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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat,
kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to Tygh Campbell, Umatilla Electric Cooperative linemen and all of those citizens who joined together to help pull vehicles from ditches and plow roadways so stranded motorists could get somewhere out of the elements.

Conditions on Wednesday night forced the Oregon Department of Transportation to keep Interstate 84 between Pendleton and Ontario and Highway 11 between Pendleton and Milton-Freewater closed overnight, leading to many people opting for alternative routes off the major roadways. Many that night trying to traverse the county’s back roads found themselves stuck in dangerous conditions, where they had to rely on emergency personnel and friendly neighbors like Campbell to save them from being stranded.

“You always have to make sure your neighbors are taken care of,” Campbell said.

And indeed, Campbell and others did just that Wednesday night,

showing we remain a community that cares.

A tip of the hat to the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners for approving a \$60,000 loan for the East Umatilla County Ambulance Area Health District to replace a 13-year-old ambulance with a cracked cylinder head.

The district’s 2006 Ford Ambulance has been out of commission for a few weeks, and the costs to repair the vehicle would have outweighed total replacement, Mark Moore, the ambulance district administrator, said. He anticipates the new rig — a four-wheel-drive 2019 Dodge Ram 3500 — will be ready to roll in the next couple of weeks. The new ambulance will provide a reliable emergency vehicle for the district, which covers 450 square miles encompassing Athena, Weston, Adams and Helix, and had been relying on its secondary ambulance, a 1998 Chevrolet.

We applaud both organizations’ ability to work together to strike an accord that benefits both and, more



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Tygh Campbell uses his tractor to clear snow drifts from a section of Gerking Flat Road near Athena on Thursday afternoon.

importantly, the residents of the district.

It’s a little late, but **a tip of the hat and a bit of encouragement for all who set goals for the new year** and find themselves bogged down a couple of weeks into the new year.

We know that many new year’s resolutions end almost before they get started. Most of the time, resolution goals are the hardest to achieve, so it usually comes as no surprise when some goals are not met, or are not met as initially planned. But we believe the

concept on face value — having the self-awareness to realize that there is some potential for self-improvement — is one that has a great deal of merit.

We encourage those who have set resolution goals to keep working toward them and remember a setback isn’t a failure unless you allow it to be. We encourage everyone to keep plugging away, no matter what the goal. Stay positive. Look to others for help and encouragement and, above all else, remember those goals are still within reach.

YOUR VIEWS

North Bank committee invites community to meeting at Rec Center

A recent letter to the editor contained a number of misconceptions about the North Bank of the Umatilla Advisory Committee’s work. I urge everyone who is interested in this topic to attend the community meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 7 p.m. in the Foundation Room at the Pendleton Rec Center.

This meeting is a chance for the committee to share their work so far, and for members of the public to share their thoughts about how the river’s north bank should be managed to best meet the community’s interests.

Kathryn B. Brown
Chair, Pendleton Parks & Recreation Commission

Climate change will impact all of us — rich or poor, conservative or liberal. It will especially affect our children and grandchildren. While individual actions are necessary to help sustain our environment, policy and cultural changes are necessary to deal with this global issue. Some may say that what we do in Oregon will not make a difference, but every little bit helps, and helpful actions can start with Oregon. Collectively, we must find ways to reduce our fossil fuel impacts.

I do not support what the Legislature is developing yet, because it is still unclear. I do support, however, their attempts to deal with this very real issue. I support it for our children and grandchildren. Taking no action, continuing to accept the status quo, is unacceptable. Let’s put our energies into solutions, not just criticisms.

Jeff Blackwood
Pendleton

Less finger-pointing, more solutions

Once again, the *East Oregonian* is criticizing the Oregon Legislature’s attempts to deal with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Criticism can be useful, but when other options are not suggested, it just becomes finger pointing with no action.

Look around us — Australia is burning, Alaska just had one of its historic worst fire seasons, water shortages all over the world, and severe storms throughout the eastern part of this country. Here at home, wildfire seasons are getting longer, mountain runoff is happening earlier in the spring, and precipitation is becoming less predictable for our dryland farmers. We will not even talk about the invasive weeds.

