



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Build it for kids

As a father of one child who completed Harrison Elementary and one child who still attends, I am impressed every day with the quality of the teaching that goes on there.

As the co-president of Harrison's parent club working with other parents to raise funds to ensure music, art, PE and assemblies, I am amazed and bewildered at the continual cuts to school budgets that make providing a good education a challenge, repairs difficult and improvements an almost impossibility.

As a member of the design committee, I have spoken at length with the architect who wrote the report on rehabbing Harrison instead of rebuilding. I keep getting stuck with the question: Even if it could be done cheaper and we could comply with all modern codes, where are we going to teach the children while this goes on? What are they going to breathe? How much would this disrupt their education?

As chairman of the Cottage Grove planning commission, I am continually reminded how little flat terrain and how few large parcels we have for development in Cottage Grove and am thankful for the luck or foresight that currently allows us the option to build a new school at the Taylor avenue property.

As Chairman of the Build it for Kids PAC, I have been gratified at the overwhelming support we hear from our community for this bond to build a new elementary school and improve facilities and security throughout the District and improve the pool that serves so many of our residents.

As a citizen, I hope you will join with me and vote yes to Build it for Kids!

Darby Valley  
Cottage Grove

### Build vs. remodel: School board made the right choice

Thank you for your article examining the difference between building a new elementary school versus remodeling the existing Harrison Elementary. It's prudent that we consider this choice before making the significant investment to build a new school. That said, it's clear that the school board made the right choice in deciding that a new school is the best, most cost-effective option.

If we remodel Harrison, the resulting school will certainly be much better than it is currently, but a remodeled school can't possibly compare with a newly built school in many ways.

A newly built school would have large classroom size, which teachers consider

to be particularly important, whereas a remodeled Harrison would still have relatively small classrooms.

A new school would have lots of natural light, excellent ventilation, and would be very energy efficient, whereas a remodeled Harrison would still have outdated heating and cooling systems and be considerably less energy efficient.

A new school would incorporate flexible design to allow it to adapt to changes in education over time, including grade-level learning communities to allow collaboration among classrooms. A remodeled school would likely not.

A new school built on the site of the old high school would have excellent parking and would be designed to accommodate the traffic safely and conveniently. A remodeled school would sit on a site that is far too small for the school population, would have less than ideal parking, and would have a drop-off and pick-up situation that is not nearly as safe or as convenient as it could be.

A remodeled Harrison school doesn't save us that much money over building a new school, and yet it has significant drawbacks. It's simply not cost effective. Let's spend the small amount extra over remodeling to create a first-class school for the future.

Christina Shew  
Cottage Grove

### Eyesore

Cottage Grove has an eyesore as you come into town on the south end on the left side and right side of Highway 99. There are blackberry thickets on the left side, a falling-down house, piles of brush, and the one place burnt down. The owner would like this cleaned up, but it falls on deaf ears with the city and county. This kind of thing hurts business. The right side is falling-down trees stumps, brush and all.

One more thing is that the roads are so bad. This kind of the thing is bad for your cars and trucks — damage is a problem. I had some damage to my rigs as well.

Cottage Grove should get a big award for the worst landscape from many directions, and as I stated, on the street: All America City Worst Chuck Hole Streets. The City and County tell you there's no money — Boy that's a good one.

I voted for ages for a tax for the streets, then another one and one more. I was born here 59 years ago, but just because I live out of the city limits, I can't vote on city issues.

Mike Ritter  
Cottage Grove



SAID NO ONE-PERCENTER, EVER



## No-cost preventive screenings save money, lives

For years, we've been hearing from organizations like the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and the American Diabetes Association, among others, about the importance of preventive health screenings and early detection of potentially life threatening diseases. Catching health problems early saves money, and, more importantly, it saves lives. While many insured Americans take advantage of these screenings, many others do not, often due to real or perceived cost.

It wasn't until the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in 2013 that preventive health screenings, ranging from colorectal and breast cancer to cholesterol and blood pressure testing, became available at no cost to the vast majority of Americans.

Despite this, many Americans continue to underuse them. Only three in five Oregonians are currently getting screened for colorectal cancer — the second leading cause of cancer deaths in Oregon, according to the American Cancer Society. Together with providers and other health care organizations nationwide, the American Cancer Society has set a goal to increase this rate

to 80 percent by 2018.

Still, many Oregonians aren't getting screened for colorectal cancer and other preventable diseases because they don't believe they are at risk, don't understand what testing options are available to them or don't think they can afford it.

Regular screenings for colorectal cancer, breast cancer and cervical cancer, among others, are important because they are the most powerful weapon we have in fighting preventable diseases. Even simple biometric screenings that measure body mass index, cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and other vital signs can provide valuable baseline information and establish risk levels for certain diseases.

