

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)

The need for communication



Our comfortable life as we knew it changed in March of 2020.

Let's remember in 2019 when it was normal to have in-person meetings, conferences, school, birthday parties, dinners, and other social gatherings. This came to a stop with the spread of the novel coronavirus where there was no gradual transition. We immediately began to work from home, hold Zoom meetings, our kids tried to navigate online learning, birthday parties became known as a drive-by and almost overnight our society lost the one thing we needed: communication.

John McCain, poli-

tician and POW, once wrote, “As far as this business of solitary confinement goes, the most important thing for survival is communication with someone, even if it's only a wave or a wink, a tap on the wall, or to have a guy put his thumb up. It makes a

From the City Council's desk

Ward 1 Councilor Chalice Savage

difference.”

In the last 18 months we have learned to adapt, but our morale has continued to drop. We are surrounded by black and white statements, this or that suggestions and suddenly this way of thinking and virtually behaving has become normalized.

Vincent Nichols, Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church said:

“We are losing social skills, the human interaction skills, how to read a person's mood, to read their body language, how to be patient until the moment is right to make or press a point. Too much exclusive use of electronic information dehumanizes what

is a very, very important part of community life and living together.”

It is through communication that we learn about culture and understand differences. Suddenly the black and white blurs to grey. The ideas of “this” or “that” fade and the concept of both This and That is understood.

Imagine each of us as a different instrument.

We practice, prepare and fine tune our skills alone. But when we come together, we make beautiful music. We are stronger together, even though we are all different instruments.

I encourage everyone to consciously communicate with the folks we interact with daily. Here are some suggestions: Thank the cashier who showed up to work despite mask mandates, smile at a stranger walking by on the sidewalk because smiles are contagious. And most of all, allow yourself to see beyond the screen, beyond the written word.

Let us unite through small acts of kindness which is behavioral communication that will begin to reawaken our senses, lift spirits, and make us more human.

The Relevance Project – and what it means for newspapers

(Editor's Note: This Guest Viewpoint was provided as part of National Newspaper Week, a celebration and recognition of the critical role newspapers play in a healthy and energetic democracy.)

When it comes to saving local newspapers, the solutions won't be found in web metrics, ad rates or shrinking news holes. The solution, seemingly simple yet terrifyingly complicated, is for newspapers to reconnect with the people they're supposed to be serving.

That's the purpose of The Relevance Project, a national effort intended to make local journalism so relevant to people's lives that papers will once again become an essential purchase. The Newspaper Association Managers, a coalition of trade associations serving daily and weekly newspapers and new websites in North America, is coordinating the project, which was launched during National Newspaper Week last year.

The focus on local newspapers was prompted in part by frustration that industry leaders were too focused on the major players — the papers run by corporations and big chains. That approach overlooks the more than 8,600 local newspapers covering the parades, the school board meetings and the soccer games of small-town America and Canada.

The problems those papers face

mirror those of the bigger players: Declining revenues and rising costs that sometimes force closings.

But for independent local papers with shoestring budgets, the financial burdens fall proportionately harder: Cutting a position from a four-person newsroom, for example, is a lot more difficult than cutting one from a newsroom of 40.

Newspaper association managers across the United States and Can-

GUEST VIEWPOINT
Michelle K. Rea
Executive Director of New York Press Association/New York Press Service

ada think the public is paying so much attention to media companies such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and Sinclair [Broadcasting] that they're forgetting that there are vital, committed newspapers in their local communities. As a result, small papers with few resources have been left to fend for themselves as the ground shifts under them.

The Relevance Project grew out of that frustration, with the Newspaper Association Managers collectively retaining rebranding expert Andy Cunningham of the Cunningham Collective to help diagnose problems and develop solutions.

Working with papers from around the country, Cunningham's research took stock of all the indus-

try's warts, from public mistrust to falling page counts, rising subscription costs and poorly functioning websites.

