

EAST OREGONIAN OPINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the two teenagers facing felony charges for assaulting a Pendleton man on the river parkway.

No one should feel any kind of apprehension or fear when they take a walk in one of the city's parks or down by the waterfront.

That's why the case of resident William Wehrli is so disturbing and should provoke some thought.

As readers probably already know, Werli was doing his workout Tuesday along the Pendleton River Parkway when he was allegedly assaulted by two teens.

The circumstances of the case are straightforward and police quickly arrested two suspects.

Police say the two teens face felony charges over the case.

The entire situation is unfortunate and especially calamitous for Wehrli.

The case will now go to the Umatilla County District Attorney's Office.

If the two individuals are guilty of the assault, the district attorney's office

should punish them to the fullest extent of the law.

This kind of behavior has no place anywhere. We live in a rural area that offers a great way of life for all. Being afraid to walk along the parkway isn't the type of atmosphere Pendleton wants to stimulate.

A tip of the hat to the Good Shepherd Health Care System, which is working to create new "community health improvement" program.

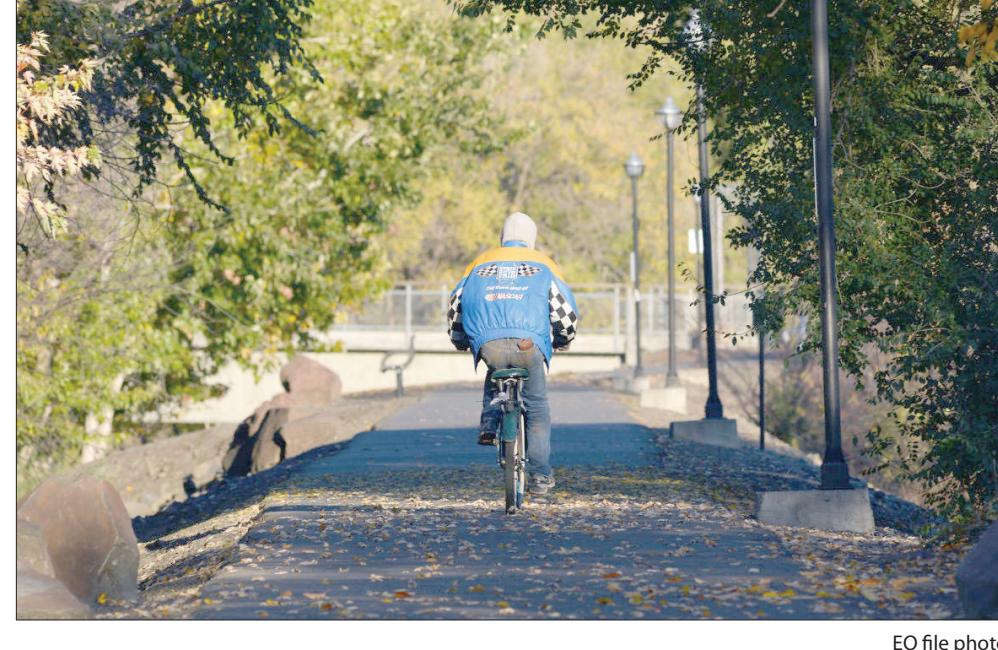
Good Shepherd and St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton united to survey county residents regarding health care needs.

The survey helped build a database to create a better, overall response to health care needs locally. The idea is a sound one and shows that our health care providers are working to address the concerns and needs of the local population.

A kick in the pants to the results of a new report that shows the vaping rate among youths in the state continues to climb. The report is one more key



OUR VIEW



A man rides his bicycle down the river walk. A Pendleton man was assaulted on the parkway earlier this week.

piece of evidence that vaping is becoming a gateway for youths and addiction to nicotine. Nicotine addiction among youths isn't a new paradigm, but what makes this new report so troubling is the nearly 80% rise by youths in the 11th grade between 2017 and 2019. The boost in youth vaping should give health care providers, parents and youths pause. The next big question is, how do we as a community stop the rise?

A tip of the hat to the effort by the Oregon Water Resources Commission to reach out to local communities to

guarantee there will be clean and abundant water for our state.

Officials are now moving across the state and talking to community stakeholders to get input and be updated on each region's water issues.

Water is so essential to life and the region's biggest industry — agriculture — that we sometimes take it for granted. We shouldn't. As the Earth warms, water will become another key factor in climate change. That means having a long-term plan in place is not only a good idea, but essential.



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In an era of the "fake news" mantra, verification and accountability are far more important than ever before for news organizations like the East Oregonian. We boast a variety of procedures to ensure that what you see and read in the paper is as close to the truth as possible.

A good case in point regarding verification and truth is our letters to the editor policy. We welcome letters to the editor. Even now, in the digital age and the ascendancy of social media, a good, vibrant letters to the editor section is a sign that your local newspaper is doing its job.

The key piece of our letters to the editor policy is the fact all letters we print must come with the individuals' name, address and phone number. That's so we can verify the individual exists. On a blog or on some social media bulletin board, or other "media outlets," such important items as verification may not be as important (or are nonexistent) but with a daily and most weekly newspapers such issues are critical.

That's because, at the end of the day, we want to provide a discourse for our readers, but that discourse can't be a free-for-all.

In my experience, running an anonymous letter to the editor is not only foolish, but just plain bad journalism. There are probably plenty of justifications for printing an unat-

tributed letter to the editor — though I can't think of one — but for us it is just bad policy.

We've moved too far down the road in this nation where the passive-aggressive can hide behind a Facebook chat screen or anonymous online comment section to spew hate and lies.

We tolerate it — why I don't know — and often shrug it off. We shouldn't.

Especially in a place like Eastern Oregon where a person's word is their bond. Eastern Oregon is an area where values, such as integrity and commitment, are learned at an early age and promoted vigorously. When someone has something important to say, even if it is controversial, they should have the fortitude to back it up with their name.

When someone doesn't do that, it is a copout. And I question any "media outlet" that would print an unsigned letter and its commitment to journalism.

We won't print letters to the editor without a name and address and phone number for lots of reasons, but one of those is we must at least know the writer is a real person, with a real complaint or idea.

It may be a clunky process, but it ensures, at the end of the day, that our readers are not going to be short-changed.

Andrew Cutler is the editor of the East Oregonian.

YOUR VIEWS

Echo City Council merits praise, support

This is in praise of the Echo City Council. I attend council meetings as often I can, not because I have a grievance, not because I consider it entertainment, but because I can. I want to give them my visible support. And I ought to.

These MCs, members of council, are business owners and retired, experienced in civic duty and novices. They are doing what democracy is, government of the people and by the people. They are unpaid, seldom thanked, duty bound.

Thank you, Echo City Council. This is to honor you, and all those who serve their town and city here in Northeast Oregon, and across the nation. You reassure the rest of us that we are doing the

right thing by governing ourselves.

Don Reese
Echo

Hermiston Community Center sale a poor decision

If the city of Hermiston follows through with the sale of the Hermiston Community Center, then Bryan Wolfe and Tim Mabry need to dust off their donation list and see that the city return that \$665,000 in donations received from community and business donors.

This is a community building run by the city, not an asset the city can sell off at their leisure. Another poor decision being considered by our city council and mayor.

Gary Quick
Hermiston