

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

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.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



Finding our common thread of sanity during a few days of ‘crazy’

After returning to Florence in 1996, I spent the next 20 years living in Old Town across from the Port of Siuslaw boardwalk. We grew accustomed to the arrival of the Davis Carnival during the annual Rhododendron Festival and living so close that we could practically high-five riders on the Tilt-o-Whirl without leaving the couch. The banging together of carnival rides late Tuesday night signaled the beginning of four days of craziness that transforms our quiet community of about 8,000 into a beautiful example of controlled chaos shared by upwards of 20,000 diverse visitors. For those four days, I always marvel at how our community transforms into an unlikely concoc-

tion of flower enthusiasts, bikers and tourists, all co-mingling over beers, art, carnival rides, fast cars, corn dogs and cotton candy. I’ve described it to others as Sturgis meets Mardi Gras, with a little Rose Festival thrown in — except even better since we have *rhododendrons*. Last year was the first year we haven’t lived in Old Town during Rhody Days. It was also the first year I saw the festival as something more than just a few days of much-needed craziness after a winter of cabin fever. Having the opportunity to travel the few miles from our home on the outskirts of town to the heart of the festival was like seeing it for the first time each day. It gave me a chance to step back and truly appreciate how, with each passing block, the crowds grew more diverse. Baseball-capped Korean War veterans talking ferent, when we’re given an opportunity — or the right circumstance — to do so. In the case of our annual Rhododendron Festival, as the carnival rides go up, people’s guards come down. Whether a biker or banker, policeman or pirate, there is an unspoken agreement and genuine interest in having that shared experience together — and an understanding that it wouldn’t work any other way. Under normal circumstances, these same people would likely pass each other without a word, assuming they would even be in the same vicinity. But it’s everyone’s willingness to participate in that little bit of “crazy” that becomes a common thread we all share for a few days each year. Once it’s over tomorrow, I have to wonder: Which days are crazier?

ing it for the first time each day. It gave me a chance to step back and truly appreciate how, with each passing block, the crowds grew more diverse. Baseball-capped Korean War veterans talking ferent, when we’re given an opportunity — or the right circumstance — to do so. In the case of our annual Rhododendron Festival, as the carnival rides go up, people’s guards come down. Whether a biker or banker, policeman or pirate, there is an unspoken agreement and genuine interest in having that shared experience together — and an understanding that it wouldn’t work any other way. Under normal circumstances, these same people would likely pass each other without a word, assuming they would even be in the same vicinity. But it’s everyone’s willingness to participate in that little bit of “crazy” that becomes a common thread we all share for a few days each year. Once it’s over tomorrow, I have to wonder: Which days are crazier?

From the Editor's Desk Ned Hickson

LETTERS

DO THE ENDS REALLY JUSTIFY THE MEANS?

Last weekend, Governor Kate Brown and the Democratic leadership of the Oregon State Senate made a bargain with Republicans who were boycotting the Senate. The Democrats wanted a vote on the Student Success Bill and they needed two Republicans to establish a quorum for the vote to proceed. In order to get the quorum, the Democratic leadership agreed to kill two key safety bills — one an omnibus gun violence prevention bill and another dealing with vaccines. Subsequently, the Student Success Bill passed with an 18-11 margin, without any votes from Republicans. Was this bargain necessary? Our governor had the power to reign in the boycotting Republicans, but she chose not to. Why was that? Did she and her legislative colleagues fear the backlash that might occur if she resorted to using the state police in a very public way? If our governor acted swiftly in the beginning, the quorum would have been met, the key education bill would have been passed, and two very important safety bills would advance. The Republican senators, most of whom feel safe in their districts, called her bluff and that of the Democratic Senate leaders, and they caved. This sounds very much like what is happening at the Federal level. The Democratic leadership doesn’t want to pursue impeachment for fear that the President’s base will mess up the elections.

