

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



The cultural dangers of social media without consequence

dinner where he was the keynote speaker, Murrow spoke of the new television medium and the potential effects it could have on journalism and our society as a whole.

Known as his now famous “Lights in a Box Speech,” Murrow explained how the new medium had the potential to teach, educate and inspire — but that it would require us to ensure it would be used towards those ends.

“Otherwise,” he said, “it is merely wires and lights in a box.”

This past Sunday, like millions of others, I heard about the murder of 74-year-old Robert Godwin Sr., who was randomly gunned down during a live stream on Facebook by Steve Stephens.

I chose not to watch the footage, but millions of others did, sharing it and tagging people despite pleas from

Godwin’s family members not to do so.

This horrific use of social media came less than a month after a live Facebook streaming of a 15-year-old girl being sexually assaulted by a gang of six individuals in Chicago.

More than 40 people watched the assault live.

media platforms such as Facebook and others succumbing to the worst — rather than the best — we have to offer as a society.

It’s human nature to be drawn to things that disturb us. It’s the reason we gawk at the scene of accidents; why there are more NCIS spin-offs than

that, while we have become increasingly engaged in sharing our thoughts and experiences with more people than ever before, we have simultaneously come to accept that we are sharing those very things with people we will likely never meet.

Through that acceptance we are slowly laying the groundwork for the kind of social disconnect that we have begun to see with live streaming of disturbing events — and, perhaps even more disturbing, having them shared hundreds of thousands of times by others.

In a way, social media is promoting a culture of digital-ized peeping Toms, encouraging us to gawk through an endless array of partially open windows into the lives of others — many of whom we don’t truly know.

We can leave comments and engage in the conversations of strangers without consequence

or accountability.

It’s an era of communication unlike any other, and ultimate repercussions on our culture remain to be seen.

In the same way that Murrow expressed the need for us to have a willingness to use the medium of television to teach, educate and inspire, we need to ask ourselves what direction we will take with the evolution of social media.

Will we succumb to the worst of our nature or the best of it?

Will our smartphones and other digital devices be utilized to improve the way we communicate and broaden our understanding of each other and the world?

Or will they prove to be little more than micro chips and lights in an even smaller box?

Write to Ned Hickson at: nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

From the Editor’s Desk

NED HICKSON

No one reported it or called police.

It wasn’t until the following day, when the girl’s mother reported her missing, that authorities discovered the video and eventually the girl’s whereabouts.

In the months leading up to the Presidential election, and in the months that have followed, I’ve watched social

any other genre on TV; and why Greek mythology is full of cautionary tales that end in tragedy. We find a certain comfort in recognizing when the mistakes of others have lead to their misfortune — and how we can avoid making those same mistakes.

But things are different in this era of social media communalism. It’s no small irony

LETTERS

WE NEED YOUR HELP

I attended the recent Siuslaw School Board meeting at the plea of a flyer bearing the above title. We were asked to come show the school board that Florence has neither a conservative or liberal position regarding sanctuary schools.

I went to represent the caring, respectful position; I went to speak for the importance of creating a safe and welcoming school environment for all students, as well as their families.

I am a teacher who works with immigrants.

I have found that they are my most respectful and appreciative students. I also see how they are extremely dedicated to helping their families and their community.

I know how incredibly hard they work. Many work two jobs and come to school. None of my immigrant students receive social services.

Many immigrants have come to our country to escape dangerous living conditions or poverty. Some seek political asylum in our democratic country. In the majority of cases, those who arrive without documentation did so because they are lacking the funds, connections or time to wait.

Most all of them would like to be legal residents and citizens, but there currently isn’t a path for them — so they must live in constant fear of being deported and being separated from family members.

I believe our schools and community must support and protect all of its children and their families. Recently, the Springfield School Board passed a resolution to support all students and their families.

They reaffirmed policies and laws already in place against discrimination and bullying, and also added new language to address how the district would protect student information and interact with U.S. Immigration and ICE.

They didn’t use the buzz word “sanctuary,” but instead were able to reestablish a climate of safety and respect, given our present threat to immigrant students.

I hope that our Siuslaw School Board will see the value of creating such a resolution as well.

