EAST OREGONIAN
OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Pendleton High School graduate Julie Rowell and a big shout-out to the teachers at PHS and all around Umatilla County.

Sometimes good news can seem hard to come by, but a story this week about Rowell is exhibit No. 1 in a showcase of good people doing good things and securing recognition.

Rowell was recently honored with the Milken Educator Award — perhaps one of the most prestigious honors for a teacher in the United States — and she credited instructors at PHS for her success.

Rowell, who teaches migrant students at Gresham High School, said she was surprised with by the honor. She named two PHS teachers, Kathryn Yougman and Shelle Bixler, as her inspiration to become a teacher.

Rowell's dedication and excellence is not just a reflection on her great talents, but is also indicative of the great teachers at PHS. Teachers play a critical — but often overlooked — role in shaping our youths and inspiring students to reach high to attain their goals.

A tip of the hat to the Hermiston Assembly of God Church with its effort as part of the "I love My City" campaign to collect donations for the TruCare Pregnancy Resource Center.

TruCare provides support and education for men and women who must make decisions regarding pregnancy. The effort by the church is another good example of a local organization reaching out to help make a difference in the lives of area residents.

A kick in the pants to lawmakers who are already gearing up to turn the 2020 Oregon legislative session into another political battleground over such issues as the cap-and-trade bill. Often dubbed the "short session," the monthlong period is not the right time to tackle flashpoint issues with potential long-lasting implications.

A tip of the hat to SAIF, which will host free agriculture safety seminars Jan. 14-15 in Hermiston. The sessions are important because they are crucial to ensuring that those of us who toil in the agriculture industry remain safe. It may seem like an inconsequential effort, but it isn't. That's because as a county that depends on agriculture as it primary economic engine, safety of our workers should be a priority. If you get a chance, don't forget to attend these important safety sessions.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Julie Rowell, a 1997 graduate of Pendleton High School, is one of only 40 teachers in the country honored with Milken Family Foundation Educator Awards. Rowell teaches English to migrant students at Gresham High School and also runs the school's Newcomer Center.

A tip of the hat to people who sacrificed time with friends and family to keep things running over the holidays.

Some people are fortunate enough to work for schools, government offices or businesses that can shut down during the final days of December. But there are many others who must forgo holiday travel plans or Christmas dinner in order to care for sick hospital patients, fight fires, keep grocery stores open and perform other tasks. News doesn't stop breaking over winter break, so we feel your pain.

To those who kept our power on or our roads safe or even just gave people the option of going out to a movie with the family on Christmas or New Year's, thank you. To those who have been enjoying a nice break from work, we look forward to you answering the voicemails our reporters left you over the break.

OTHER VIEWS

Idaho Power won't go up against the Tribes

Has anyone ever noticed that government transparency is not the norm in Oregon? The Oregon PUC is currently writing "new rules," with the input of Idaho Power, to allow Idaho Power to condemn, and seize, land from private landowners. What kind of government does Oregon have that would work with the company wanting to seize private land in making the "new rules" allowing it to be easier? Interesting that none of the private landowners have any input in regards to the "new rules."

There are federal and state laws that requires all utilities of this nature be within a utility corridor. The corridor is there but the state, feds and counties chose not to address it. There is a large transmission line that exists already, running to the same place through Umatilla, Union and Baker counties. The footprint of the existing line could be expanded to incorporate the B2H line. Access roads are already in place, which would greatly reduce the effects of the proposed line. Why is this route being used? The biggest reason is the CTUIR, as Idaho Power cannot condemn and steal their lands. One member of the B2H group stated: "We do not want to deal with Tribes, as they can make our lives miserable."

The state of Oregon, the feds and the enviro community claim to be concerned about our forest lands for sequestering of carbon, however, no one has analyzed the negative effects of a 500-foot-wide clearcut easement through the timber lands. Not only will the loss of timber affect the landowners, it will affect the wildlife, water resources and plant life near the line. If not so serious, it would be funny that the same entities will do all they could to stop a private landowner from doing exactly what they propose to do.

Idaho Power cares less about the private landowners of Eastern Oregon, only profits for its investors. There are no valid reasons for Idaho Power to zigzag across private land other than to avoid public and Tribal lands. One large landowner, east of La Grande, threatened to sue to stop the line and the route was changed. Small landowners don't have the resources to do the same, making them easier to run over.

