

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

# Opinion



## The importance of accepting what homelessness isn't

There are a lot of things we're proud of as Oregonians: The scenic beauty that constantly surrounds us.

Our generally progressive thinking on important issues.

Being outside of California. Yet, amid all the things about Oregon that make us proud, there's one thing I find it hard to admit about my beloved state.

While homelessness has declined around the nation, Oregon continues to have the highest percentage of homeless families with children. Between 2015 and 2016, the

number of homeless families decreased in 41 states across America while, in Oregon, we experienced a 2.5 percent increase — the fifth highest in the nation.

Right after California.

According to a report released in November by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), more than half of Oregon's homeless families (60.5 percent) are without shelter, either living on the street, in cars or in tents without that scenic beauty I mentioned earlier.

As much as we want to tell ourselves that most of the homeless are drug addicts, criminals or suffering from mental disorders, the fact is more than half of the homeless living without shelter in Oregon — more than 7,000 — are either school-aged or displaced veterans.

To bring it a little closer to home, each day, 92 students between the Siuslaw and Mapleton School Districts go to class, participate in school activities and finish the day without a permanent home to go to.

The fact is, more often they are those whose faces we recognize each day but who never say a word about their homelessness. They are mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. They are students, cooks, part-time employees,

away from the kind of financial crisis that could lead to homelessness.

That's not the kind of stereotype we want to think about, but one we have to be willing to accept in order to affect the kind of change that will, in turn, changes the lives of so many of our homeless in Oregon.

Today in Florence, we have an opportunity to affect that kind of change by participating in — and supporting — National Homeless Persons Memorial Day. It's a day that has been set aside each year since 1990 to raise awareness of those who don't have a place to call home, as well as remember those who have died as a result of being homeless.

Between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., consider donating any of the following supplies (new or used) at KXCR Radio (across

from the library on Ninth Street) or City Lights Cinema, 1930 Highway 101: Tents, tarps, sleeping bags, ponchos, warm waterproof jackets, blankets, gloves, warm hats and hand warmers, cotton socks, flashlights and batteries, fast food or grocery gift cards, canned foods and personal hygiene items.

While the bigger solution to homelessness in Oregon will require more than donations of food and clothing, our willingness to acknowledge the homeless in our community by offering support is an important step toward achieving something else we can all be proud of as Oregonians.

*Write Siuslaw News editor Ned Hickson at nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com or P.O. Box 10, Florence, Ore. 97439.*

### From the Editor's Desk

NED HICKSON

As it stands, 4.3 percent of Siuslaw's student body is homeless. By comparison, the statewide average is 3.7 percent.

Before we can truly address the issue of homelessness, we must be willing to understand that the majority of those who are living their lives without a home aren't those on the street whose faces we often avoid.

unemployed veterans and senior citizens faced with deciding between medication, food or shelter.

By stereotyping the homeless as addicts or criminals, we insulate ourselves from the reality of homelessness, and how close we all are from a life without shelter. Truth be told, nearly half of Americans live less than two paychecks

### LETTERS

#### I'll never doubt again

Imagine my surprise when I googled "Manitou Springs Great Fruitcake Toss," and discovered that it really exists. I will never again doubt anything that Ned Hickson says.

*Todd Smitherman  
 Florence*

#### Lesson to be learned

Lost Valley Ranch, a proposed 30,000 confined animal feeding operation dairy, is planning to open on 7,288 acres of the Boardman Tree Farm located in the Columbia River Gorge. It brings into question environmental and health issues, as well as out-of-state ownership of Oregon land.

Lost Valley Ranch would be located within 30 minutes of an existing ThreeMile Canyon Farms, one of the country's largest dairies, with 8,000 acres of land and 70,000 animals — which has already demonstrable visible impact on the environment. The gases from the ThreeMile operation are creating a haze over the Gorge.

Adding Lost Valley Ranch will put a huge amount of waste into the ground and air. The data for these emissions is mind-boggling. It is

estimated that 55,000 cows produce a ton of manure a minute — a nonstop ammonia emission. In addition to ammonia, cow manure contains hydrogen sulfide and methane gas, which are the three toxic materials of most concern.