Preventive screenings are also key to keeping America's rising health care costs under control. It costs the consumer nothing to take advantage of federally approved health screenings, and treating the early stages of a disease can be far less expensive than treating it in its advanced stages.

Secondly, preventive screenings lead to early detection, which helps identify diseases when they are most treatable. In short, a preventive screening can

save your life.

Adults with certain risk factors may be eligible for other screenings, such as lung cancer and osteoporosis. Following is a small sampling of the preventive health services available to insured Americans at no charge:

- Blood pressure screening
- Colorectal cancer screening
- Depression screening
- Type 2 diabetes screening
- Obesity screening and counseling
- Breast cancer screening
- Cervical cancer screen
- Osteoporosis screening
- Tobacco use screening

By utilizing no-cost preventive screenings, it's easier than ever for Oregonians to take stock of their health. And if you're unsure about your benefits, contact your health insurance provider for a clear picture of the tests and screenings for which you qualify. It could be a life-changing call.

*Justin Montoya, MD, is Medical Director for Commercial Programs at PacificSource Health Plans.*

## Telomeres are central to the aging process

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD  
For the Sentinel

Telomeres are the caps of DNA at the ends of our chromosomes that protect our genetic material and make it possible for our cells to divide. Telomeres are where the DNA



replication machinery attaches during the cell division process, so that the entire DNA strand can be copied. Each time the cell divides, the telomeres get shorter. For the next cell division to happen, there must be enough room left on the telomere for the replication enzymes. If the telomere becomes too short, the DNA can't be copied properly, and the cell cannot divide. To prevent excessive shortening, the enzyme telomerase rebuilds telomeres. Telomere length and

telomerase activity are factors associated with aging, not only within individual cells, but of organisms as a whole. As scientists continue to examine the complex role of telomeres in the aging process and the role they play in our health, we have come to understand that shorter telomere length is associated with biological aging and lifestyle-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and cancer, and premature death.

The good news is that telomere length, although influenced by genetics, can also be affected by environmental factors, including diet and lifestyle choices. A superior diet and a healthy lifestyle are associated with greater telomere length. Conversely, since oxidative stress and chronic inflammation are linked to telomere shortening, studies have reported factors that promote inflammation and oxidative stress may also accelerate telomere erosion, namely a high body mass index, obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, smoking, chronic stress and a low socioeconomic status.

What does this mean for you

and me? It means that the positive choices we make when it comes to what we eat or how much we exercise—among other lifestyle factors—can maintain our telomeres, one of the many mechanisms by which healthy behaviors promote longevity. Higher levels of vegetable and fruit consumption, fiber intake, vitamin and mineral adequacy, and exercise are the factors associated with longer telomeres and/or greater telomerase enzyme activity.

When the telomeres get too short, the cell can no longer divide, becoming what scientists call senescent. Senescent cells are still alive, but not able to carry out normal cellular processes, and as more cells in a tissue become senescent, it impairs the tissue's ability to repair damage. Plus, senescent cells secrete factors that negatively affect the function of neighboring cells, including promoting the development of cancer.

Telomere length and telomerase enzyme activity can be measured in human white blood cells. A shorter length or lower telomerase activity has been associated with not only the short-

ening of the human lifespan, but also a number of chronic, preventable diseases, including hypertension, cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, depression, osteoporosis and obesity.

In a study assessing the relationship of food groups to telomere length, vegetables were found to have the most significant association to greater telomere length. In particular, peppers, carrots, spinach, tomatoes and root vegetables had the highest correlation. Further analysis showed specific micronutrients from whole plant foods were associated with telomere length. Also, in a study involving an elderly population, vegetable and fruit consumption were both significantly associated with longer length telomeres. Another study in women found dietary fiber consumption to be associated with longer telomeres, further supporting the idea that whole plant foods can improve telomere length.

In addition to a healthful diet, supplementing with a carefully designed multivitamin can help to optimize the body's supply of micronutrients, which may ben-

efit telomere length by tempering oxidative stress and chronic inflammation.

A comprehensive lifestyle change study assessed the impact on telomeres and found improvements in diet, exercise, stress management and social support significantly increased telomere length by approximately 10 percent. Notably, the more individuals changed their behaviors, the more dramatic their improvements became.

The aging process is complex, and much has yet to be determined, but these findings indicate that lifestyle factors can influence telomere length and cellular aging. A high-nutrient diet and a healthy lifestyle supports healthy aging and may even help decelerate the aging process.

*Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. Visit his informative website at DrFuhrman.com. Submit your questions and comments about this column directly to [news-questions@drfuhrman.com](mailto:news-questions@drfuhrman.com).*

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Personal attacks and name calling in response to letters are uncalled for and unnecessary.

If you would like to submit an opinion piece, Another View must be no longer than 600 words.

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