

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

VIEW FROM UPRIVER



At our very best for the holidays

WESLEY VOTH
 For the Siuslaw News

What a wet December we are having. It reminds me of 1964 when I was 12 and we had to flee for high ground in the middle of the night at Christmas. What lasts in my mind from that long-ago event is a sense of wonder at the dynamic forces of nature, of the camaraderie of people helping each other and that some of the best of times for a family can come in the midst of chaos and uncertainty, when life is stripped to its essentials.

This time of year can be difficult for so many reasons: less light and time spent outdoors has a depressing effect and our expecta-

tations can be higher than what we can actually rise to. We are extra aware of those we cannot spend the holidays with due to distance, choices, estrangements or death. And sometimes those who we love the most do not share the values or beliefs we hold dearest.

Susie and I have found the following to be helpful: take Vitamin D, light the interiors of the house brightly with full spectrum light and do not allow anything to come between the two of us or between us and our children. Close and frequent contact helps. For extended family we work at staying positive and seek the amount of contact that allows this to be maintained.

We live in a world that is divided in so many ways. My life goal, and the reason I write these columns, is to bring about greater understanding and lessen the friction and divisions between people. For me, I begin by

noticing and appreciating the natural world, valuing it as it is and working to do it no harm. Then trying to do the same with anyone I come in contact with. To begin in kindness, to listen, to appreciate and be able to have conversations with anyone about anything. To try and find common ground.

Conversations, or editorial pages for that matter, are like a fire. If they stay small, they draw people closer together, appreciating the light and warmth. If a great amount of fuel is thrown on, however, everyone has to back away or be burned.

This political season is a lot like our region was at the end of the summer — tinder dry. Carelessness with fire can burn the whole place to the ground. Political and religious bonfires are being dangerously stoked.

I have things to contribute to the political conversation, like for example what I had thought about doing this column on: "Congress ends its session by wrapping up presents for wealthy corporate interests that they picked out for themselves. We get the credit card bill," but my holiday gift to you is this good-will column I wrote instead.

LETTERS

Praise for Oregon Brass

To the powers that be that brought the Oregon Brass to the Florence Events Center on Sunday, Dec. 20 — Thank you! Gracias! Merci!

It was wonderful, so professional and a beautifully selected and executed program. Ending with fanfares and the audience singing Christmas carols was the "icing on the cake."

