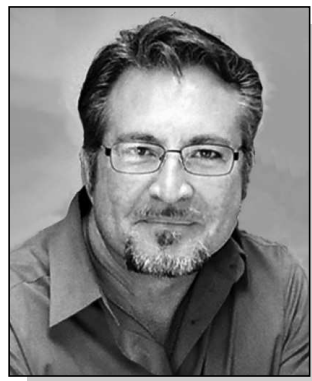


Siuslaw News
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Opinion

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.



American flag stands for freedom's infinite notion

their shirts into white stripes while officers' wives offered their flannel petticoats for red stripes.

The blue cloth coat of Capt. Abraham Swartwout was utilized for the Union rectangle adorned with 13 stars — all sewn together in haste amid cannon fire before being hoisted in a symbolic gesture representing a unified people under the United States of America.

It was 240 years ago today that the Second Continental Congress passed the Flag Resolution, officially adopting what would be the first of 27 versions of what we recognize as the symbol representing the United States.

Less than two months later, on Aug. 3, 1777, soldier reinforcements arriving at Ft. Stanwix from Massachusetts brought news of Congress's adoption of a flag consisting of 13 stripes alternating red and white, along with a smaller blue field with 13 white stars "representing a new constellation."

In that moment, while under siege from the British, American soldiers cut up

Over the course of more than two centuries, Americans have waved our flag in celebration, hoisted it in defiance, wrapped themselves in it to represent achievement on behalf of all Americans, and draped it over those who have sacrificed their lives for the values our flag represents.

At the same time, some have even burned it in protest — an act that I personally find reprehensible and more than ironic, considering it is the very ideal our

flag represents that affords them that freedom to begin with.

Admittedly, as a kid, I didn't think much about those things as we stood — hand over our hearts — and gave

means loyalty, faithfulness or commitment to something — in this case, the American ideal of a democratic republic founded on rights and freedoms that support the pursuit of happiness.

make their own choice.

In the same way that I didn't think about these things as a kid, we seem to be thinking less and less about them as a nation. However, today's lack of appreciation stems more from a growing indifference or apathy rather than a lack of childhood perspective.

While I recognize we are far from perfect as a nation, the American flag itself isn't about representing a particular policy, election, partisanship, event or individual in history.

It symbolizes the ideal of freedom, the hope afforded by that freedom, and our commitment as Americans in the endless pursuit of both.

Ultimately, it stands for more than the past or even the moment we live in; it's a reminder of the infinite notion of freedom.

According to the New York State Historical Association, Capt. Swartwout was eventually

reimbursed with a voucher for the use of his coat in the creation of our nation's first makeshift flag.

Though the exact amount is disputed by scholars, the one thing they — and I'd like to believe all Americans — can agree on is that the ideal which inspired the hasty patchwork of that first flag is something immeasurable.

Today, as we recognize the American flag in ceremonies across our nation, I hope we'll consider the pledge to liberty and justice it represents, as well as the notion of a people undivided in their pursuit of freedom.

Even when that freedom includes not recognizing our flag at all.

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From the Editor's Desk

NED HICKSON

our Pledge of Allegiance each morning in school. At the time, it was just something we did that ingrained within us a reverence for the flag I still carry today.

Over the last few decades, I've watched that same reverence erode as the morning Pledge of Allegiance in many schools has become optional — and in some cases challenged or dissuaded — out of concern for political correctness.

Granted, reciting the pledge to our flag contains the term "Allegiance," which

I have no problem aligning myself with those principles.

And while "under God" is also a part of our flag's pledge, every American has the right to eliminate it if they choose, in the same way they have the freedom to practice a religion — or, if they so choose, practice no religion at all.

Again, it's because of what the flag represents that Americans — unlike many living in countries throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa and parts of Europe — have the right to

LETTERS

HEART IS CENTER OF OUR COMMUNITY

On Saturday, June 10, members of the Florence community answered the call to support Malakai Kirk's bone marrow transplant (See May 27 issue of Siuslaw News.) It's estimated that 500 people showed up in droves at Siuslaw Middle School to bid on and win the more than 200 items donated by local businesses and individuals.

Organizing an event of this magnitude usually takes months of planning. This one came together in a mere month thanks to the amazing energy and effort of many supporters.

Thanking everyone who helped make this possible would fill most of the newspaper. Shannon Graham had the vision and was the catalyst to make this event happen.