A majority of the public demands that our legislators pass bills to protect us from gun violence and rampant diseases. Our state and federal leaders must stand tough and not bargain away what’s necessary to keep us safe. The ends do not always justify the means. —Michael Allen
Florence

RECENT LEGISLATION PART OF A ‘MAGIC SHOW’

On May 8 in Salem, citizens of Oregon witnessed a magic show provided by the Oregon Education Association (normally referred to as the OEA) and the Democrats who control the Oregon Legislature. They focused citizens’ attention on the education portion of the current budget while ignoring the other than education portion (OTE) of Oregon’s financial needs. It was much like a magician would use one hand to distract an audience during a magic show. Hopefully, when legislators tour their districts after this current session, they will be asked what happened to the OTE portion of the budget in this session? What happened to the budgets of OSP, ODOT, DHS, ODFW, ODE, etc.? Were those budgets increased or reduced? And of course, why was the kicker so large? In reality, it amounted to a non-interest bearing loan taken from citizens in the form of excess taxes over the past year. —Al Pearn
Florence

APPRECIATE SIUSLAW WATERSHED EFFORTS

I just wanted to share my appreciation and gratitude for the Siuslaw Watershed Council (SWC) and its efforts to help the ecosystem in Florence and other areas of Lane County. With its dedication and hard work, it has made it easier for such aquatic species as the Coho Salmon to travel through the creeks and rivers of the Lower Umpqua National Forest, as well as other Lane County areas. I would also like to thank the people of City Lights Cinemas for allowing the council to play eight short documentary films free to the public. I personally have watched the films and was impressed with what the people involved in the films were doing to help the aquatic habitats and their surrounding forests to grow and thrive. After all of the films were played, seven of the people who were in each documentary sat on the stage in the theater and answered questions asked by the audience. I enjoyed the films and think that it is very important to help protect and preserve the natural life on planet Earth. Without a safe environment in which to live, there is no hope for the future of our children. I am a father and am very concerned about the world my daughter lives in. The Earth might survive, but if we keep polluting the environment, we as the human species may not. —Ebram Hubbard
Florence

The beauty of a ‘Pageant’

This past Wednesday, I attended my very first Rhody Coronation. I have to admit I was a bit apprehensive. I never was one for “beauty pageants,” which is what I had assumed it would be like. The idea of judging teens based on things like how big their smile is or how gracefully they wave at the audience always seemed a bit misguided to me. The Rhody Coronation, I am happy to say, was nothing like what I expected. The evening was not about critiquing; the evening was about *celebrating* everyone on the junior and senior courts. On the stage was a diverse group of kids — all from different backgrounds and all being supported by their fellow contestants, the panel of judges and the audience. There were waves of applause for every prince

and princess. An intense sense of community and acceptance was felt throughout the auditorium; it really was beautiful. When performing their talents, I learned more about my peers than I

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Annalee Griffis SHS student intern

had in nearly two years of attending school with them. I had no idea how passionate my fellow students were about their goals and ambitions. Watching them, I felt a spark of inspiration and excitement for the future that I hadn’t felt in a while since becoming a senior. The one emotion that really characterized the evening was *pride* — for

my friends, for my fellow students and, most importantly, pride for my community. As I said, I was previously confused as to the appeal of the Rhody Coronation. I hadn’t understood what made it such a vital part of Florence’s Rhododendron Festival tradition. After all, it is just a “beauty pageant,” right? Wrong. After actually experiencing it myself, I saw that the Rhody Coronation was so much more than that. It is a celebration honoring the incredible kids who come from our beautiful town. It is a coming-of-age ritual — a metamorphosis from teen to adult; from princess to Queen Rhododendra.

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	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
OREGON 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	STATE SEN. ARNIE ROBLAN (DIST. 5) 900 Court St. NE - S-417 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1705 FAX: 503-986-1080 Email: Sen.ArnieRoblan@oregonlegislature.gov
U.S. SEN. RON WYDEN 221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg Washington, DC 20510 202-224-5244 541-431-0229 www.wyden.senate.gov	STATE REP. CADDY MCKEOWN (DIST. 9) 900 Court St. NE Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1409 Email: rep.caddymckeown@oregonlegislature.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	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