

OUR VIEW

We’re all in this together

This is space is normally devoted to our weekly Tips and Kicks editorial in which we alternately salute the good and point out the bad of the weekly news cycle. This week, however, we see nothing but the good in our fellow man in the wake of some devastating local flooding.

It is truly heartening in a time of crisis to see the community pull together to help one another.

That was the clear case Thursday and Friday as the Umatilla River spilled from its banks all across Umatilla County and forced residents to flee their homes. It was also the case as neighbors helped neighbors in Pendleton, Weston, Thorn Hollow, Echo and a dozen other locations around the county impacted by rising floodwaters.

Police and fire personnel acted fast to help, and then many community organizations stepped up to provide assistance.

The Pendleton Convention Center opened as an emergency shelter operated by the American Red Cross, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation opened its Cmutypama Warming Station for evacuees as well. The Pendleton Salvation Army is offering vouchers for shoes, clothing and blankets to those who were forced to evacuate



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

**Bill Koskela returns to the cab of his truck to pull it out of a washed-out road in Thorn Hollow on Thursday afternoon. Koskela had been using the truck to anchor a boat for an attempted rescue mission when the Umatilla River rose and started sliding the truck. Koskela was able to drive free of the incident while those involved in the rescue attempt were stranded for hours awaiting the arrival of a Black Hawk helicopter from Salem before being flown to safety.**

their flooded homes. Echo School is sheltering displaced residents on the west side of Umatilla County and Echo Community Church is offering breakfast, lunch and dinner to anyone who needs fed.

Large national organizations like the Red Cross and Salvation Army prove

invaluable during such times of crisis. They have the infrastructure and know-how to meet the challenge. But it is often the smaller acts of kindness by everyday residents helping one another that may go unnoticed in times of trouble.

Responding to calls on social media,

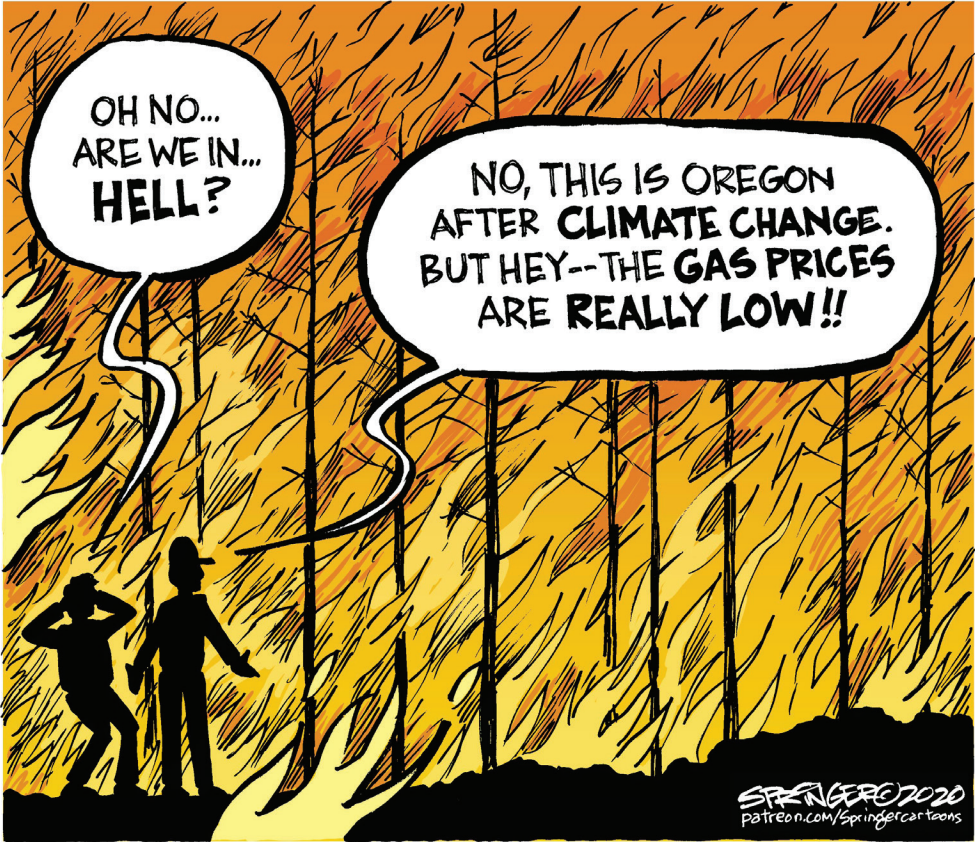
residents in the Athena and Weston area mobilized to fill and stack sand bags in order to prevent further flooding in their towns. Neighbors in the rural Thorn Hollow community did what they could to rescue an elderly couple before use of a military helicopter became necessary.

Countless other individuals — too many to name here — have also stepped up and offered to lend a helping hand. That says a whole lot about the kind of communities we live in and the people who live here.

It’s unfortunate that we often don’t realize how many truly dedicated people live in our community until disaster strikes. But in the bigger picture, the work of so many people and agencies over the past two days illustrates that our neighbors do truly care and quickly step up to help when necessary.

The floodwaters will recede. However, the fact that members of our community and the agencies we depend on chipped into help quickly Thursday is a memory that should not soon fade away. Instead, that assistance and that dedication will be a signpost into the future that shows the people of Umatilla County are willing to make a difference during a crisis and provide help when help is needed.

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YOUR VIEWS

SOTU should have been front-page news

I believe the Feb. 5 issue of the *East Oregonian* used poor judgment in placement of its news.

Testing of grain samples has been around for decades. Front page news? While the state of the union speech and surrounding events got the last page. Whether or not you like Donald Trump, he is our president. It was an important annual event, and people want and need to know about it.

