

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

ANDREW CUTLER
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Editor/Senior Reporter

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

The following is perhaps the most famous example of a child wanting to know if Santa is real.

Letter to the editor
The New York Sun, 1897

Dear Editor:

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in The Sun it's so.' Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?

— Virginia O'Hanlon

Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



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YOUR VIEWS

Misinformation to blame for lagging vaccinations

Here is something to think about as we enter the winter months, with the potential for an uptick in COVID-19 and the variants of delta and omicron. This information was updated as of Dec. 5 and heard on NPR's "Morning Edition." The print article was headlined "Pro-Trump counties now have far higher COVID death rates. Misinformation is to blame."

Since May 2021, people living in counties that voted heavily for Donald Trump during the last presidential election have been nearly three times as likely to die from COVID-19 as those who live in areas that went for now-President Biden. That's according to a new analysis by NPR that examines how political polarization and misinformation are driving a significant share of the deaths in the pandemic.

The trend was robust, even when controlling for age, which is the primary demographic risk of COVID-19 mortality. The data also reveal a major contributing factor to the death rate difference: The higher the vote share for Trump, the lower the vaccination rate.

The analysis looked at only the geographic location of COVID-19 deaths. The exact political views of each person taken by the disease remains unknowable. But the strength of the association, combined with polling information about vaccination, strongly suggests that Republicans are being disproportionately affected.

Misinformation appears to be a major factor in the lagging vaccination rates. The Kaiser Family Foundation's polling shows Republicans are far more likely to believe false statements about COVID-19 and vaccines. A full 94% of Republicans think one or more false statements about COVID-19 and vaccines might be true, and 46% believe four or more statements might be true.

By contrast, only 14% of Democrats believe four or more false statements about the disease.

The full report can be found on NPR.org.

Dan and Jan Blair
Joseph

Elk are fortunate to have economic value

"The elk arrive" (East Oregonian, Dec. 15) provides information about 10 local elk feeding stations operated by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Elk are fed to keep them out of ranchers' haystacks. Many ranchers graze cattle on public lands in summer while their lower private land grows hay.

As noted, elk are highly adapted to survive winters by pawing through snow to grasses. But when cows eat the grass, elk are forced into the valleys and will quite naturally eat from haystacks. To prevent that, elk numbers are controlled through various hunting programs. The sale of elk tags is lucrative for ODFW. Thus government feeding stations, paid for by public dollars, are run to benefit ranchers and ODFW. Elk are fortunate to have economic value for ODFW.

When wolves kill or harass livestock, all hell breaks loose. Ranchers howl and get reimbursed. ODFW condemns repeat offenders to death. After all, there's no money in wolves. In an unregulated capitalist system only profit has value.

Respect for diverse species and healthy ecosystems is not yet prioritized by most people, particularly lawmakers taking funding from big business. For that reason, basic ecosystems are unraveling everywhere. See Norm Cimon's Other Views column "Cheatgrass will take over Owyhee" (The Observer, Dec. 16).

There's a steep price to be paid for such bedrock ignorance and greed.

Worldwide news is chronicling it today.
Mary McCracken
Island City

Give to cultural nonprofits that matter to you

Twenty years ago, a mighty group of visionaries celebrated the fulfillment of a dream — a simple and effective way for Oregon taxpayers to direct funds to cultural activities. This was the genesis of the Oregon Cultural Trust and its cultural tax credit.

It remains cause for celebration. As the Oregon Cultural Trust marks its 20th anniversary, it has proven itself a stable source of funding for Oregon's arts, heritage and humanities nonprofits.

The state tax credit is available to any Oregonian who donates to one or more of the 1,500-plus cultural nonprofits and makes a matching gift to the Cultural Trust. At tax time, the amount you gave to the trust comes back to you — dollar for dollar. And the state sets those funds aside for Cultural Trust grant awards the following year.

Since its founding in 2001, the trust has raised — through the cultural tax credit — more than \$74 million for culture statewide. It has distributed nearly 10,000 grant awards totaling more than \$34 million and its permanent fund now exceeds \$33 million. In addition, the Cultural Trust network of County Cultural Coalitions enabled the distribution of more than \$25 million in Coronavirus Relief Fund for Cultural Support awards to 621 organizations struggling to survive the pandemic.

Please donate generously to the cultural nonprofits that matter to you — they need your help now more than ever — and use your power by making a matching donation to the Cultural Trust by Dec. 31.

Roberta Lavadour
Executive Director
Pendleton Center for the Arts

EDITORIALS

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LETTERS

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SEND LETTERS TO:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801