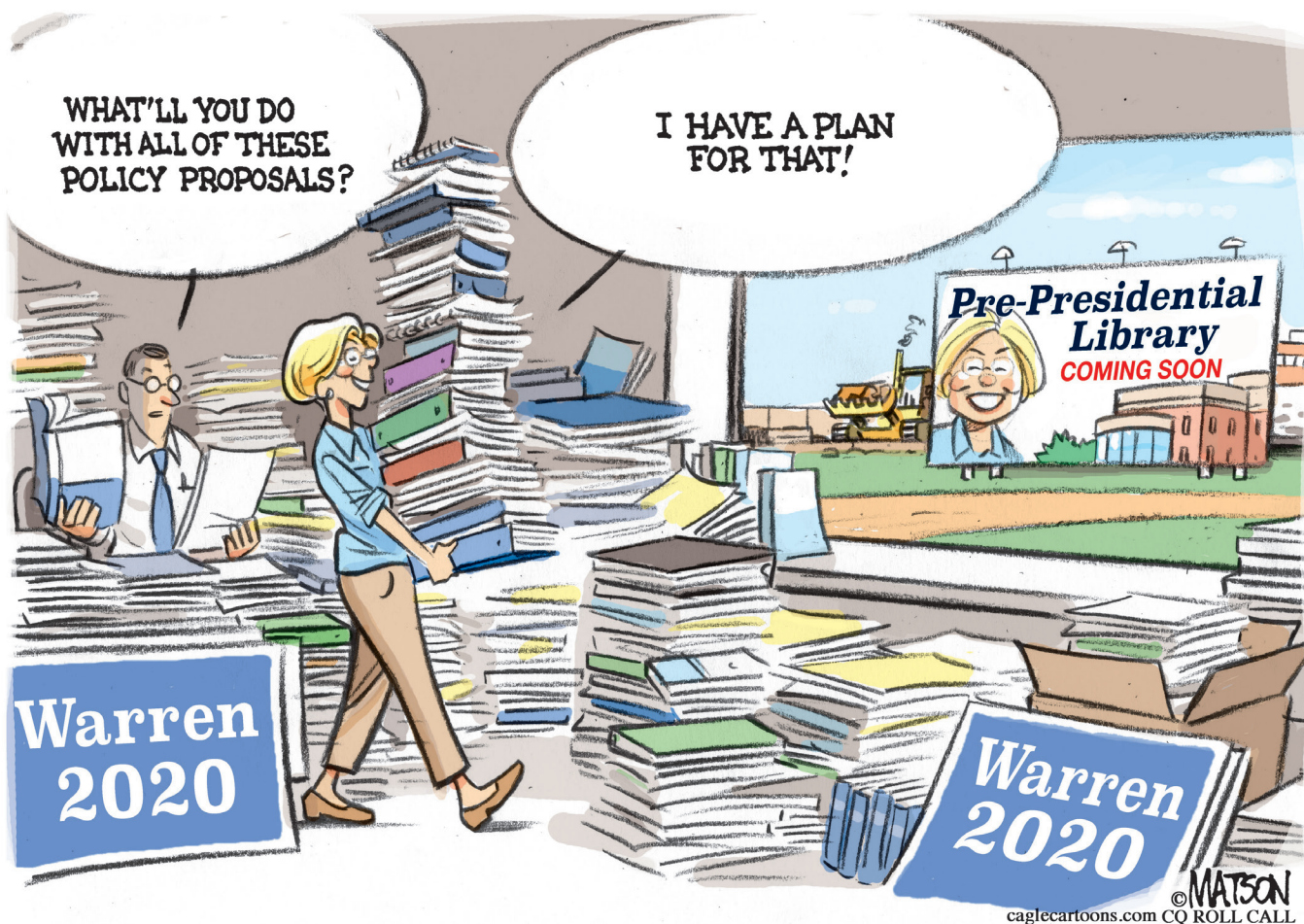
I would like to thank Phil Wright for his June 8-9 article sharing information about the OSP Pride Car. Historically the police have been, and sometimes continues to be, an agent of fear to gay, lesbian and transgender people. This month we celebrate Gay Pride in remembrance of a particularly egregious example of police brutality.

As an ally of the LGBTQ community, it is gratifying to read this uplifting article and the show of partnership between a police force and this community. It is unfortunate not every jurisdiction can enjoy this relationship.

PFLAG offers support to people who have recognized it is time to live the life they were meant to live. We reach out to their families, friends, and the community to show them how to best give their support. We partner with the community and elected officials to change unacceptable laws and to encourage equal treatment of all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender expression.

If you see us tabling in the community please stop by and say hello. Just look for our lovely rainbows.

Alice Hepburn, president
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