

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

### Local centers add valuable services to fight addiction

The local area learned of some good news last week when three drop-in peer centers opened, adding another layer of services that will make a difference in the future.

The Oregon Washington Health Network drop-in centers in Hermiston, Pendleton and Milton-Freewater are designed to offer support and guidance from peers who can help people seek addiction assistance.

Amy Ashton-Williams, the network's executive director, said the grand opening of the Hermiston drop-in center was monumental and we couldn't agree more.

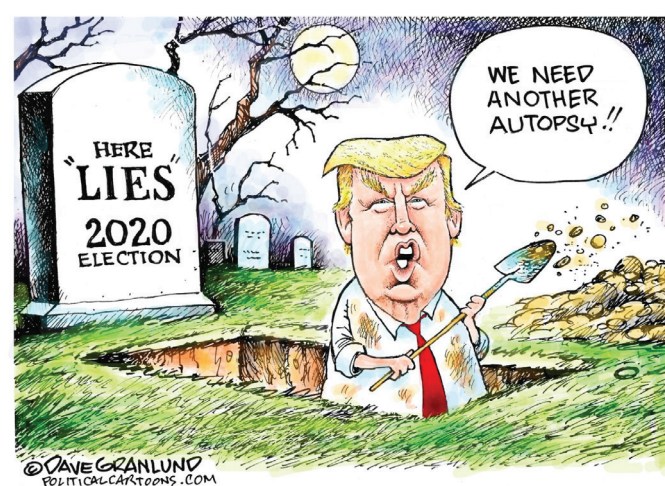
The drop-in centers are a grassroots way to help tackle addiction. The services are free, which is another big plus. The centers can offer a low-key type of assistance to help those in need, and in a perfect world there would be far more such center than currently exists.

Addiction is one of those community challenges that needs more attention from us all. If we have not been touched by addiction challenges — either personally or with a loved one — it can be hard to relate to the impact such problems can generate. Addiction touches not just the individual but those around them and, often, impacts public safety. Police spent a huge amount of time dealing with addiction — in one form or another — so the advent of a resource such as the peer drop-in centers is good news for everyone.

Addiction is a subject that can be easily dismissed by those who have not been touched by it. It shouldn't be dismissed. Drug and alcohol addiction costs millions in taxpayer dollars every year. If a viable method can be found — such as the drop-in centers — to help it should be embraced by all.

Ashton-Williams said in a story in this newspaper that her organization already had helped about 50 people in the past few months. The new offices mean even more people will be able to access addiction services.

The centers are an investment in the future in a real sense. They will provide a key piece of infrastructure to help our area combat addiction — in all its forms — and hopefully, ultimately help make a real difference in our collective future.



## YOUR VIEWS

### If you don't feel well stay home to stop the spread

Your editorial regarding individual responsibility and COVID-19 is applauded but misses the mark. Individual responsibility does not start with masking and social distancing. It starts with if you do not feel well stay home.

In my humble opinion, a venue such as the Pendleton Round-Up was squeaky clean of any variant of COVID-19 until the first well meaning but misdirected person with COVID-19 stepped on to Round-Up Grounds and from there it went wild. COVID-19 may well be here to stay so the world needs to change its view from "Oh it is just a mild cold, so I can go out," to "I do not feel well, I am staying home."

The expectation of all kinds of folks need to change, from bosses who compel their workforce to be at work to the friends who compel friends to party.

Carl Culham  
Athena

### Bi-Mart has let our community down

Bi-Mart has let our community down. With little notice they sold their pharmacies, including the one in Hermiston, to Walgreens, which decided to close it immediately. This has negatively impacted many people, the remaining options are limited. Walmart is already extremely busy and has huge crowds with long waits for service, and difficulty managing complex medication issues.

RiteAid is seriously understaffed. Recently their pharmacy has been closed. People can neither obtain their medications nor have them transferred since other pharmacies can't contact them. That is an unsafe situation for patients.

Safeway is trying to pick up the slack but it is overwhelmed by the huge numbers of people abandoned by Bi-Mart and RiteAid. Also, they have no seating, so people with mobility issues are limited. If there is no riding cart available, Safeway is inaccessible.

With many insurance plans, these are now the only approved pharmacies in town. The other two available choices are not covered by many plans. They are, however, both good pharmacies.

Hermiston Drug has a reputation for excellence. They are, however, difficult to access. It is almost impossible to park on Main Street and the parking lot in back is some distance from the door and treacherous due to its poor maintenance.

Good Shepherd Medical Center is very capable and more accessible, but costly if not preferred by insurances (such as mine).

Bi-Mart's ill-conceived and harmful decision has negatively affected our community. I will remember that in the future when deciding where to shop.

Shelley Wilson  
Hermiston

### Urban Renewal District is the future with drawbacks

A column extolling the virtues of the Pendleton Urban Renewal District suggested by the mayor and written by City Councilor Kevin Martin, chairman of the Pendleton Development Commission, recently appeared in the East Oregonian.

Successful projects mentioned in that article included new facades on some of our historic downtown buildings and additional apartments intended to meet the demand for additional housing. These projects achieved the goals of increasing the tax base on which property taxes are computed and ultimately should increase available revenue to the

city and pay for the program.

Residents were elated to see the city finally addressing the deplorable condition of our streets. Most of those are in the URD. Unlike streets on the North Hill and other parts of town that are being repaired using gas tax and utility fee revenue, streets in the URD are funded with bank loans and must be totally rebuilt to qualify for PDC funding. Navigating a new street through these neighborhoods gives you the opportunity to switch your attention from dodging potholes to the urban blight that continues to be a problem. Southwest Eighth Street is a prime example and reflects directly on city management's failure to act responsibly to protect neighborhood property values.

According to the city officials, the URD program is self-supporting, and repayment of the loans for projects will be through property tax increases resulting from a larger tax base. That is not exactly the case. A rather large detail that has a major impact on every property owner, a detail that city officials conveniently are reluctant to admit in plain English, is that a portion of every property tax payment that would normally go to the city's general fund to maintain city infrastructure is diverted to fund the PDC budget, and a major portion of that tax revenue in the near future will be needed to cover overhead and repayment of those loans plus interest. Once those payments commence in 2024, don't be surprised to hear those calls once again from city hall to raise the utility tax, water rates, and establish a gas tax as repayment of those loans begins. City officials will once again complain of a shortfall in revenue to support expanded city operations.

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Pendleton

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### EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

### LETTERS

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