Vicki Nunenkamp
Hood River

Extinguish the war flames

It’s heartening to see growing support in the Senate for limiting Trump’s use of war powers. Last week, the House passed a resolution to limit his war powers against Iran. The measure, although it doesn’t carry the force of law, said Trump should withdraw U.S. forces from conflict with Iran within 30 days if he does not get congressional approval.

Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley should push for the same, or even a stronger version, in the Senate. We do not want war with Iran, and we most definitely do not want this rogue impulsive president to create or fan any more war flames.

Vicki Nunenkamp
Hood River

FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

It’s all about connecting through stories

The women stopped me as I walked through Sisters Cafe to put up a First Draft Writers’ Series poster on the bulletin board.

“What’s First Draft?” they wanted to know. “Is it a writers’ club?”

No, I explained. We invite Northwest writers to read to us. It’s not a club — there’s no admission and everyone is invited.

They were librarians, I learned, on their way home to Madras after hearing Johanna Stoberock read in Walla Walla, Washington, the night before — and they were looking forward to their own upcoming Community Read. Molly Gloss would be coming in April, and the Jefferson County Library District was busy lending copies of her novel “The Hearts of Horses” and planning their own two-day festival.

They were excited about hosting Molly Gloss, and that brought back memories.



BETTE
HUSTED
COMMENT

She kicked off our First Draft series in May 2013, and I remember holding my breath to see how many people would turn out. As it turned out, so many came that there was barely breathing room.

This month First Draft also hosted Johanna Stoberock, winner of the Artist Trust’s \$10,000 2019 LaSalle Storyteller Award for outstanding fiction. In February, we’ll welcome former congressman Les AuCoin with his new memoir “Catch and Release: An Oregon Life in Politics.” March will bring Don Colburn, former journalist and Pulitzer Prize finalist who now writes poems nearly everyone loves — at least I don’t know a writer who doesn’t smile at “In the Workshop After I Read My Poem Aloud.”

And remember Sully, the pilot who landed Flight 1549 on the Hudson River? Colburn was one of the 155 passengers; reading his poem is almost like being there ourselves:

“Someone named Josh knew to knock the door out / over the wing. I didn’t notice the guy carrying / his garment bag or the lady screaming for her shoes. / I just remember getting pushed toward a hole / in the side of the plane and tumbling out / into the cold gray blinding afternoon / which held me. I came to my feet / on the submerged wing with the others / and we walked on water.”

Is it any wonder we love to be read to?

All over Eastern Oregon, people are gathering to listen to stories and share ideas. Baker City, La Grande — and now The Dalles, too, where Jackie McManus has organized a series of workshops and readings called Writer’s Talk, also held on third Thursdays. In Enterprise, Fishtrap Firesides give Wallowa County residents monthly fall and winter opportunities to hear to their local writers.

Winter Fishtrap is back, too, and just wrapping up three days of reading and listening and talking about dams. Historian Bill Lang was on the program, Bobbie Conner was a panelist. CTUIR Communications Director Charles F. Sams III’s talk this morning was titled “Tamanawit — Natural Law / Kya’ak ha’ast — Air/ Cu’uc — Water / Tiica’m — Land / Nati’tayt — People.” I wish I could have been there.

We crave stories. Reading, listening — and community, just being with others who need stories too.

Maybe you are a member of a book club here in Umatilla County. Or an online member of a Silent Book Club. I just learned about this phenomenon. In 2012, two women were sipping wine in a San Francisco restaurant and wishing they could be members of a book club without having to vacuum the house and make deviled eggs, or read a book they weren’t really interested in and didn’t have time to finish — but still be part of a group where they could meet with others who also loved to read.

So they began meeting — each bringing her own book, ordering a drink and committing to reading a silent chapter before conversation. People noticed. Asked questions. Now there are 50,000 online members and 180 active chapters in 20 countries.

For the first half hour in a Silent Book Club people order a drink and talk a bit about whatever book they are reading. Then there’s an hour of silent reading. And then — they keep reading, or chat. “Introvert Happy Hour,” they call it — because with a book in your hand it’s easier to have something to say. Something you want to say.

Because — well, stories.

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