Gases such as ammonia and nitrogen are causing acidification of the gorge ecosystems. Oceans show this same acidification (and associated rising temperatures). So it is not just the haze that we can see, it is the toxins that we cannot see.

While Lost Valley Ranch is not ThreeMile Canyon Farms, it will be another mega-industry owned by out-of-state families whose names I have been unable to find in print.

At the Threemile Canyon farms, 358 products were recalled (Two Willamette Valley companies, Salem's NORPAC and Corvallis' Stahlbush Island Farms both bought processed vegetables under the Organic by Nature label.)

In addition to consumer health risks, lawsuits claiming minimum-wage violations, long working days without breaks, gender bias, animal abuse practices, and workers complaining of respiratory distress such as burning eyes, sore throats and other ailments.

My recollection from watching the documentary on this operation at City Lights Cinemas is that the animals were inoculated to protect them from respiratory problems. It seems the animals in this respect are better protected than their workers.

Violations of safety hazards resulted in 12 citations from Oregon OSHA, as well as punishment for engaging in union organization efforts. I believe it is a sign of things to come if we do nothing and run the risk of becoming a big factory farm state

We need to protect the state's recreation, tourism and agricultural area of the Columbia River Gorge by not allowing another mega (CAFO) confined animal feeding operation in Oregon.

We must protect human health and planetary health by calling our legislators and insisting that the permit for Lost Valley Ranch be denied.

Those who do will be in good company along with organizations like the Columbia Riverkeeper, Friends of Family Farmers, Food and Water Watch, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Center for Food Safety, WaterWatch of Oregon, Humane Oregon, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the Humane Society of the United States, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, and Socially Responsible Agricultural Project.

*Nan Harvey  
 Florence*



#### By the numbers

Just finished reading the latest edition (Saturday, Dec. 17) of the Siuslaw News and once again I see in the Letters to the Editor more folks who can't seem to accept the Trump presidency.

The main contention seems to be that Clinton won the popular vote by over 1.5 million votes — or at least more than President-elect Donald Trump.

I can concede she did that. But let's toss around a few other figures I think are important to note.

If my figures are correct, there are 3,141 counties in which Trump won (3,084); Clinton won only 57.

There are 62 counties in the state of New York, of which Trump won 46 and Hillary won just 16. There are 5 counties in New York City, from which Clinton won by well over 2 million votes.

Those 5 counties alone could have accounted for her winning the popular vote. Those same 5 counties comprise only 319 square miles of the United States' 3,797,000 square miles.

Therefore, in a country that includes nearly 4 million counties, the folks living in 319 square miles of it shouldn't be able to dictate the outcome of our national election by their heavily populated numbers. By popular vote, a few densely populated Democratic cities like Los Angeles, Chicago and New York City could essentially speak for the rest of our country.

Once again, this shows the wisdom of our

very capable forefathers when they conceived the Electoral College into our system.

Thank God for them and God bless America.  
*Tony Cavarno  
 Florence*

#### Praise for post office

My husband Willie and I left Florence for a senior facility in California some three years ago.

However, we have continued to request that Florence Habitat for Humanity send cards to family and friends on our behalf. It saves shopping, shipping, packaging and everyone is delighted to receive the elegant handmade cards indicating that a donation been made in their name.

This year, I goofed and mailed my labels to a street address instead of the P.O. Box. Twice!

I want to praise the Florence Post Office for 1) Returning the first package to me, and 2) Catching the second one after it was brought back to the facility, (undeliverable to street address, no boxes). Diane caught it and put it into P.O. Box., ensuring it arrived at its correct destination this morning.

That's above and beyond the call of duty! It's just one example of why Florence was a great place to live. Our "bestest" to all of you for a Merry Christmas.

*Barbara Prisbe-Sutton  
 Oceanside, Calif.  
 Formerly of 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 or poetry will not be published.

All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

Write to:

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## Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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**Saturday Issue**—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

#### NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$71; 10-weeks subscription, \$18; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$94; 10-weeks subscription, \$24; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$120; Out of United States — 1-year subscription, \$200; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

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