

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.



Mass shootings will continue until we address the real smoking gun

One day before 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz murdered 15 students and two teachers, and injured 13 others during his mass shooting spree at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., 18-year-old Joshua Alexander O'Connor had been preparing to carry out his own mass shooting at ACES Alternative High in Everett, Wash., after choosing the school on the flip of a coin.

According to court records that included entries from his journal, O'Connor wrote that he "[Couldn't] wait to walk into that class and blow all those f---ers away."

The Washington teen was arrested Tuesday, Feb. 13, by Everett Police after his grandmother reported to authorities that she had discovered plans for the mass shooting in her grandson's journal, along with a semiautomatic rifle hidden in a guitar case.

The town of Everett is just miles from Marysville, Wash., where, in 2014, freshman Jaylen Fryberg lured four students around a lunch table at Marysville Pilchuck High School and gunned them down before killing himself.

A recent study of World

Health Organization (WHO) data published in the American Journal of Medicine showed that, among high-income nations, 91 percent of children ages 14 and younger who were killed by bullets lived in the United States. According to WHO, more youth were killed

violent criminal or mental history, and requiring all gun owners to be certified and licensed, I also believe that guns are *not* the problem — They are the symptom of a much larger epidemic threatening our society more than guns, opioids or partisan discourse.

Kingdom recognized what it described as "an epidemic of isolationism and loneliness impacting communication at community levels across the nation." As a result, Britain has taken the unprecedented step of appointing a minister of loneliness, Tracy Crouch, to address the challenge.

The trend of having fewer social connections on a community level — whether it be in school, at work or in social circles — is something former U.S. surgeon general Dr. Vivek Murthy says impacts self-esteem, the ability to empathize and leads to more likelihood of depression.

While it's true that we have more ways than ever before to communicate, it doesn't mean we are communicating better. We need to recognize that our devices are proving to be just that: Divisive.

Though I support the passage of stricter gun regulations and the need for increased security in our schools, they are only short-term solutions to a long-term problem that will persist until we are willing to recognize that each of us is already holding the smoking gun.

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From the Editor's Desk

NED HICKSON

by gunfire (1,637) in 2016 than during any year in the past millennium.

Naturally, the call for stricter gun regulations and tighter security measures at our schools has once again risen to the top of our nation's consciousness as the debate between the need to protect our Second Amendment rights goes head-to-head with the need to protect our children — and society as a whole — against those who would abuse those rights.

And while I do believe in common-sense gun regulations like banning high-capacity magazines and bump stock modifications, creating a universal background check and centralized recordkeeping system of gun purchases, barring the sale of guns to those with a

The real smoking gun is our growing lack of connection.

It's no small irony that in the "age of communication" the divide between people is growing and, along with it, a sense of mental and social isolation. Studies show that the more time we spend on social media with politically or ideologically likeminded people, the less fulfilled we feel and the less engaged we become within our own family, neighborhoods, schools and communities.

It's a shift in our culture over the past decade from which we are only now beginning to see the effects — beginning with our children, who sadly have become the canaries in our collective coal mine.

And not just in the U.S. Last week, the United



LETTERS

SO MUCH TO BE THANKFUL FOR

This is a letter to the quiet heroes, the positive role models, the wise and good hearted.

Thank you to the people who (twice) returned my wallet when I lost it at Fred Meyer's.

Thank you to River City Taxi for its care of aged and disabled in transporting for medical needs.

Thanks to the person who donated a sum to enable low-income folks to afford a community garden bed (peas, spinach, strawberries and more).

Thanks to the folks who clean up after their dogs.

Thanks to the folks who don't let their wood fires smolder day and night, poisoning their neighbors' air.

Thanks to the people who don't leave their dogs out on cold nights, and who provide a warm place for humans who have no where to go on those same cold nights.

And thanks for this newspaper.

With so much focus on the negative, I thought it would be a nice change to remember the good within our community.

—Carol Green Florence

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT AT GREENTREES

I feel I must respond to the angry letter from Jill Rizk ("Animals Also Have Right to Live," Feb. 14). I feel she is misinformed about the residents in Greentrees Village and would like to set the record straight.

Greentrees has 567 homes with close to 800 residents. Many of the people spoken so angrily about in the Letter to the Editor are just as heartbroken over the euthanasia of those bears. Greentrees had no part in that decision and didn't know it was going to happen until after the ODFW did it.

Our residents respected the bears and enjoyed seeing them when they visited. Residents were continually warned in the Greentrees Newsletter, at board meetings and by their district representatives about not feeding the bears or leaving things out haphazardly. They were also told not to put their garbage out until right before the garbage trucks came.

There may be the occasional individual who would ignore the warnings or would be careless, just like others in Florence can be sometimes.

Greentrees has always had bears because they return to their birth areas, and also because of the close proximity of the dump, as well as the landfill that had been there before it.

The range of the bears includes the dump, airport area, animal shelter, Greentrees itself and the hospital.

We have all learned to live with the bears and cherish them as part of our beautiful life experience here. It was those 800 residents of Greentrees Village who, along with other citizens of Florence, fought for months to get the bike path done in the way it is now.

The original plan would have devastated the foliage and vegetation that was the animal habitat for all wildlife in the area, including those magnificent bears. It was my understanding that when the necropsy was performed, they found garbage from Spruce Point and the hospital in their stomachs.

I would ask that instead of condemning the people of Greentrees, look into the big picture. I would think, living in bear country, that all facilities in the area would have bear-proof containers, as well as educate residents as they have in Greentrees.

—Vickie J. Martin Greentrees resident

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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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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, \$76; 6-month in-county, \$52; 10-weeks subscription, \$23; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$99; 6-month out-of-county, \$65; 10-weeks subscription, \$29; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$125; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$71.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
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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 only be published at the discretion of the editor.

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.

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