"Our interest all along has been to support what the community wants," said Mitch Colburn, director of resource planning and operations for Idaho Power.

Now that is funny. Idaho Power cares less about communities, or private landowners, effected by this unneeded line.

John Harvey
Stanfield

Closed roads aren't a bar to forest usage

Recently, the *East Oregonian* published an editorial about the long-overdue plan revisions for the national forests of the Blue Mountains. This editorial included a statement that challenged the need to close any roads on the national forests, suggesting that closing a road meant "closing the forests to logging, firefighting, hikers, hunters, and other users."

I speak on behalf of closed roads. Closing a road to motorized vehicle traffic does not close the forest. Hikers, hunters, anglers, mushroom and huckleberry pickers, Christmas tree cutters — we all use closed roads. As good local research shows, and hunters know, closed roads provide good habitat for elk. Elk avoid roads that are open to motor vehicles.

Closing a road does not mean the road cannot be used for logging or firefighting. During my Forest Service career, it was not at all unusual to open a closed road to help fight a fire. Sometimes it means simply unlocking a gate, and sometimes it takes a dozer to remove earthen barriers, but closed roads are usually still available for fire fighting.

Just like any asset, a road system must be maintained. The money appropriated to national forests to maintain roads is inadequate for maintaining the road system that was developed when the forests sold more (and more valuable) timber. Closing a road to motor vehicles holds the road in better condition until the day that it is needed again, and this seems to me to be a prudent approach.

We can, and should, have an open and honest public dialogue about what we want from our national forests, including the road system. Provocative misstatements, like suggesting that closing roads means "locking up" or closing the forests to all sorts of uses, does not help this dialogue.

William C. (Bill) Aney
Pendleton

FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN

Looking ahead to a new year, new decade

LINDSAY MURDOCK
COMMENT

Mason, my oldest son, recently agreed to help me move some pictures and sort through a pile of framed images I had taken off the wall upstairs this past week. I had spent the day sorting, cleaning and purging, and when it came to the boxes of photos that tell the story of our life, I was struggling with the decision of what to keep and what to let go.

We laughed out loud about a few of the photos, and as we sorted through the stack, we talked about how much has changed over the past decade.

We bought our home that sits on one of the most beautiful pieces of Umatilla County 10 years ago. The boys were 5 and 2, and little did we know how much the wide-open spaces and rolling hillsides would change all of us from the inside out. It's been an incredibly beautiful journey, filled with adventure and growth — years that I wouldn't trade for anything — even during the hardest of seasons. It's been a gift to have the time and space to grow up alongside my handsome boys in the fields, sorting pens, hay shed and calving barn. They've pushed me to be a mom I never thought I could be, and have given me opportunities to shine in ways that I'm certain wouldn't have happened without them as my children.

The photos sparked so many memories for both of us, and as we finished moving the frames, Mason stood looking at the photos on the wall.

"Mom, I don't want to keep growing up. I have loved being a kid," he said.

I smiled and whispered to him, "You're always going be my kid, Mason. Always. And I believe with everything in me that you're going to keep loving every season you're in because you were born for this. You were born to love your life and it's very clear that growing up is what you're doing best," I replied.

He looked at me for a few seconds with a peaceful look on his face, said "Goodnight, Mom," and then turned around and headed to his new room in the basement.

It's been a really good decade here on Yoakum Road, with lots of growing up for all of us. And I think it's safe to say the four of us are really looking forward to the goodness that lies ahead and the growing up that's still left to do.

Choosing words for the new year

For the past several years, I've had family and friends join me in choosing words for the year ahead. Words to focus on, words that we want to reflect our actions, words that will define us, and words that challenge us from deep within.

The word I've chosen for 2020 is solace. It's defined: to cheer, comfort, console, alleviate, soften, relieve, upraise.

My hope for the upcoming year is to take full advantage of opportunities to give and receive solace in the busy life we live. Yes, in the life that is filled with incredible beauty, even on the most demanding and hardest of days, may I offer solace to the world around me through my actions and my words, but also find, accept, and embrace the solace that comes my way as well.

Navigating through another decade

I don't know the best way to navigate the season of parenting I've found myself in, but I do know that solace will see all of us through another decade of moments and memories, and stacks of images that keep us young at heart, but also eager to keep growing up.

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Lindsay Murdock lives and teaches in Echo.

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