From the newspaper association managers' perspective, the results were a much-needed slap in the face — newspapers weren't doing the right things by their readers.

The Relevance Project is working to reassert newspapers' relevance to their communities by building on the credibility they already have. It aims to remind people that newspapers serve as a trusted community forum and as a resource. A newspaper's strength and future rely on its local community; fortifying that relationship will fortify the paper.

To do that, the project is coordinating efforts and supplying resources for newspapers across the continent working to find new ways of building reader trust and community engagement. The key to the project's success will be its focus on concrete tools that even papers with limited resources can adopt.

The project's superpower is the thousands of local newspapers who may choose to participate. With potentially 8,600 local daily and weekly newspapers participating, there's a huge opportunity to reinvent the community forum, to re-engage communities to collectively address issues, and to make a substantial impact both for the readers and the newspapers.

not make a teacup in the ocean's difference. Oregon is probably one of the most carbon-neutral states, next to Alaska, in the United States. It is commendable these people believe in something so strongly as to take these actions; they should be better informed.

—Dick Gilkison
Cottage Grove

Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel 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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel 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.

Send letters to:

dsherwood@cgsentinel.com

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR REPS

Oregon state representatives

- **Sen. Floyd Prozanski**
District 4 State Senator
PO Box 11511
Eugene, Ore. 97440
Phone: 541-342-2447
Email: sen.floydprozanski@state.or.us
- **Rep. Cedric Hayden**
Republican District 7 State Representative
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Ore. 97301
Phone: 503-986-1407
Email: rep.cedrichayden@state.or.us
- **Rep. Peter DeFazio**
(House of Representatives)
405 East 8th Ave.
#2030
Eugene, Ore. 97401

Oregon federal representatives

- Email: defazio.house.gov/contact/email-peter
Phone: 541-465-6732
- **Sen. Ron Wyden**
405 East 8th Ave., Suite 2020
Eugene, Ore. 97401
Email: wyden.senate.gov
Phone: (541) 431-0229
- **Sen. Jeff Merkley**
Email: merkley.senate.gov
Phone: 541-465-6750
- **Heather Buch**
Lane County Commissioner - District 5
Email: Heather.Buch@lane-countyorg.gov
125 E. Eighth Ave.
Eugene, OR 97401
Or call 541-682-4203

Cottage Grove Sentinel

541-942-3325

Administration

Jenna Bartlett, Group Publisher

Gary Manly, General Manager... Ext. 1207
gmanly@cgsentinel.com

Advertising

Gerald Santana, Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1216
gsantana@cgsentinel.com
Carla Skeel, Inside Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1203
csummers@cgsentinel.com

Editorial

Damien Sherwood, Editor... Ext. 1212
dsherwood@cgsentinel.com
Kendrick Murphy, Sports/Education Reporter... Ext. 1204
kmurphy@cgsentinel.com
Sophia Edelblute, Features Intern
sedelblute@cgsentinel.com

Customer Service

Office Manager, Legals, Classifieds... Ext. 1200
mfringer@cgsentinel.com
Kurt Krueger, Circulation... Ext. 1213
kkruieger@cgsentinel.com

Production

Ron Annis, Production Supervisor... Ext.1215
graphics@cgsentinel.com

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LETTERS

CLIMATE PROTESTS INEFFECTIVE

I wonder if the people demonstrating against climate change have wondered about Earth being in the ice ages as recent as 11,500 years ago?

Probably not; Earth has been warming ever since. Granted, a small portion of the warming may — get that? — may be caused by man.

During the Eocene Epoch, starting about 48 million years ago, the carbon dioxide levels were so high that it had, in fact, a greenhouse effect on Earth. It was so warm, even the Antarctic was a tropical rain forest. Earth has warmed and cooled many, many times since then. The Willamette Valley was once a savanna.

What these demonstrators could accomplish in Oregon, as far as reducing carbon is concerned, would