

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

Opinion

Poverty, housing issues real in our River City

“You got trouble my friend, Right now, right here in River City.”
— *The Music Man*

Twenty-nine years ago I discovered this wonderful city on the beautiful Central Oregon Coast. I vowed to retire here, which I did 14 years ago. I’ve been active in the community since I moved here but recently began volunteering in the Siuslaw Public School District. For me, it’s been an epiphany. I met so many hardworking teachers, administrators and staff — and of course volunteers. However, the epiphany came in meeting the students and learning of their family life in the midst of this retirement and tourist community.

It’s not difficult to get kids to talk, at least those in the elementary school grades. At that age, they are delightfully honest and forthcoming. So many of these children live in single-parent households — most with a mom and maybe one or two siblings.

According to the U.S. census, the average income for a female in the Florence area is \$16,184 — a figure that is below the poverty level for

even a single female, let alone a single mother.

Although I did find another figure of \$19,356 for a female supporting herself with one or more children at home, it is still below the poverty level.

Another statistic states that 14.2 percent of the population of Florence is living in poverty.

Poverty in Florence never really occurred to me. I had always assumed that, given exposure to primarily my own peer group, Florence was a wealthy — or at least well-off — retirement community.

I began to look around.

I talked with a number of young people, including servers in our many restaurants and clerks in local retail establishments. Most have young children who they are struggling to support.

As a tourist town, most of these Gen-X-ers and

Millenials were lucky to work eight months out of the year. If one includes the citizens living in the Florence metropolitan area, from Dunes City to Heceta Head Lighthouse, I estimate that the folks living in poverty to be almost twice the 14.2 percent in the Florence estimate.

That’s roughly 3,000 men, women and children living at

children have dinner through the school’s Twilight program each day. I saw several children on the school bus on Fridays with backpacks filled with packaged food.

He explained that the backpacks were for kids who probably wouldn’t have much — if any — food available for them on the weekends.

What is truly disconcerting is that the current \$1 billion-plus shortfall in our state treasury due to recent budget cuts from Washington D.C. means that the social programs helping these children and their families are tenuous at best.

Affordable housing in Florence is practically non-existent.

Family wage jobs are few and far between.

What can be done?

To begin with, we need to recognize that the poverty issues in Florence are very real.

People who are poor and hungry become disenfranchised; children who are poor and hungry don’t learn.

It’s a dangerous situation for any community, as well as our society in general.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

By ERIC HAUPTMAN
FORMER MAYOR OF DUNES CITY (2007-11)

or below the poverty level.

As a volunteer school bus monitor, I see where and how many children live in our area. A lot of them live in multi-family situations: two older brothers or sisters with their own children, along with an uncle, aunt or grandmother.

Another statistic that shocked me was that 64 percent of our elementary school children are on free or reduced lunches.

According to Siuslaw Elementary School Principal Mike Harkleroad, 110-115

LETTERS

WHAT YOU READ OR HEAR ISN’T ALWAYS TRUE

I agree with Ian Eales’ letter (Siuslaw News, July 5). During my 80-plus years of life, I have learned what you read or hear isn’t always true.

For example, Ned Hickson’s editorial “From Dune to Shing Sea” (July 5). When my grandson was in high school, he and some of his friends had a fire on the beach. Two deputies from Lane County made them put the fire out and leave the beach.

Then, my son was given a ticket for cutting and removing wood from the beach. The Oregon Agricultural Law says you can’t use a saw, wheelbarrow, etc., and can’t take anything off the beach.

In the ‘60s, then-governor Tom McCall asked the people to cut the logs on the beach for wood because tourists were climbing on them and waves would roll the logs over on them — killing or crippling them.

I remember the beachcombing days. Six guys, including myself, would go beachcombing for glass balls and floats that would wash up on the beach. We all had old cars with big tires.

Laws are passed and things change. New regulations should be posted on all the beaches.

—Virgle Bechtold
Florence

HAVE MEDICAL ISSUES? BE A EUROPEAN TOURIST

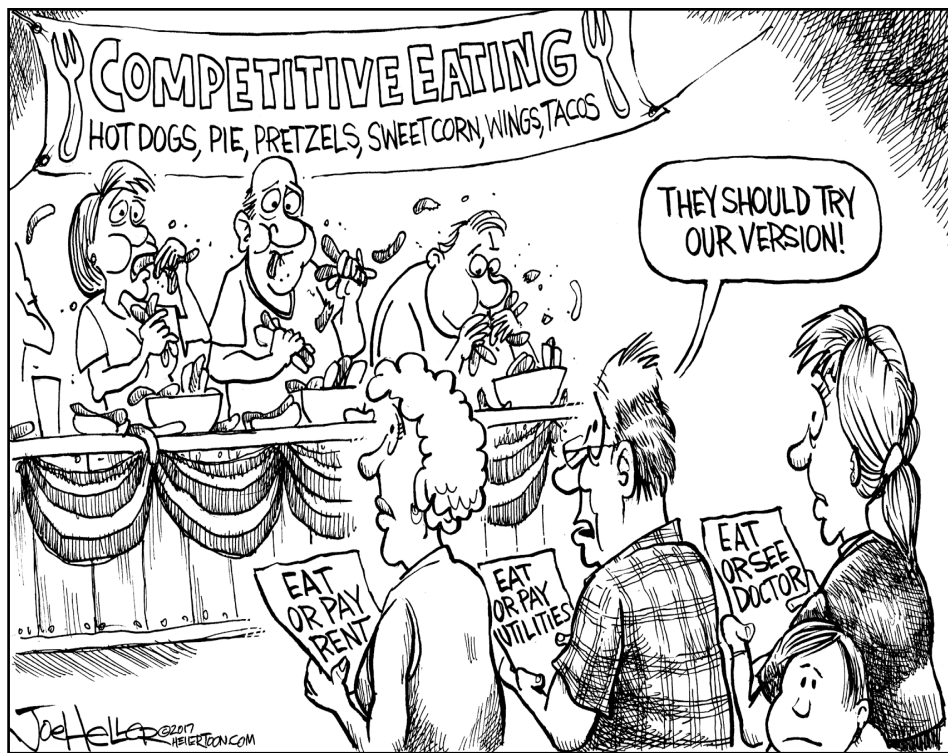
My wife and I have Medicare and supplemental insurance. We both have had major surgeries on our body limbs which has been 90 percent covered.

