

Addiction a base for plenty of tragedy

According to Dwight Holton, many modern tragedies begin with an addiction.

Crime, mental health breakdowns, even suicide and homicide can often be traced back to a pill or a poison — some brains are just wired to be susceptible to outside influence. And many of the systems of care and punishment our society has in place don't do much to get to the root of the problem, or save people who are in danger of hurting themselves or others.

EDITORIAL
The voice of the Chieftain

Holton is a former federal prosecutor and Oregon's U.S. attorney. In that line of work, by the time he got involved it was too late. Someone had already been hurt, bad decisions had been made, lives had been impacted for the worse.

In 2014 he took over as director of Lines for Life, a Portland-based nonprofit that has twin goals of preventing substance abuse and suicide. He wanted to get involved early, to prevent the bad decisions in the first place. And while it might seem at first glance that substance abuse and suicide are different threats, Holton said they are nearly always intertwined.

In the course of his new work, he quickly realized that the major source of substance abuse problems in Oregon come from prescription pills. They kill more Oregonians — hundreds a year — than all illegal drugs. Holton said a major factor may be that Oregonians think prescription pills are safer than they actually are. We think heck: these things are legal, they are given to me by my doctor and they make me feel better. What's the downside?

Addiction can cause people to do terrible things outside their own nature. They lie and cheat and embezzle and burgle and assault and kill. They get stuck in a cycle of depression and broken relationships. There is literally nothing good that comes from it.

So how can the state reduce the number of people laid low by prescription pills? Holton's plan is to reduce the number of prescribed but unnecessary opioids. Currently, 100 million such pills are prescribed in Oregon each year. He also wants more places where patients can dispose of unused medicines. In addition, Holton sees the benefit of better treatment and less-addictive versions of the medication.

There is lots to talk through and plenty to think about, which is why Holton is taking his crew on the road. They met Friday in La Grande, the first discussion to kick off the first phase of identifying best practices across the state.

We realize it is a root issue that leads to all kinds of rotten social ills, and agree with Holton that time and money spent up front will save us even more down the road — including a society with fewer broken lives and families.

There is no easy answer to the problem of prescriptions drugs. Science continues to learn more about addiction, and continues to fine-tune medicines that reduce the likelihood they will be misused.

One simple way to start is to realize how dangerous prescription opioids can be. Use them only when necessary, discard them when you're through, and if you think you have a problem get help immediately. Lines for Life (call the helpline at 1-800-923-4357) is a great place to start.



Fix streets now for savings

GUEST COLUMN

Dennis Sands

Joseph deserves to have usable streets that meet the basic needs of its residents, businesses and visitors. Our streets do not currently fulfill that promise. We have the ability and responsibility, as citizens, to change that. This is why I am asking you to approve the two street-related ballot measures on May 19th.

These ballot measures are a result of a long process that was designed to find the most economical and effective way to solve our street problem. This process made it clear that the problem is one that can no longer be ignored. Twenty percent (20%) of the City's streets are gravel. A majority of our streets, 59%, are classified as either poor or fair. Just 21% are classified as good or very good. We can and must do better.

Some have said, "Let's just fill the potholes and save some money." While that is a fine temporary solution, the reality is that most of our streets are about 50 years old and subject to extreme weather. Filling potholes only delays the inevitable and increases the long-term cost of repair. If approved, the ballot measures would allow us to create an economical long-term solution that benefits everyone. All poor and fair streets would be upgraded to either good or very good classification levels and funding would be put in place to maintain that quality into the future.

The City realizes this project is not cheap and that we cannot ask our fellow citizens to absorb this expense without being completely transparent about the cost. The total cost of the project is \$1.3 million. If approved, the ballot measures would authorize the City to issue a general obligation bond to pay that cost with a targeted

completion date of 2016. The bond would then be paid for with a Transportation Utility Fee of \$11 per month, per tax lot. That cost would be reflected in your water and sewer bill and any fees collected through it would be dedicated solely to bond payments.

As with any project of this size, there is some risk. Because this is a new fee and the City has no payment history with the bond company, we are required to provide some additional collateral. This means that if the fee were for some reason to fall short of our required bond payments, we would have to pay the difference from the general fund and make up the difference through a one year property tax levy. As your elected representative, I can assure you that we believe this is a remote risk. But it is one that the City is required to take on to receive a general obligation bond.

That said, we are also optimistic that the timing of the project could allow us to take advantage of lower gasoline prices. If that turns out to be true, we hope to also seal some of the City's gravel streets. Not for appearance reasons, but to save money. The City currently spends about \$11,000 a year on dust abatement — sealing additional gravel streets would reduce that cost and save the City money over time.

Some of you may still ask, "Why can't we just make due with our existing tax revenue — shouldn't this already be part of the budget?" That is a fair question and one we should always ask before asking citizens to increase government funding, so let me ex-

plain why this step is required. The City is responsible for maintaining about 22 miles of streets. Funding for that maintenance comes primarily from the City's share of the state highway fund, about \$60,000 per year based on our population of 1,090. But that funding is designed only to allow the City to maintain its streets in their current condition. It does not cover the cost of improving existing substandard streets up to acceptable levels.

Because the City has waited so long to make those upgrades, the existing budget simply falls short. This is because the cost of repair increases as the quality of streets is allowed to decline. Based on our research, the cost to bring a fair street up to standard with a 2 inch asphalt overlay is about \$15,000 per block. The cost to bring a poor street up to standard is about \$45,000 per block. Even a single layer chip seal costs about \$1,600 per block. To minimize costs while still achieving our goal, streets classified as fair will receive a single layer chip seal. Those classified as poor will be reconstructed and have a triple layer chip seal applied. All streets will then receive a single layer chip seal every 5-7 years.

