

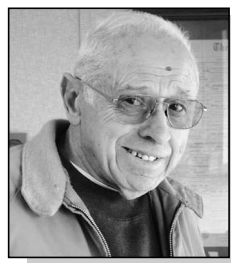
Siuslaw News
 P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

DEAR READERS: 125th Anniversary

Our 125th Anniversary Flashback series will return next week. In the meantime, let us know what's on your mind. —Editor

NEIGHBORS



White crosses of Montana

BOB JACKSON
 NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENT
 For the Siuslaw News

For many years, two white crosses affixed to the trunks of large trees, marked the spot where two young fellers perished in a tragic accident on a sharp curve near the entrance to the old Booth Road just north of Tahkenitch Lake. Another similar flower-festooned memorial to a fatal accident existed for years between Reedsport and Winchester Bay.

These unsettling reminders of danger that is ever lurking on our highways is fairly uncommon in this area, maybe not so much elsewhere.

Our good neighbors, Debbie and Sheldon Glenzer, have just returned from a leisurely road trip to visit her father back in Minnesota, and they brought back an amazing story of seeing at eye-level, mile after mile after mile of white, rebar-mounted crosses, marking the location of vehicular fatalities.

Poignant reminders in the state of Montana, where in this Big Sky Country the highways stretch for mile after mile, sometimes without another vehicle in sight

in either direction — and it can become mesmerizing, almost to the point of causing what pilots on long, boring flights have called “cockpit hypnosis.”

Sixty-two years ago, the Montana Highway Commission approved the White Cross Fatality Marker program, which was created and is maintained by the American Legion of Montana. The markers are placed as close as is possible to the location of the accident. Decorations are strongly discouraged. The crosses are not placed on private roads or on federally funded interstate highways.

Between Cut Bank and Browning on Highway 2, there is nearly one cross every mile — often there are even more. There are more than 2,000 white crosses, though nobody seems to know for sure the exact amount.

They cost about \$20 apiece to make. These crashes occurred mostly on straight, rural areas, where you could easily see far ahead and what was behind. This brings to mind an old adage: “Familiarity breeds contempt.”

A somnolent, blase acceptance of danger can lead to a dangerous lack of alertness. I

remember reading someplace that a disproportionate number of fatal accidents occur close to home (“We are almost home. Now we can relax!”)

The crosses have not remained unchallenged. A “kooky” organization called Freedom From Religion, and the ACLU, which I consider “rabble rousers,” want the crosses removed, saying “it is almost like driving through a graveyard.” I find that roadside markers date back as far as the roads themselves, even back to Rome and Greece.

Along Highway 2, passing through Glacier National Park, there are dozens of identical white cross markers attached to rebar. In one spot there is an eye-popping memorial with nine crosses, where a tanker semi-truck lost control and hit a bus full of high school wrestlers. The bus caught fire and burned completely.

Incidentally, Montana is reported as having the highest rate of drunken driving deaths — nearly twice the rate of the national average.

An interesting note: Montana’s American Legion members do annual repainting and maintenance, and some Legionnaires carry a can of white paint in their car — “Even if we’re 800 miles from home, if we see a cross, we stop and paint it!”

Now that is dedication.

CHILD CARE IN FLORENCE

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By ROB SPOONER
 PAST KIWANIS CLUB PRESIDENT & PAST QUALITY CHILD CARE OF FLORENCE BOARD MEMBER

Florence needs a state-certified child care center serving infants and toddlers. For a while, Quality Child Care of Florence, acting independently and later under the aegis of Boys and Girls Club, provided this care, but infant care ended in the winter and recently QCCF was shuttered entirely. We now face the daunting task of reviving it or losing an essential service in our community.

Before I get to the how, let’s review the why. Child care is an issue on several levels. One is economic. For young professionals considering a move to Florence, the availability of reliable and high quality child care may be the deciding factor on whether they come here. At the other end of the spectrum, Florence has a lot of low-paying jobs and many young families need both parents working just to make ends meet. If child care is not available, some mothers may find themselves cut off from employment.

Also, there’s the safety of the child to consider. Child care centers follow 70 pages of regulations in order to be certified. Baby sitters are completely unregulated, putting the health and wellbeing of the child at risk. This is not to suggest that all baby sitters do a bad job, but there is no certainty without the level of evaluation that goes on continually in a state-certified center.

Finally, research has shown that intensive interaction between babies and adults produces long term benefits. Studies have shown that babies from low-income families have heard 30 million fewer words by the age of four than those from high-income families. The results last a lifetime. High quality child care can compensate for some of this, with positive outcomes that can be tracked into adulthood.

