

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Citizen group an example of democracy in action

Successful police work has always hinged on the involvement of the community, and that is why the recent effort by members of the Milton-Freewater community to create a citizens patrol is such a good idea, and one that the city should welcome.

An outside observer could believe police are not doing their jobs, justifying the effort. That unfounded assertion needs to be discarded once and for all. Truth is the Milton-Freewater Police Department — like all area law enforcement agencies — is doing the absolute best it can with the resources it has. Already down one full-time officer, the department is working on burglaries and thefts and a homicide investigation. In other words, they have their plate full.

The local group — called Take Back our Little Town of Milton-Freewater — is a grass-roots effort to add citizen resources to the local police.

Arguments can be made about



Walla Walla Union-Bulletin Photo/Chloe LeValley
Milton-Freewater Police Chief Doug Boedigheimer explains the current situation of his police department to the 50 or so concerned residents who attended the city council meeting Monday to talk about increased crime in Milton-Freewater.

why crime appears — and the key word here is “appears” — to be climbing in Milton-Freewater, but in the end debates about the why fall short as the effort to seek solutions

takes center stage.

Citizen involvement is crucial in every aspect of democracy, and the Milton-Freewater citizens’ patrol is an excellent case in point.

Residents there could have easily sat back and pointed fingers at police. They didn’t do that. Instead, they plan to band together and make a difference. Instead of laying blame, they seek solutions. Instead of spewing rhetoric, they want to take action.

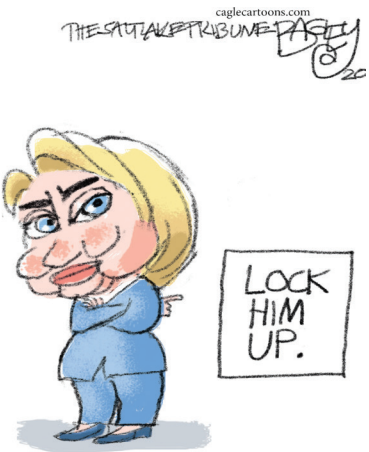
Our democracy needs more citizen involvement. That is why the Milton-Freewater effort should stand as a good example of an engaged body politic that isn’t looking for easy answers. Easy answers — such as blaming police or elected leaders — are not going to slash crime in Milton-Freewater. Like most things in life, to be successful in tackling crime, the citizens of the town are going to have to work hard.

With the right kind of effort and right goals, the citizen patrol program can evolve into a crucial element — an added weapon — for local police to combat crime.

Getting involved in democracy sometimes isn’t easy, but in the end, it pays dividends for all.

OTHER VIEWS

WHAT TO DO WITH SOMEONE FOUND GUILTY AND FINED \$2 MILLION FOR FRAUD INVOLVING THEIR “CHARITABLE” FAMILY FOUNDATION?



*TRUMP AND HIS CHILDREN ILLEGALLY USED THEIR FAMILY FOUNDATION TO PROMOTE HIS 2016 CAMPAIGN AND PAY OFF BUSINESS DEBTS.

Can a public education campaign work to reduce gun violence?

Could a communications campaign aimed at gun-owning households lower the incidence of gun violence in America?

I know it could, and here’s why — a communications program targeting potential arsonists changed my life.

As managing director of a New York communications consulting firm, I received a request for proposal from Aetna, the insurance giant. After passing the first screening round, we were given a test assignment. Aetna asked us to design a communications program to reduce arson. Arsons produce big losses for insurers, of course.

We were surprised to learn that most arson crimes weren’t committed in disadvantaged urban areas, but rather in rural, mostly Southern, communities. The perpetrators were generally young, white men and their motive was revenge — “you seduced my wife, I’ll burn your house down.”

We also learned that virtually 100% of them get caught. So we recommended a campaign aimed at potential arsonists. Our key message — “Don’t do it — we’re going to catch you!”

We won the account, and I later got recruited to lead the communications organization at Aetna.

Targeting potential arsonists turned out to be pretty easy. There was lots of information available on their lifestyles and the media channels that would reach their demographics.

Could we do the same thing for risky gun owners?

According to a study by the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence cited in *The New York Times* editorial, a gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used in a family homicide, suicide or accident than to be used in self-de-

fense. And more than 1.5 million children under the age of 18 live in homes with loaded, unsecured guns, making them 16 times more likely to be killed than in safer homes.

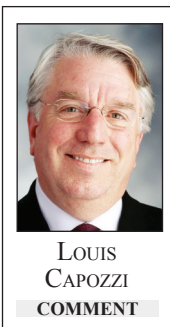
Today’s sophisticated marketing and public relations professionals can reach those people. We have the technology, the communications networks and the strategic planning tools to design campaigns targeted at those homes with messages that will resound with the parents.