Even a teaser above the *EO* masthead, State of the Union speech/A8, would have been acceptable.

Joanne Kain  
Pendleton

City support of high school sports programs lacking

Pendleton and Hermiston high schools had a long-standing rivalry in sports until Hermiston left the OSAA and joined Washington’s MCC. There was one glaring difference between the two cities — at basketball and volleyball games on Tuesday nights, it was not uncommon to see Hermiston city officials in the audience cheering on their team. With Pendleton’s city officials, that’s simply not the case.

On our side of the state, high school

sporting events, particularly basketball, volleyball, and baseball/softball games have been traditionally scheduled on Tuesday evenings.

On a recent Wednesday afternoon, in a casual conversation with our City Manager, Robb Corbett, I happened to mention that at the previous evening’s varsity basketball game against Redmond, his daughter, Olivia, a standout on the junior varsity team, got in some playing time near the end of that victory against Redmond. His response was, “I know, I had to leave before that game, you know, those Tuesday night city council meetings.”

When I suggested he approach the mayor and council about changing the meetings to Monday like Hermiston, he kind of scowled and said, “What kind of headlines would that make — ‘City manager requests council meetings be moved to Monday night so he can watch his daughter play basketball.’”

I let on that the public would be more than receptive, but he disagreed. Robb has already had one daughter graduate from Pendleton High School and was forced to miss watching her because of those Tuesday night city council meetings.

How about it? Would you support a change? Let your councilor know if you agree. Tuesday night can’t possibly be that crucial to city operations. Monday seems to work well in Hermiston.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton

FROM THE HEADWATERS OF DRY CREEK

A musician’s ear (heard over breakfast in John Day)

“It was early Sunday morning. I was playing bass in a bar band, so by the time we got all of our gear back in the van and I drove an hour home, it was a good three or four in the morning.

“I’ve been living in the boonies for 30 years. Built the cabin myself out of logs I got off my own property. Three wives later I have a roof over my head, but I am living alone.

“Everybody blames the burglaries on the meth freaks, but some of it has been the work of pros. A kid on speed doesn’t take the time to sort through a pocket watch collection like they did up at Charlie Goodnight’s place.

“Every spare dollar I’ve ever had went into musical instruments. At any time somebody could waltz into my home and walk away with \$20,000 worth of music tools. I am gone a few nights a week, so I have surrounded the cabin with lights and motion detectors.

“It’s a homemade system, but if you get within 100 yards lights flash and whistles blow and I have a motion detector hooked up to a boombox in the barn that triggers a tape of my voice yelling, ‘Get the f--- out of here, now’ with a couple of gunshot sounds for punctuation. There is a simple on and off switch hidden beside the gate at the head of the driveway.

“I leave the porch light on. Coming home that night, I grabbed the bass and amp from the car and hauled them up the steps onto the porch, tired to the bone, and went to fishing for my door key when all of a sudden there was this big old twop, thwop, thwop, sound coming from somewhere.

“My first thought was helicopter. There had been a few busts of pot grows up on the Forest Service and I figured it was the DEA swooping in before daylight. They undoubtedly have the technology. But when looked up, there were no lights besides the stars. Something that loud should’ve been producing wind at least.

“So I was looking up at Cassiopeia and nothing much else, when I realized that the sound was coming from inside my head. My next thought was that rock and roll had finally done it to me. I had busted a blood vessel and I was bleeding from the brain. I just sat down on the ground and thought, ‘Well, it’s a good enough day to die.’

“I sat there, ready to meet my maker, until I noticed that the noise was coming only from the left side of my head and that my left ear tickled every time the sound happened. I stuck my little finger in that ear, mostly

expecting to find it full of blood.

“Instead, I touched a moth’s butt, which caused it to panic and it began to fluttering even faster. I wasn’t dying after all. A confused bug had left the porch light and found my ear. Moths don’t have a reverse gear or sense enough to back out of trouble. It was way down in my ear canal, burrowing deeper into the wax at every wing beat.

“Ever try to look in your own ear? Using bathroom mirrors and the one on the back of my hairbrush I could not get things situated

well enough to see and grab the little bugger with a pair of tweezers. All I accomplished was to make it more frantic and the thumping more maddening. I needed professional help and headed toward the emergency room 60 miles away.

“The moth and I got to know each other pretty well on that drive. It didn’t seem to like right-hand corners. Must have been just enough angular momentum to make the critter think it was losing purchase

when we turned toward the right. It was getting tired of the confusion too, and would rest during the straightaways and left turns.

“After a night of automobile wrecks and heart attacks and people beating the crap out of each other, the woman at the check-in counter at the ER was not all that convinced that a bug in a bass player’s ear was an emergency. I had a terrible time filling out the admission forms because the moth was firing off at random times and my handwriting was pretty darn jumpy.

“At sunrise I saw a doctor, a young fellow from Pakistan, who must have seen every Lon Cheney and Bella Lugosi movie, because when he reached into my ear with a hemostat, he grabbed the moth just in the right place, backed it gently up the ramp, then held it up with its wings flapping and limped around the ward going, ‘It lives! It lives! It lives!’ in a Pakistani/Transylvanian accent. I fell asleep while they were irrigating the moth dust from my ear. I didn’t see what happened to the moth. The extraction cost me \$265.

“I’ve thought about leaving the porch light off during bug months to avoid having lightning strike twice, but I am too paranoid about getting ripped off, so I took the cheap way out. I now keep two pairs of ear muffs, one in the house and one on the dash of my car, and wear them at night when I have to get anywhere close to the porch light.”

JD Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.