I could go into more detail, but I’ve found very few people who question the need for infant and toddler child care. The problem is that too many people have decided that it can’t be achieved with the resources we have available here. There have been enough missteps over the years that this is a reasonable attitude, but it’s wrong.

The proof I believe is the Cedar Creek Child Care Center in Hebo. It serves the Nestucca School District in south Tillamook County, which has about a third as many students and a quarter of the population that we have in west Lane County. Yet they have been in operation for several years and appear to be stable. There are three keys to their success.

First, they do local fundraising at around \$3,000 per year. That would translate to \$10,000 in Florence. It makes the second step easier, which is grant writing. There are many organizations who are willing to help communities that have shown that they are helping themselves. Cedar Creek gets more than five times as much in outside grants as they raise locally, which suggests that the diligent pursuit of grants will pay off.

The third key is an aggressive hourly pricing. Most child care centers set fairly low rates for full-time care, or part-time care that meets a strict set of conditions. This may work for a few working professionals, but many jobs for young mothers in Florence are both part-time and irregular. There is no reason to penalize them for this. Both Cedar Creek and Tillamook Bay centers take this approach and it is very effective.

Kiwanis is an international organization, serving the needs of children. When QCCF was just getting organized and through its capital campaign, Florence Kiwanis members served on its board. As president of the Florence Kiwanis club at the time, I was the first Kiwanis representative. The club will soon consider whether it should acquire the QCCF building in order to take up the mission of infant and toddler care. Some decisions will need to be made by both the Kiwanis club and the Boys and Girls club for this to happen.

However, launching is one thing and becoming sustainable is another. A better strategy for fundraising and operations will go a long way, but the community needs to show that it believes in this. One thing is absolutely essential. Families with very young children must be willing to pay for their care. The state of Oregon has a program to assist low-income working families, so this should be achievable if we put the word out.

Volunteer help would be of great value. At times, state regulations will require us to bring in an extra person to look after just one additional infant. If two dozen people would give an hour each week, basically playing with one baby, we would both save significant costs and improve the experience for the kids.

I’m working on a business plan based on \$5 an hour for infants under 2 and \$4.25 between 2 and 3 years old. If you are interested in sending a child at those rates, or would be willing to volunteer a few hours, let me know at rwsponer@gmail.com. It will help me make the case.

LETTERS

Wrongful firing

Politics and legalities set aside, the shameful manner in which former fire chief Jim Langborg was treated and then terminated by the Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue board is just plain wrong.

There has been a slogan used around town lately: “Come See What We See.” In this case, I don’t think so.

Julie Goodman
 Florence

A word of advice

To all the candidates running against Donald Trump (or every-one):

To be successful in a debate, try to remember to not interrupt your opponent while he is portraying himself to be an idiot.

Charlie Pennington
 Florence

Elks appreciation

First of all, congratulations to Julie Brown being installed as district deputy to the Elks national president for the lodges in the Northwest District of the Oregon State Elks Association.

I appreciated the content of the article in the Siuslaw News (“Brown Chosen to Lead Area Elks,” July 11, page A3) to inform the public of all that the Elks organization accomplishes in all the communities they exist in. Even I had no idea the magnitude of the contribution of dollars not to mention the countless hours of service.

My first introduction to the Elks outreach in our community came back in the late 1990s when they paid for my granddaughter’s first pair of eye glasses. Since then I’ve become an



Elks member myself and see first hand the charitable attitude of a very decent group of men and women. It’s pretty amazing!

Donna Dobson
 Florence

Duck thanks

Many thanks to the merchants, Kiwanis members, volunteers and Mary McNulty and her kayak team for helping make the 18th annual Kiwanis Duck Race on July 4 a success.

Last year the Kiwanis Foundation funded over \$28,000 in grants and scholarships for projects involving the local Boys and Girls Club, Florence and Mapleton Food Share, the free Thanksgiving community turkey dinner and the Free Lunch Program.

All the money raised goes toward local projects, and none of it is used for Kiwanis Club administrative costs.

Please continue to purchase Duck Race tickets next year

when they become available and support the local merchants who generously donate gift certificates for prizes.

Florence Kiwanis Club is always looking for active citizens who might be interested in visiting or joining the club to participate in their many community activities.

If you are interested, call me at 541-999-8804.

Bill Craig
 Kiwanis Duck Race Coordinator
 Florence

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County. Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer’s full name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity.

Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received. Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published. All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned. Write to: Editor@TheSiuslawNews.com

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