Leonora Kent
Florence

INTEGRATE THE FOURTH “R” INTO EDUCATION

Timothy Tuttle’s April 15 letter in Siuslaw News discussed “Larger Concerns About Education.” He stresses the need for an overhaul of schools to move them into the 21st century.

I strongly agree with his views.

A number of years ago, I retired from the University of Oregon. During my long teaching career, I was first a faculty member in mathematics, then in computer science, and then in education. I founded the International Society for Technology in Education, which is a large nonprofit professional society dedicated to improving appropriate use of computer technology in schools.

I headed this organization for 19 years.

Both before my retirement, and in the years since, I have written extensively about ways to improve our educational system.

Our schools stress the first 3Rs — Reading, WRiting, and ARithmetic. However, the fourth R — Reasoning — seems to be left out. One of the major goals in education is to help students become better at solving the types of problems they are currently encountering and/or will encounter in their futures.

Nowadays, information and communication technology is a very valuable and increasingly powerful aid to learning about solving the types of problems in every subject area taught in our schools.

I recommend integrating the routine use of computer technology into all grades and all subject areas, kindergarten through high school.

This includes integrating the fourth “R” into reading, writing, and arithmetic.

David Moursund
Florence

PRESIDENT TRUMP’S PEERLESS LEGACY

President Trump’s thoughtful tide of proposals of either restructuring or eliminating socially provocative programs such as Meals on Wheels, clean water enforcement and public education must be compared to his attempts at deregulating free-market forces reforming such “give-aways” as Social Security, Medicare or open internet access.

After lengthy research, the following list seems to reflect which of his ideas meet customary peer-reviewed standards:

Rand Dawson
Florence

NOT A MILITARY TOWN

In response to “Not Glorifying War” (April 5 Siuslaw News), the group who came to support an alternative to a military park went unnoticed because there was no room in chambers. They had to stand in the hallway unseen and not called upon.

My main objection is that the City Council displaying military weaponry in a city park is not projecting the image of what our city represents. Nor do I feel it would serve to educate.

Mr. Spayd’s (Deeds of Valor, Inc.) letter to the editor contains some alternative facts. One is that “Florence is a military town.” Military towns such as Colorado Springs, San Diego,

Mountain Home and such have thousands of active duty personnel and a visible, economic impact on the communities in which they are located.

Florence, in fact, is a town of 8,000-plus people; one-third are retired people of varying backgrounds. A percentage of these would be military; others engage in a wide spectrum of volunteer activities, caregiving and art — to mention a few. This would not affirm a military designation to the City of Florence.

Honoring Brigadier General Benjamin King is on target. Perhaps if they had Kingwood St. between Ninth and 35th named in his honor, that would bring more name recognition than designing a military park around his name.

Nan Harvey
Florence

THE FLAG IS THE ONLY SIGN WE NEED

Recently, at a city council and school board meeting, as well as a town hall meeting with Congressman Peter Defazio, it was noted that there have been numerous raids by ICE agents in Florence. There was one raid (reported in Siuslaw News) that four illegal immigrants were taken.

The issue of Oregon being a sanctuary state and local schools needing to be declared sanctuaries — and off limits to ICE agents — keep coming up.

It has also been suggested at these meetings that local businesses and the City of Florence put up signs indicating Florence is a “safe place” for all people (LGBTQ, anti-bullying, etc.).

I don’t believe that putting up anti-bully or anti-discrimination signs around the community will make a difference.

I would really like to see this polarized country be united. However, there will need to be compromise on both sides for whatever issues (sanctuary, health care, taxes, etc.)

To do that, we must first remember why we are united.

The colors of the U.S. flag have meaning.

White: Purity and innocence;

Red: Hardiness and valor;

Blue: Vigilance, perseverance and justice.

These characteristics include what the proponents of safe spaces and sanctuaries are attempting to proclaim.

The American flag is the appropriate symbol and therefore should be the only sign necessary within our community display.

Virginia Reynolds
Florence

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. 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, argumentative and anonymous letters or poetry will not be published.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large. The newspaper does not publish partisan letters that promote or endorse local political candidates based solely on their record, reputation and qualifications; this constitutes paid political advertising.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes. This also constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any such letter.

The newspaper is particularly sensitive to organized “letter-writing campaigns.” The newspaper reserves the right to reject any such letter.

Write to: editor@thesiuslawnews.com

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