I realize these are substantial costs and costs that add to already tight budgets for many of my fellow citizens, but I also know that further delay will only move more of our streets from fair to poor, ultimately raising the cost of inevitable repair substantially for our future generations. We have the enormous privilege of living in a really great town. With that comes the obligation to do our part to help keep it great. And it is for that reason that I urge the voters to approve both ballot measures on May 19th.

Guest columnist Dennis Sands is mayor of Joseph.

Willis, Davis, good for cemetery

To the Editor:

We must keep moving forward toward the goal of restoring the Enterprise Cemetery grounds to the beautiful place it has been in the past. Although my wife and I no longer own property in the cemetery district, the Enterprise Cemetery is the final resting place of four generations of family members. Much has changed since the land for the Enterprise Cemetery was donated by Alonzo Wagner over 100 years ago, but it remains that burial grounds are a reflection of the community.

The current condition of a cemetery full of squirrel holes and lack of green grass is unacceptable. While steps have been recently made to restore irrigation and manage squirrels, much more oversight is needed to implement a credible ongoing and responsible maintenance plan which addresses current funding, annual expenses, and future improvements.

Voters in the Enterprise Cemetery District must assume individual responsibility for the task of maintaining the integrity of this piece of history for both past and future generations by voting on the cemetery board positions on the May 19 ballot. Votes for both Pat Willis and Perry Davis in the May 19 election will ensure that solutions to current conditions will be explored and acted upon. I support Pat Willis and Perry Davis for these important cemetery board positions. Both Pat and Perry have the time, dedication, and experience to guide positive changes for the cemetery district. It is time to move forward!

Ron Wagner
Talent

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

other events. There is also a rich honesty about Enterprise. It is seen in Liza Jane's "on your honor" roadside farm stand and in the downtown benches that are always available for everyone's use but have no need to be locked and chained.

The town echoes of the good things that we cherish from the past and hope for the future: the magnificently crafted and stately courthouse and its honor of the veterans who have given much for our freedom, the pleasant songs of the community church bells floating faithfully through the town at their prescribed hours, the senior center meals served by various volunteer groups and provided for by home town businesses and individuals, the rural commentaries, local artists, and old-time radio shows of KWVR, the phenomenally courteous attitude of Enterprise drivers toward pedestrians, the amazing little Soroptimist thrift store that, through the team effort of donors and volunteers, clothes the people of the community and supports worthy local endeavors.

Enterprise and the surrounding area as a community is full of productive and caring citizens with a zest for life. May you collectively continue down the path you have taken, looking after each other in friendship and refreshing those who happen to be passing through. You have truly been a blessing!

Janet Haddock
Pilot Rock

Visitor praises Enterprise

To the Editor:

My husband's work project planted us in your community for several weeks. How refreshing it has been to live briefly in your midst!

It is not just the lovely mountain backdrop where all day long I can "lift up mine eyes unto the hills," nor is it just the friendly and industrious people all over town that give a full days work and then some and still gladly pitch in with evening community sports, music, and

Factions spreading misinformation

To the Editor:

"Where in the world have we in 2015 misplaced our brains?" The last sentence in your opinion article in the April 22 Chieftain vividly illustrates what is going on now in our country. We apparently do not understand that we are all involved in what goes on in our government whether we vote or do not vote. We are all responsible, not just those who meet in Washington, DC to pass laws or not pass laws,

but for being current in knowledge of the issues, voting wisely and communicating with our representatives.

It is timely to call attention to Hamilton and Madison's warning regarding factions in our country. Perhaps had we heeded their warning we might not even have Democratic and Republican parties in 2015. At least, if political parties paid attention to the founding fathers, they might be more interested in what is best for the country as a whole. The present Tea Party and the Birch Society of the 50s - 70s are other factions with dangerous agendas. To me, these entities truly fit Madison's definition of a faction: "(citizens) who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."

The founding fathers took their time discussing various forms of government, stating their points of view and compromising as they drafted our constitution to benefit the entire community, not just a faction of it. Up until this point in time, I believe our citizen patriots basically used their brains to keep the country on the constitutional path set forth by the founding fathers. We should continue to hold our constitution as a plumb line to keep order and serve everyone in our country.

In 2015 our country is much larger and more populated. We have far more access to a variety of viewpoints through the Internet, television, and other electronic and printed forms. Leaders of factions have a multitude of opportunities to get their messages out to millions of people. As a result, powerful financial interests have the ability to buy media to disperse a multitude of diverse information or misinformation without concern for honesty or fairness. With the ability of powerful factions to contact so many people so rapidly and frequently, so much of the news disseminated has no integrity. Thus, too many citizens fail to discern truth from falsehood, choosing to believe misinformation.

Our founding fathers were right to warn of the dangers of factions. Indeed, where in the world have we misplaced our brains?

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN
USPS No. 665-100

P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

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MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com
EDITOR Rob Ruth, editor@wallowa.com
REPORTER Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com
REPORTER Kathleen Elynn, kellyn@wallowa.com
NEWSROOM ASSISTANT Rich Rautenstrauch, rrautenstrauch@wallowa.com
AD SALES CONSULTANT Brooke Pace, bpace@wallowa.com
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Robby Day, rday@wallowa.com
OFFICE MANAGER Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com

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