

Cottage Grove Sentinel

1498 E. Main St., STE 104
Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

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)

Many Hands Make Light Work

(Editor’s Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

As a member of the Bohemia Mining Days production team for the past 17 years, I am keenly aware of how much work, money and coordination is invested to provide our community with events that create joy, happy memories and a million smiles.

Wowza! Last weekend we were blessed with seven special events to usher Grovers into the 2021 Christmas Season. There was literally something for everyone to enjoy!

The two largest events were the Christmas at the WOE and the Christmas Kick-Off in Bohemia Park. We also had the annual Jingle Rush Walk/Run and the Boy Scouts’ Tree Sale.

For those of us on the hunt for something unique to give to those on our gift-giving list, we had three holiday shopping events: Seeds & Flint craft makers offered a variety of hand-crafted items, the Humane Society’s Christmas sale offered great deals on used holiday decorations, and the Cottage Grove Christian School’s Bazaar filled the Armory with music and a wide selection of vendors.

I made it to three of those events and was delighted by what I found.

Thousands of adults and children gathered in Bohemia Park last Saturday evening to watch the lighting of the community tree, visit with

Santa, enter a raffle for a fully decorated tree, enjoy soup and hot beverages, color a picture or write a letter to Santa, hear a story, and to listen to the middle and high school choirs.

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Cindy Weeldreyer BMD President

The weather was as perfect as it gets for early December – dry and not terribly cold. Everything came together to create a memorable evening for all who attended!

I tip my hat to the WOE Fair Board members and volunteers who transformed the Fairgrounds into a colorful and festive experience for four days (Thu-Sun) for the enjoyment of thousands of Grovers! Children shared their wishes with Santa. The Snowflake Pavilion featured live music and beverages. Vendors provided a great variety of items for gift-giving.

On Saturday, a live nativity was in the barn and Princesses Elsa and Anna from the Disney movie Frozen were there – much to the delight of their fans. Kudos to the WOE folks for starting a new holiday tradition with plans to make it an annual event!

On Sunday afternoon I went to the Armory to hear the Cottage Grove Christian School students give a holiday performance and found the drill floor packed with people participating in the silent auction and shopping among the many vendors that lined the large room. Christmas cheer was definitely in the air!

One can only imagine the effort made by those who heavily invested their time, talent and money to present these holiday opportunities for us to enjoy last weekend. I bring this up because it appears too many people today are becoming “consumers” and not “producers”. Like the Little Red Hen story, everyone wants to eat the delicious sweet-smelling bread in the oven but when the hen asked for help to make it no one wanted to do the work to create it.

Many hands make for light work and forge new friendships while having fun together. It is my prayer that more people (of all ages) will make a New Year’s resolution to become a community volunteer in 2022.

Many local organizations would love to have your help to do good things around town. I am deeply thankful for and appreciative of the many volunteers who do show up and roll up their sleeves to make things happen in The Grove for our enjoyment.

And this seems like the right moment to make an urgent request...

The Bohemia Mining Days board secretary and treasurer are stepping down at the end of this month. BMD must fill these key leadership positions so we can continue moving forward with planning BMD 2022. (The treasurer must be proficient in Quickbooks software.) If interested, call me ASAP at 541-915-0113 for more information.

Best wishes for a safe, happy and memorable holiday season with your family and friends!

Choose the River

(Editor’s Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

This holiday season, in a world that feels increasingly conflicted — where so many cultural battle lines have been drawn, it’s impossible not to stumble over one of them and find yourself in unfriendly territory — what centering force helps us maintain our inner sense of wellbeing, our faith in a better future?

The experience of Janessa Gans Wilder may be instructive. She found her centering force in the midst of a war zone.

An intelligence analyst for the CIA, Janessa spent 21 months in Iraq from 2003 to 2005 — the height of the insurgency. Her job was to make sense of the enemy, to understand their motives, tactics, strategies, funding sources and leadership — all to help the U.S. wage a more effective war.

It was a job that brought her to the brink of despair. It was all too much: The death, the maiming, the near impossibility of collecting good information, the nights made sleepless by the incoming mortars of the enemy and, even worse, the outgoing mortars from U.S. forces that “shatter you from the inside out.”

For Janessa, the first battle of Fallujah — sparked by the killing and mutilation of four American Blackwater guards, their bodies hung on a bridge spanning the Euphrates River — was the worst of it. “It felt like the world was coming to an end and I couldn’t do anything to help. I just felt so powerless...I was drained emotionally, physically, spiritually, on every level.”

Janessa had reached what Amanda Ripley, author of “High Conflict,” calls the saturation point: “The point in a conflict where the loss-

es seem heavier than the gains.” In common parlance, it’s when we’ve “hit bottom,” when we finally accept that the old ways aren’t working, but don’t yet know what else to do.

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Kern Beare Founder of the Difficult Conversations Project

While it may not feel like it at the time, reaching the saturation point can be a very creative moment. It’s an opportunity, says Ripley, “for a shift.” At a loss for what else to do, new possibilities arise we hadn’t seen before.

For Janessa, a new possibility came as she stood on a rooftop overlooking the Euphrates River:

“From the roof of the house, I could see the Euphrates, and I was captivated by its beauty and by the quiet. The only thing I could hear was the water gurgling by, which was so incredible, because the noise of war is so intense and constant. So that contrast with the quiet just took my breath away. And I just sat there, wanting to be taken in.

“And what I noticed was, just a few miles downstream, this river goes right through the middle of Fallujah. This beauty, this peace and quiet, was actually happening amidst all the bombs and noise and death and destruction.

“And then the thought came to me: Which will you choose?”

“And I was so taken aback. I mean, it’s a choice? I could choose this scene of life and peace and beauty?”

“And I just said out loud, ‘I choose the river.’”

At that moment, says Janessa, a weight lifted from her shoulders. She’d regained a calm and clarity of mind the war had taken from her.

Assisting the Iraqi government in making its transition to democracy. And later, after coming home from Iraq, she founded a non-profit dedicated to global peace-building, which she named The Euphrates Institute.

So, what is the centering power of the river? What does it symbolize? For Janessa it symbolized the most powerful force of all: the force of life.

The constant flow of creative energy that nourishes and builds, rather than depletes and destroys.

“I had just left the most in-your-face display of power I’d ever experienced...and I realized, no matter how many of those freaking bombs went off, the river was completely unaffected by it. And I thought, well, which is more powerful? The noise and bombs, or this effortlessly, relentlessly flowing force?”

“And then I realized something else...that this force, this creative energy, is available and flowing through all our lives at every moment, and we can choose to align ourselves with it even if we can’t see it.”

Here then is one recipe for maintaining our inner wellbeing and our faith in the future, even in the midst of conflicts that seem forever out of reach of resolution: Choose the river. Say no to the fighting, the attacking, the resisting. Trust the flowing, creative force of the river rather than the destructive force of our rage and fear.

Saying yes to the river won’t make our conflicts go away. We’ll still have to live though perilous and chaotic times. But we’ll be living through them having made the one choice that can truly make a difference: To trust in each other’s capacity for kindness, and to surround those who seem to have lost that capacity with the full force of the river’s energy — the quiet but eternally powerful presence of love, understanding and wisdom.

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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.

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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.

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