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PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat,

kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Umatilla County and the city of Hermiston for striking a deal with Amazon to build new data centers near Stanfield.

The deal means the retail giant will get a 15-year property tax break but, in exchange, it will hire new employees from the local area and must invest no less than \$200 million in the Greater Hermiston Enterprise Zone.

From our point of view, it seems like the county and Hermiston struck a pretty good deal with Amazon because it generates economic development that not only benefits Hermiston and Umatilla County, but Eastern Oregon as a whole.

Massive tax breaks to giant corporations can often go awry, but in this case, we believe the right decision was made.

A tip of the hat to all of those — farmers, conservationists and residents — who worked over the past few years to get pesticide levels in some Oregon waterways to drop.

While the decline isn’t huge, it is a step in the right direction. In our part of the country, finding the right balance between protecting our public lands and waterways and allowing our hard-working farmers to produce food in the most effective ways possible should always be a key goal.

A kick in the pants to U.S. policy where an ongoing dispute is doing more to hurt our future than help it. We’ve already commented on this page that the news China will buy \$40-50 billion in U.S. agriculture products is good news. President Trump has agreed to suspend planned boosts in tariffs on Chinese goods, and talks, we are told, continue on the issue. However, the recent agreement doesn’t do enough to eradicate tariffs on U.S. goods. The bottom line on all of this is the U.S. and China need to quickly find a middle ground on their trade disputes and move forward. Wars of words and tariffs may look good in the headlines for the Trump administration, but they don’t do a thing to help our farmers.



Photo contributed by James Thomas
The Amazon data center in Umatilla is one of four sites in Umatilla and Morrow counties that have been completed since 2010, with at least two more on the way.

A kick in the pants to the Trump administration’s withdrawal from northern Syria that left our Kurdish allies out on a limb.

This week, Vice President Mike Pence announced the U.S. and Turkey agreed to a short cease-fire in the region to allow the Kurds to move out of the contested area. As readers probably already know, Turkey launched an ambitious incursion into the area to clear out Kurdish forces, whom they consider to be terrorists.

Short term, the American backout

looks good politically, but the long-term implications of such a move haven’t been properly vetted or considered. We need to do better.

A tip of the hat to the Umatilla County 2020 Census Complete Count Committee for pulling together the effort to count everyone in the 2020 census. The Complete Count Committee kicked off with a brainstorming session in Pendleton and Hermiston, and by all accounts, the brainstorming sessions came up with some excellent ideas.

OTHER VIEWS

School bond is necessary for sustained growth

Each year, the Hermiston School District can expect to see an additional 50 to 100 children walk through its doors. Because the growth has been sustained, the school district has been able to budget for new teachers, equipment and programs to meet the needs of all its students. But state funding doesn’t take into account the brick and mortar necessary to keep up with student growth. That’s why local districts must secure the support of their voters to fund new schools.

Looking at Measure 30-130, on the November ballot by the Hermiston School Board, shows how careful the district is being with its limited resources and local taxpayer money. There are no frills, just three main projects that are critical to keeping up with the growth. There will also be a mandated oversight committee that will monitor the way the money is spent to make sure the projects are delivered as promised.

Hermiston has a record of good financial management. An aggressive payment plan on the 1999 school bond has led to a property tax reduction this fall. The districts business department has, for the past 12 straight years, earned the Excellence in Financial reporting award from the Government Finance Officers Association.

As an added bonus, the district is eligible for \$6.6 million in state funding if the bond is approved.

The school district has worked hard to be a responsible manager of taxpayer dollars, and Measure 30-130 shows what a responsible bond proposal looks like. I encourage a yes vote in November.

Mark F. Gomolski
Hermiston

An investment in Hermiston schools is an investment in the community

Hermiston has the opportunity in November to again invest in its young people who are our future.

The Hermiston School District is proposing a bond that will fund adequate classroom space for its students. It’s a package that takes into consideration the growing student enrollment and the priorities of residents.

Support for a school bond such as this is an investment, and we see the returns every day. Graduates of the Hermiston school system are a huge part of our community. We’re lucky to live in a place that adds jobs and housing at a pace that welcomes alumni to return and give back to their community.