I’ve had cataract surgery which was almost completely covered. Now, I discovered that hearing is not covered although both of us have been informed that “nothing that is needed is not covered.”

It seems like Medicare and our insurance does not cover anything other than seeing and walking.

A few years ago, I rented a 17th century farmhouse on the Tuscan coast of Italy. One night I fell and tweaked my back. The next day, our housekeeper took me to a small local hospital in Orbetello where X-rays were taken and I was given a muscle relaxant shot.

About a week later I had a rash on my back that spread to my left leg. The housekeeper said it was Saint Anthony’s Fire — sort of like shingles.



Once again, she took me to the local hospital, where two doctors looked at the rash and suggested she drive me to a larger hospital in the city of Grosseto. The doctor there prescribed a salve and four pills and, within 10 days, everything was clear.

Cost to me was about \$30 for the prescriptions and nothing for the three hospital visits and treatment.

A few years ago, a friend was in the Vatican and had a heart attack. He was moved into the Vatican hospital and was there for two months being treated. Upon being released, he returned to the U.S. and, more than a year later, received a bill for \$1,800.

The moral of the story?

If you have major medical problems, make sure to be a tourist in Italy, Germany or any other European country; you will be taken care of.

—Win Jolley
Florence

LEAVING FLORENCE

I am disappointed. Florence is not the retirement community the Chamber of Commerce would like others to believe. It’s a great town to visit but is a town with limited amenities and resources that one needs to sustain a quality lifestyle as a senior female.

I’ve been here since January 2016 and built a home in The Reserve. I thought this was my last stop in life. The home is now up for sale and I’m looking forward to leaving Oregon.

For such a small town that lacks

amenities and resources, you would think all the “do-gooders” would want to improve this community and make it better for all of us.

I’m tired of the relentless asking for money, food or volunteering time to help the entitlement population here, including some who are committing crime and doing illegal drugs. The attitude of so many Florence residents is to give without questioning the results. For the rest of us (the taxpayers) the necessary services, amenities and resources are limited — and that affects the quality of life in Florence.

Just drive down Highway 101 and take in the view as you go into Old Town. There’s a lack of pride in land ownership and code enforcement.

So maybe the Helping Hands move to Highway 101 would enhance Florence’s image to the seasonal visitors.

—Jessica Rojas
Florence

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.

USPS# 497-660 Copyright 2017 © Siuslaw News

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.

James Rand
Jenna Bartlett
Ned Hickson
Erik Chalhoub

Susan Gutierrez
Cathy Dietz
Ron Annis
Jeremy Gentry

Oregon Group Publisher 541-265 8571
Publisher, ext. 318
Editor, ext. 313
Consulting Editor 831-761-7353
Email: echalhoub@register-pajaronian.com
Marketing Director, ext. 326
Office Supervisor, ext. 312
Production Supervisor
Press Manager

DEADLINES:

Wednesday Issue—General news, Monday noon; Budgets, four days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Monday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Monday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Friday 5 p.m.

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.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
Website and E-Edition: www.TheSiuslawNews.com

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.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this 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 letter that doesn’t follow the above criteria.

Send letters to:
nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

WHERE TO WRITE

Pres. Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414
FAX: 202-456-2461
TTY/TDD Comments:
202-456-6213
www.whitehouse.gov

Gov. Kate Brown
160 State Capitol
900 Court St.
Salem, Ore. 97301-4047
Governor’s Citizens’ Rep.
Message Line:
503-378-4582
www.oregon.gov/gov

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office
Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5244
541-431-0229
www.wyden.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office
Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3753/FAX: 202-228-3997
541-465-6750
www.merkley.senate.gov

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio
(4th Dist.)
2134 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6416
541-269-2609
541-465-6732
www.defazio.house.gov

State Sen. Arnie Roblan
(Dist. 5)
900 Court St. NE - S-417
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1705
FAX: 503-986-1080
Email: rep.ArnieRoblan@state.or.us

State Rep. Caddy McKeown
(Dist. 9)
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1409
Email: rep.caddymckeown@state.or.us

West Lane County Commissioner Jay Bozievich
125 E. Eighth St.
Eugene, OR 97401
541-682-4203
FAX: 541-682-4616
Email:
Jay.Bozievich@co.lane.or.us