Technology can help too. If Amazon can recommend a book they think you will like based on your past purchases, those same tools could be used to make America safer.

And we don’t need to do a lot of research to learn about the ways safety can be improved. Just Google “how to keep my gun safe at home” and you’ll get 177 million hits. Even the NRA has advice on gun safety in the home.

Tim Dees, a former criminal justice professor, said, “Injuries to children from the mishandling of firearms is a 100% preventable problem. The problem’s not a shortage of advice; it’s a problem of access to that advice, and motivation to employ it. That’s what marketing and communications people do well. We can motivate consumers to seek out products that fill their needs. We can encourage voters to prefer a candidate. We can even change behavior on important social issues like automobile safety or smoking. We can, and should be applying those skills to this critical issue in America.”

Louis Capozzi is the former chairman of the MSL Group and teaches in the master’s degree program at the University of Oregon. Capozzi is an investor in Central Oregon Media Group, the limited-liability company that owns the Bend Bulletin.



LOUIS CAPOZZI
COMMENT

Talking to my daughter about war and megafires

We were on the way to ballet rehearsal. It’s my favorite 30 minutes of the day. It’s a chance to break away from work, and to touch base with my only child. She’s 14 now. And it won’t be long before she’s driving herself. I treasure these moments.

“So,” I asked her. “How was school today?”

“We were arguing about whether we’re more likely to die from World War III or climate change,” she said.

Her response stopped me cold, but I guess I shouldn’t have been surprised.

With the dogs of war straining at the leash, the missiles flying in Iran, and our bellicose and unstable commander-in-chief lurching from one scarcely believable justification to the next, the prospect of another American forever war on the other side of the globe didn’t seem all that far-fetched.

First up, I disabused her of the notion that any of her classmates might be drafted, reassuring her that there was no such movement afoot on Capitol Hill. Nor would there likely ever be one. The American military remains an all-volunteer force comprised not of the nation’s elite, but of the sons and daughters of Main Street America. Trump’s voters. Some of my daughter’s classmates — if they ever heed the call to serve — may well be among them.

She seemed relieved at that news. Talking to her about the threat of climate change was another matter entirely.

It seemed to me there were decades remaining before the Earth might ever be rendered uninhabitable because of climate change, I offered. Which didn’t mean that we shouldn’t do all we can right now, I added.

“But Australia is burning,” she countered, her brown eyes wide with alarm, anger creeping into the edges of her voice.

She had me there. I’d seen the photos of scorched koalas and dead kangaroos. The endless walls of flame. It’s difficult to find the words to describe the scale, and the scope, of the ecological and human catastrophe that’s unfolding on the other side of the world.

As of this writing, NPR was reporting that a hellish “megafire” comprising an

unfathomable 1.5 million acres, an area three times larger than any known brush fire in California, had taken shape in New South Wales and Victoria, the country’s most populous states.

That’s on top of the 135 bushfires in southeastern Australia that have left at least 26 people dead, killed more than 1 billion animals and damaged or destroyed nearly 3,000 homes.

Writing in *The New York Times*, columnist Paul Krugman observed that, in a more rational time, the fires, which have been partially a result of climate change, “would have represented a turning point.”

“After all, it’s exactly the kind of catastrophe climate scientists long warned us to expect if we didn’t take action to limit greenhouse gas emissions,” he wrote. “In fact, a 2008 report commissioned by

the Australian government predicted that global warming would cause the nation’s fire seasons to begin earlier, end later, and be more intense — starting around 2020.”

And all this got me to thinking about the world that we’re bequeathing to my daughter and her classmates.

While much is better about the planet, there’s still much to be concerned about. And the threat of an uninhabitable globe should lead us to a united search for solutions, not juvenile taunts hurled at a teenager by one of the most powerful people on Earth. Even one dead child in an elementary school classroom should motivate us to find ways to reduce violence, not watch hopelessly as more bodies pile up.

I’m still firm in my belief that it’s not too late for us to shrug off all that divides us, and to work together to fight these existential threats.

But that means having a nation that engages with the global community, not denigrates it; one that rejects the false choice that less gun violence somehow means fewer rights; and one that doesn’t stare at each other over the trenches, each irrevocably convinced that its way is the only way.

My daughter — and all our children — deserve far better answers than the ones we’ve been giving them.

John L. Micek is a syndicated columnist.



JOHN L. MICEK
COMMENT

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