It’s incredible to look around at the number of businesses started or managed by Hermiston graduates. Alumni are stepping up into service clubs, nonprofit boards and volunteer positions. At Hermiston High School, more than a quarter of the teachers were once Bulldogs themselves.

These were students who came up through a district supported by the community. They attended first-rate schools with outstanding teachers and staff. Our Hermiston residents made this possible by supporting school bonds.

Students in Hermiston again need our support. The school district is asking for a bond that will set the next generation up for success and make sure Hermiston remains a vibrant and connected community.

Please join us in voting yes for Hermiston schools.

Bryan and Lou Ann Wolfe
Hermiston

FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

Art reminds us of what’s important

I hope you were able to see Tamastlikt Cultural Institute’s recent gallery exhibit “Savages and Princesses: The Persistence of Native American Stereotypes.” The show featured 13 contemporary visual artists who used humor, subtlety, or irony — and sometimes, as Bobbie Conner put it, “shock and awe” — to represent their real identities as Native Americans.

I was fortunate to hear both Conner and Jim Lavadour at their Pepsi Prime Time “Politics and Identity in Art” event last week. Shock and awe seemed an appropriate description of Micah Wesley’s “Redskins: Our Scalps, Your Honor” exhibit, one of the largest pieces on display — a wall of red wax circles with long strands of (synthetic) black hair hanging from the center of each.

Wesley wrote, “I have been told the teams and mascots honor the Native American people and they should be empowering symbols,” then quoted a Minnesota newspaper from Sept. 24, 1863: “The state reward for dead Indians has been increased to \$200 for every redskin sent to Purgatory. This sum is more than the dead bodies of all the Indians east of the Red River are worth.”

As a writer, I particularly enjoyed K.H. Poole’s “Lazy,” a self-portrait made from a collage of time receipts from her own workplace.

“Our words matter,” she wrote, “and I hope my work invites the viewer to contemplate their own misconceptions and choose their words with purpose and thoughtfulness.”

But the best part of the evening was listening to Conner and Lavadour. In this beautiful building designed to reflect the land around it, we heard Lavadour describe the way he hiked the hills, and how the muscle memory of the land stays with him. We heard Conner explain that traditional Plateau art came from the animals and plants of this place — and that, in respect for the life of the deer or dogbane or cornhusk, the artists worked hard to create something beautiful.

“We are the land,” Lavadour said, adding that the land holds stories, many of them painful — but necessary, he said, for both Native and non-Native people to hear, in order to heal.

I yearn for this kind of belonging to place. My people have been on this continent for such a short time, and of course they came with ideas about land different from those I heard at Tamastlikt. They thought land belonged to people, not that people belong to the land.

In my novel “All Coyote’s Children,” set on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the character Annie is a reflection of my own attempt to know and belong to this place.

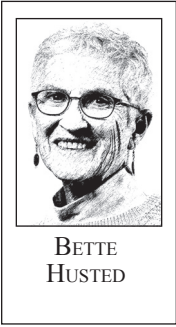
She has spent summers on her husband’s family ranch up the Umatilla River, but now he is missing and she is here year-round, and with her Umatilla friend Leona’s support, is becoming aware of the birds and plants and animals, the river currents of every season. Elementary stuff. But Annie and I still have much to learn.

Art helps. Art reminds us who we are, what’s important. At times like these, when attitudes toward the earth are causing ecosystem collapse, and as for climate — well, who can predict “normal” weather any more? — not to mention the keep-us-awake political news we’re all dealing with, I cling to K.H. Poole’s “our words matter.” And I let myself feel encouraged that many non-Native people are looking for better ways of understanding our relationship to land.

High Desert Journal, Camas, Orion, About Place — many journals now focus on this search. One of my favorites is Windfall: A Journal of Poetry of Place, published by Bill Siverly and Michael McDowell in Portland on the spring and fall equinox.

Ten of the poets in this fall’s issue have read at PCA’s First Draft Writers’ Series. My favorite poem this time is by Ashland’s Amy Miller — “Cougar Spotted behind Rooster’s Restaurant.” Everyone jokes about how he came for the chicken, she writes, or because the deer are really friendly, “but really it’s the springs/and their endless migration, the quail who shelter/in the blackberries everyone wants to shred, the hail/shotgunning summer’s tomato crop. It’s every/straight line we thought we drew. How the ground/is bending them even now.”

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T’ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.



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