Marsha Klosterman, Carrie McNeill and

Karen Perry, who attended the first planning meeting on May 9, brought their Delta Gamma auction expertise to organize every detail.

Andy Marohl, Siuslaw Middle School principal, made the school available and rolled up his sleeves to help with set up, facilitation and clean up. He even pushed a broom when needed.

The Siuslaw News, KCST, KCFM and KEZI broadcast information to the masses, and invited community support that included Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue and Siuslaw Viking cheerleaders. Star Wars Stormtroopers with Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker had the force with them and posed for special photos.

The Siuslaw Elementary School Kindness Club, started by Kaylee Graham, sold Italian sodas and donated the proceeds. Craig's BBQ donated half of sales of its cheeseburger meal and are continuing their donation through this week.

Many local businesses contributed items and gift certificates. As you visit them, please say thank you for all they do. There are many worthwhile events in our community that our local restaurants and shops generously support.

Special recognition is deserved for school employees who contributed many hours and amazing energy to this event as they worked full time to complete this school year and assist with the organization and facilitation of this event.

Thanks to the amazing generosity of organizers and attendees, the financial burden for Malakai's family will be lessened, with the event raising \$30,866. The family's expected out-of-pocket expense is estimated to be at least \$100,000, and additional fundraising events are being organized.

Donations for those who couldn't make it to the Gifts of the Heart Auction can be made at Oregon Pacific Bank to Malakai's Bone Marrow Transplant.

Malakai is scheduled to begin chemotherapy in August and will undergo bone marrow transplant when the doctor deems his body is ready.

The community's ongoing support is greatly appreciated — and the support of this Gifts of the Heart Auction clearly shows the love and

support of our community.

— *Jacquie Beveridge*
Florence

THANKS FOR BRINGING SITUATION TO LIGHT

Early last month, there was an article about the Memory Loss Respite Center of Florence in Siuslaw News (May 3) that noted how the center is low on volunteers and needs help from the community. Mark Brennan wrote a lovely piece about our struggle.

We now have additional volunteers who have passed the criminal record check and are being oriented to the respite center program and its participants. An accepting attitude and compassion for others, along with volunteering four hours a week, are the main requirements.

We can always use more help from those who are willing to volunteer.

Currently, we also have some new participants in the program who are fitting in well. It is a low-pressure setting and more participants are always welcome.

Our thanks again to Siuslaw News for bringing our situation to light.

— *Carol Krasel, president*
Board of Directors
Memory Care Respite Center of Florence

LET THE PRESIDENT

DO HIS JOB

Our U.S. Constitution allows us to view both sides of the national situation thanks to Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press. Yet it seems too many newspapers only report on what is damaging to President Trump, his family, his character and his staff.

For the first time in my life, I saw this past election as an opportunity to vote for someone not a part of the established political "regime." I wholeheartedly voted for Donald Trump, confidently feeling he could give our country back to "We the People."

I feel President Trump is the best thing that

has happened to our country and I'm not sure why people can't see that?

Or won't.

The current political establishment is clearly against him because of fear — they don't think that "We the People" are smart enough to govern ourselves.

I believe it is because of the very slanted fake news, which feels like a coup to obstruct all the good things President Trump is doing for our country.

President Trump is a genius who knows exactly what to do to give us back our country. However, it seems he's tied to the media's whipping post and is being lashed out at by Congress and the political regime.

We have crippled our own growth and economy with red tape and binders full of rules that Trump has thrown out.

We are taking a killing on our trade deals yet Congress wants to fight the very man who has commonsense to stop all that madness and return our country to its Constitutional rights.

The federal government has taken over many of the states' rights. President Kennedy tried to stop the far-reaching powers of the federal government a long time ago when he wanted to reinstate the gold backing for our currency.

In our Constitution, the federal government has no rights over our money, our alcohol, marijuana laws, education or health insurance.

I believe President Trump is concerned about our safety as individuals and freedom of our country and has taken out the special interest groups that have ruined our Mother Earth.

Yes, we can have clean energy now because gas and oil, big pharmaceuticals and industrial farming no longer run our country.

It is unconstitutional for our elected officials to be backed by special interest groups.

President Trump was the first one to be elected without the help of special interest groups.

Let him do his job for the sake of our best interests as a nation.

— *Guthrie Wilson*
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, or letters from outside our readership area will not be published.

Send letters to:
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