

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE
 For the Siuslaw News

Robert (Bob) DuBose



“We won’t have people in sleeping bags,” he said. “Sheets and pillows provide so much more dignity.”

With a facility provided by the Masonic Lodge, the FECWSC provides emergency food and shelter for homeless men, women and their pets when the wind chill dips below freezing.

“It’s really just about keeping people alive,” Bob said.

But it’s also a daunting task with multifaceted complexities. Volunteers remain ready to go at a moment’s notice — no easy feat during the holiday season — with a long list of functions.

“It’s quite a chore putting up dozens of people, so every volunteer is crucial,” said Georgia, who manages the training. “We really need more help with everything imaginable, from laundry to publicity.”

Bob bears the huge responsibility of deciding when to open the shelter. That requires constant monitoring of multiple weather sites and medical alerts when the weather poses a life-threatening danger.

For people living out in the elements, the season to be jolly is the most dreaded time of the year. As storms battered the area last week with record rain and wind gusts closing the port, the homeless huddled under building overhangs and in doorways trying to stay dry. Despite the harsh weather, temperatures weren’t severe enough to open the facility.

Bob and the FECWSC team are working tirelessly to raise community awareness about the need for a year-round shelter.

“Plans are afoot to establish one, but it’s going to take a lot of money and manpower,” he said. “We have huge support from the community

and the volunteerism here is remarkable. I have learned to love this beautiful little riverfront city and its amazing spirit of compassion.”

An Arkansas native who received a bachelor’s degree from Harvard and a master’s degree from Berkeley, Bob chose careers reflecting that compassion. After serving in the Navy, he became a journalist and “civil rights agitator,” then joined the Foreign Service in 1964 as a diplomat in Rwanda.

“It was the most isolated foreign post in the world at that time,” he said.

While most people would have retired after 30 years in the Foreign Service, Bob had other plans.

“It was time to do something for humanity,” he said.

With positions as director of Counter-Terrorism Intelligence and



PHOTO BY CATHERINE ROURKE

Bob and the Rev. Georgia DuBose work with a team of local groups and volunteers to provide an emergency cold weather shelter for the homeless in Florence.

here. It takes two minutes to call or become a volunteer on our website, and the holidays are when we often need help.”

So in between the shopping and festivities, take some time to volunteer at the FECWSC. National Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day falls on Dec. 21, the longest night of the year, to remember those who have died due to lack of shelter. It’s a great day to extend a random act of kindness to the homeless and remember that laying one’s head to rest is our birthright. Call 804-439-1775 or visit www.coldshelter.org to do something extraordinary for humanity this season.

Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning writer, journalist and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. She may be contacted at CJReditor@gmail.com.

Florence Emergency Cold Weather Shelter — how you can help

Attend volunteer training on Thursday, Dec. 17, from 4 to 6 p.m., at 410 Ninth St. Call Norma Wood at 804-439-1775 for volunteer info, or visit www.coldshelter.org.

LETTERS

Corral your carts

I was stuck in the Safeway parking lot last weekend for about 45 minutes. Why? Someone didn’t corral their small grocery cart. It ran into the back of my car and the lower basket was firmly wedged under the bumper.

The upper basket prevented me from opening the back door and getting to the jack. I couldn’t get the basket loose, neither could the assistant manager or the cart gal. We worked in tandem to try to get the cart unstuck, and of course, it was raining like crazy.

I finally called my husband and he brought down a jack, lifted the car and the cart got unhooked. By the time I got home I was soaked to the skin from the waist down and our ice cream had melted.

I’ll admit, I’ve not always corralled my cart, especially if I had young kids along and wasn’t close to a corral. I try to park near one so there’s no excuse not to safely park a cart.

Please remember to at least park your cart across the slope or hooked on a cement parking barrier, especially on windy days, if the corral is too far away.

As we were working on freeing my car, a gal pulled out of a handicapped space, and as she left, her large cart rolled north and smacked into a parked car down the row from mine. It was too far away to catch in time.

Button Watkins
 Cushman



Just the facts

In recent issues of Siuslaw News, two letters have been published in regards to the issue of Syrian/Muslim immigration.

The first, as I recall, stated that Syrian Muslim refugees had thrown Christian refugees overboard (“Just Remember,” Dec. 5). The fact is that there were no Syrians involved in this incident. According to CNN and several other

news agencies, the protagonists were actually from the Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal. They have all been arrested by the Italian Palermo police. So are all possible immigrants to be banned from entry?

The writer of the first letter also mentioned that America was based on Christian values. Although there has been a debate about that “fact,” some of the pillars of Christianity are forgiveness, compassion and charity. Are these

values to be put on hold?

In regards to the second letter and that question about the M&Ms (“Accepting Facts as Facts,” Dec. 9). Of course not. What is the question? Exposing children to poison? So the answer that is proposed would be that no immigrants should be allowed with respect to the possible inherent danger.

This country has been built on the back of immigrants. It continues to prosper in a global environment, full of interactions with some of the 1.6 billion Muslims that inhabit the planet. Isolationism has no place in the world, the present one we all live in.

World trade, international finances and global health issues cannot be ignored or wished away. These are the facts.

Justin Lavespere
 Florence

LETTERS POLICY

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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