Please bring them back again.
 Carol Strenkoski
 Florence

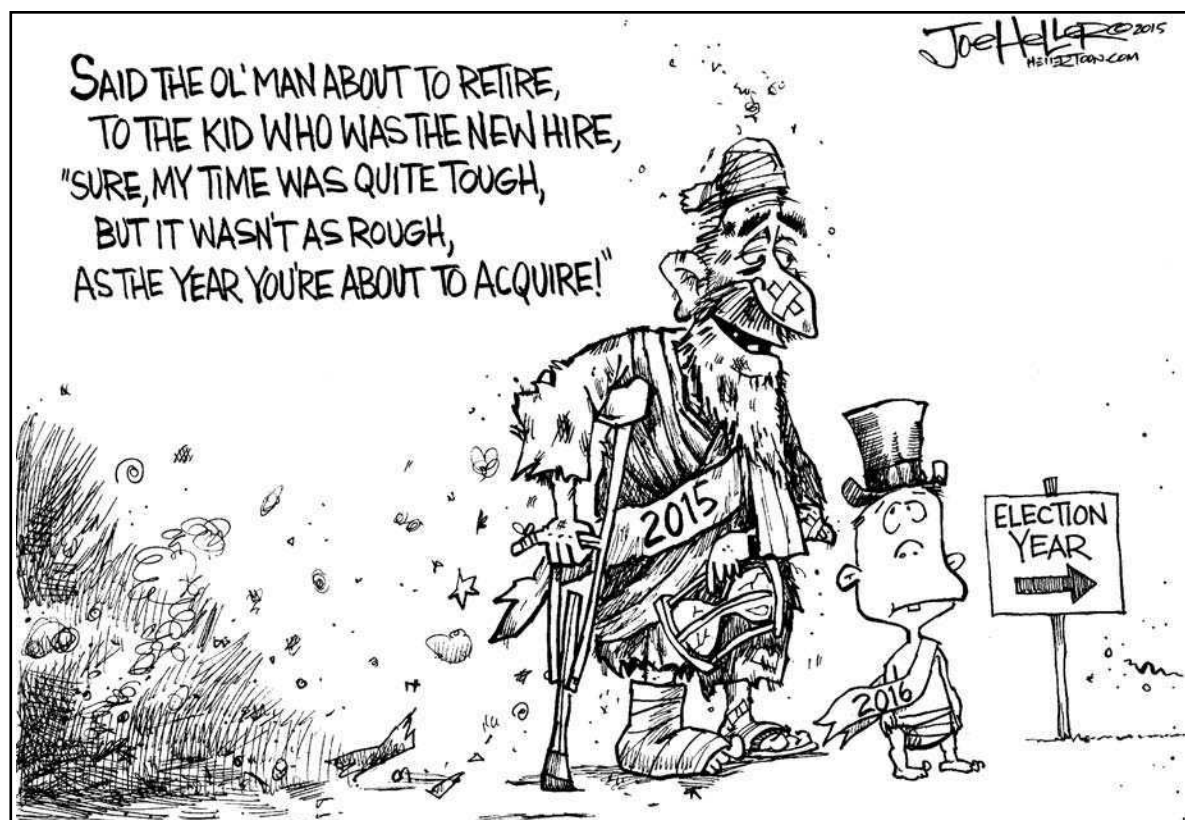
Scholarships for students

I read with interest the Dec. 16 column by Ned Hickson ("My Intuition Tells Me Our Kids Will Be Drowning in Tuition") regarding the high cost of education now and in the foreseeable future.

I have always held Mr. Hickson in high regard and generally appreciate his sense of humor. In this particular article, I must take him to task for what I feel is a very perplexing and unfortunate take on the scholarship programs available to graduating seniors and other adults in our community.

While I wholeheartedly agree that post high school education is beyond the reach of many, if not most, average- or low-income families, I flatly disagree with the insinuation that "Fortunately, there are lots of scholarships for students who consistently earn a 4.0 GPA" suggests that those with less are regularly excluded.

I am the vice president and scholarship chairman of Western Lane Community Foundation (WLCF) and actually gave one of the presentations he referenced. I purposely noted that each parent and/or student should never keep from applying for a scholarship because they think they don't meet the scholastic minimums



but should let the granting organization make a determination regarding their eligibility.

Many organizations like WLCF, Rotary, etc., do in fact use many other criteria such as financial need, outside activities, volunteerism, sports, scholastic improvement, attendance at community college, and the like rather than simply high scholastic achievement in determining their scholarship awards.

Many, if not most, of our scholarship awards go each year to students with significantly lower GPAs than 4.0.

Our assumption is that those with 4.0 GPAs will get potentially full rides directly from the schools they will attend. If, during my presentation, I said or implied that there was little hope for financial assistance for average students like Mr. Hickson and myself, please forgive me. Quite the opposite, in fact.

I strongly encourage each and every family grappling with the huge task of financing further education to apply for as many

scholarships, grants and other financial assistance as possible and I wish them the very best with their applications and potential interviews.

Degrees are not the only answer to future success, but they sure can give one a step ahead. To address the billowing cost of education, call, write, vote and maybe even strong arm your elected officials.

I think that is the only solution to this national problem.

Tom Bassett
 Vice President & Scholarship
 Chairman, WLCF

Help keep local shops open

Florence has many little Mom and Pop shops that people like me and you decided to take the chance and open with the hope that it will pay the bills and bring food to the table.

For a thriving community, it is essential that people will be able to open businesses and make a

decent living from them. But it will not happen if we as a community will not make a conscious choice to shop there. We have the power to keep the local shops open. It is in our hands to make sure they stay in business and feeding their families.

So let's see a movie in our local City Lights Cinemas, buy Christmas presents on Bay Street, shop organic and from local farmers at the Real Food Co-op, dine organic in Riverside Cafe, eat in the many other restaurants in town, and many more — even if we once had a bad experience with them, or even if it means more than one stop, and even if it is a dollar or two more.

The big chain stores (and Eugene) are not going anywhere, and we can always shop there if we have to (and find entertainment there), but let's take a little break from them and do all that at the little Mom and Pops in town, and let's make Florence a happy place to live in.

Liat Meller
 Florence

YESTERDAY'S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME

The History Channel

- On Jan. 2, 1897, American author Stephen Crane survives the sinking of The Commodore off the coast of Florida. He will turn the harrowing adventure into his classic short story "The Open Boat."

- On Dec. 29, 1915, the French National Assembly formally cedes the land that holds the British war cemeteries to Great Britain, ensuring that even as World War I was being fought, its most sacred monuments would be forever protected.

- On Dec. 30, 1922, in post-revolutionary Russia, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, also known as the Soviet Union) is established, comprising a confederation of Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine and the future republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

- On Jan. 3, 1938, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, an adult victim of polio, founds the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, later renamed the March of Dimes Foundation. The virus, which affects the central nervous system, flourished in contaminated food and water and was easily transmitted.

- On Dec. 28, 1954, Oscar-winning actor Denzel Washington is born in Mount Vernon, N.Y. In 2002, for his performance as a corrupt cop in "Training Day," Washington became the first black man to win the Best Actor Academy Award since Sidney Poitier in 1964.

- On Jan. 1, 1973, Roseann Quinn, a 27-year-old New York teacher, visits Tweed's Bar in Manhattan and is picked up by her soon-to-be killer. The incident inspired the cautionary novel "Looking for Mr. Goodbar," later made into a movie starring Diane Keaton.

- On Dec. 31, 1999, the United States hands over control of the Panama Canal, putting the strategic waterway into Panamanian hands for the first time. A ship heading from New York to San Francisco can save about 7,800 miles by taking the Panama Canal rather than sailing around South America.

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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.

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