

EDITORIAL from page 1A

Between my arrival in Florence in 1981, departure in 1984 after graduating from Siuslaw High School, and eventual return in 1995, I have spent nearly 30 years in this community. I've seen struggle and controversy over those years as local government and community interest groups found themselves at odds over everything from housing and infrastructure to dunes protection and commercial development. Fred Meyer, condominiums higher than two stories tall in Old Town, the Justice Center, Florence Events Center, Three Rivers Casino — each brought a level of division within our community.

But nothing has approached what we are experiencing at this moment as nationally driven agendas on both sides of the divide — aided in no small part by wielding the power of social media — have trickled down into local conversation through grassroots efforts

aimed at influencing, dividing and claiming territory within local government, agencies and committees.

As Mayor Roger McCorkle said at that city council meeting back in 1997, “The issue is getting bigger and bigger, and it doesn't have to get bigger and bigger.”

To that end, beginning Aug. 12, *Siuslaw News* will be publishing the first in a series of investigative reports culminating from more than a year of researching thousands of documents, emails, texts and other information obtained through public records requests in order to understand the scope of the issue. This is in addition to hundreds of hours spent searching through social media sites and posts dating as far back as 2015. The end result is a road map of how we got to where we are, which events influenced that direction, what role our own coverage played in amplifying both right and left turns, and who the most prominent groups and individuals are giving directions.

The point of this series is not about assigning blame. It's not about right or wrong, left or right, conservative or liberal, choosing sides or pointing fingers — all of which are elements that got us here. Our hope is that by understanding how the many moving parts within our community have each contributed to arriving at this destination, we can at least have the option, as a community, to pump the brakes long enough to decide if this is the direction we wish to continue taking.

That being said, there are four consistent truths that I ask that you keep in mind throughout this series:

- 1) Primarily, each side is pursuing what they believe is in the best overall interest of our community, even if political in nature.
- 2) Neither side is without fault; both have utilized many of the same devices and resources to advance their goals.
- 3) We as a newspaper, and I as its editor, at times have failed to

identify some of those devices and, in some cases, inadvertently strengthened their influence.

4) We are all human and prone to some level of assumption or prejudice, no matter how much we don't want to believe or admit it.

We are launching this series so that, as a community, we can decide whether we want to allow the issues we face to “get bigger and bigger” or agree together that it “doesn't have to get bigger and bigger” if we can make the changes necessary to defuse the influence — and influencers — of partisanship dividing our community.

It really wasn't that long ago that the description of public discourse described by Robert Serra in his 1997 editorial could have been used to describe our community discussions at any city council, FURA, PAC or even school board meeting here in Florence.

We can get back to that. But not without acknowledging and learning from the mistakes that got us here. Together.

MUSIC from page 1A

where he was involved in both music and theater — and has since worked in children's improvisational theater and is a private music teacher. Moore, a Mapleton native, recently graduated from a music education program at the University of Oregon with a focus on choral studies, and also has a background in elementary education and works as a private music teacher.

“That's another facet as to why we are a good team, too,” Wood said. “My approach tends to be more performance based and Sheena's is very literacy based, I would say.”

Like so many educators, when coronavirus first

struck, their attention went straight to the effects it would likely have on children and their access to continued education and

a way to make it available to kids.’

“So many programs are just dead in the water right now that it felt very,

“The humanities [like music] really encourage teamwork, they encourage empathy, and allow you to learn about other cultures other than what you're immersed in. That's a wonderful thing and a very important thing in this globalized world we live in.”

— *Sheena Moore, Music Instructor*

social interaction with their peers.

“In the summer I will usually teach a music program in one of our local camps here in town for kids,” Wood added. “But, because of the pandemic everything is shut down. So, our thought process was, ‘We have to figure out

very necessary. ... Sheena and I think it's really important that the kids have these artistic and musical outlets available to them and watching them all disappear was really, for me personally, the fire, my motivation.”

Luckily, unlike sports for example, music and per-

formance are not things that must strictly be done face-to-face thanks to video conference technology. The teaching tandem saw

“The humanities [like music] really encourage teamwork, they encourage empathy, and allow you to learn about other cultures other than what you're immersed in,” Moore said. “And that's a wonderful thing and a very important thing in this globalized world we live in.”

“And then all you gotta do is make it fun, throw a few animal movements in there, ride a horse, chase a bull, and then you've got the kids!” Wood added.

While Wood and Moore are pleased to be able to offer a tangible, real-life summer activity to children during a difficult time, their hopes extend beyond the four-week “Music in Motion” camp. Perhaps programs like theirs and others like it can be a rubric for other educators of all subjects to explore as the future of education gets cloudier.

“The future of music education in public schools is increasingly uncertain ... due to the nature of music, with breathing and singing. They're all activities that require extra distance, extra space and extra caution,” Moore said. “It's making educators rethink how to teach music and what's really important about music. Hopefully in the future we realize that music is much more than singing or playing notes from a page.”

“We, as educators, need to get creative right now and we can't back off. We need to push forward,” Wood said.

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