

**EDITORIALS**

**Hopes for a better New Year**

In four short days, 2016 will finally be over. The last 12 months have been tough, taking their toll on the Polk County community and the nation as a whole. We're coming out of a year that saw one of the nastiest election seasons in memory, as well as two officer-involved shootings here in Polk County — something this county hadn't seen in 20 years. We are not the types to be blindly optimistic about a new calendar automatically bringing better times, but we are hopeful that, if we put in the effort, 2017 will be better. Some things we cannot control. Many of the tragedies experienced in Polk County this year were beyond control. But what we can do is decide how we will react. Will we troll Facebook threads, tossing gasoline on the fire and spiraling comments out of control? Or will we offer support to our neighbors? Instead of posting hateful comments or using hurtful sarcasm, let's choose kindness and understanding — or, if emotions do not allow kindness, take a break from Facebook and other social media outlets for a while. Breathe, take a walk outside, and let Mother Nature heal and calm you.

On that note, make 2017 "your year" by doing something good for yourself. Start by driving sober, or designating a driver if you plan to consume alcohol or drugs this weekend. Read the comments from Sheriff Mark Garton on this page to see how lives can change in an instant when a bad choice is made.

Then, take time out for yourself. Put down a bad habit and pick up a good one. The last five weeks, we have highlighted members of our community who dedicate their time to others, going above and beyond to give back. Consider how you can give back. Serving others is a great way to make yourself feel better while improving your community. Remember that you will only get as much out of life as you put into it, so step away from the negative and migrate toward the positive. Take action in your life to make a change. Choose to make 2017 a better year through your attitude — it's one thing you can control.



**FROM THE SHERIFF**

**Drive sober: Don't take chances this New Year**

As we approach the new year, a lot of us enjoy family gatherings and company parties. Most people are looking to have a good time and sometimes alcohol comes into play. Then comes the decision after you have had a drink. Do you have a ride home? Do you take the chance and drive home? Or do you call a taxi?

Unfortunately, a lot of the times people choose to drive when they shouldn't. Some people may get home safe or they may get arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants. Worse yet, they may get into a crash that may hurt another person or even cause loss of life. These decisions cannot be taken back and you could be stuck with an unforgivable outcome.

Throughout my career, I have arrested many people for DUII, people from all backgrounds and of all ages.

I have also investigated many traffic crashes where one of the involved drivers was impaired, whether because of alcohol or drugs (or a combination of the two). While at those crash scenes I have seen people that were injured and some that had passed away as a result of the crash. Some of the most difficult crash scenes involve the death of a child, at the hand of an impaired driver who decided to take a chance by driving.

I want to share some statistics about impaired driving both here locally and throughout the U.S. to give you some perspective.

Last year in Oregon there were over 17,000 people who were arrested for DUII while across the US the number of arrests for DUII topped 1.5 million. The total number of traffic deaths across Oregon last year was 447 — a jump from 357 in 2014. In 2015, 155 people died in crashes in Oregon where alcohol was a factor, up from 99 the year before (56.6 percent increase).

Just over six years ago, I had a family member pass away because she was hit head on by an oncoming vehicle near Rickreall. The other driver was late to an appointment and simply crossed the center

line and struck her head on. The other driver lived. During the investigation it was determined that the other driver had been drinking, but only had a 0.05 blood alcohol content (BAC). He also had several different drugs in his system, including methamphetamine and cannabis.

He was charged and convicted of manslaughter and was sentenced to prison and he will get out in 2021. Having alcohol and a variety of drugs in his system caused him to crash that day and kill another human.

Regardless of the drug(s) someone has in their system, if they are impaired, they will get arrested. Law Enforcement doesn't have the luxury of being able to test someone's blood, urine or breath on the side of the road. They simply look for impairment and then the police officer makes a decision to arrest or not. Sure, the legal limit in Oregon for DUII (alcohol) is 0.08 (BAC). However, you can be arrested and convicted for DUII if you only have a 0.05 BAC. Someone may not have any alcohol in their system at all, but consumed marijuana and they would be arrested for DUII. The point is, if you are impaired, regardless of how you became that way, you can be arrested.

In Polk County if you get arrested for DUII (or any other crime) you will go to the Polk County Jail.

The only way to get released from the jail is to have a judge authorize the release or if someone posts your bail.

As if being lodged in jail wasn't the worst thing, you could also lose your driver's license, your insurance rates could go up and you could end up paying a lot of money in fines as well.

People make decisions every day that could change their life and yet a simple decision to say no or to hand your keys to someone else isn't always made.

These seemingly easy choices are often made without totally seeing their potential impact not only to themselves, but to the lives that are lost every day at the hands of those who choose to drive while impaired.

When it counts, make the right choice and allow everyone to get home safe.

— Sheriff Mark Garton



**Garton**



**PUBLIC AGENDA**

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the Itemizer-ObsERVER via email (ionews@polkio.com).

- WEDNESDAY, DEC. 28**
  - Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.
- TUESDAY, JAN. 3**
  - Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
- WEDNESDAY, JAN. 4**
  - Monmouth Historic Commission** — 6 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.
  - Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.



**WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?**

Letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Longer letters will be edited.

Each writer is restricted to one letter per 30-day period.

Letters that are libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Attacks by name on businesses or individuals will not be printed.

Letters to the editor that are obvious promotions for a business, products or services will not be printed.

The Itemizer-ObsERVER does not guarantee the accuracy of facts presented by letter writers; dissenters are welcome to re-

spond. Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers should maintain a civil discourse and address the subject, not the author.

Letters, like all editorial material submitted to the newspaper, are edited for length, grammar and content.

Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. This includes letters submitted via the I-O's website. Names and cities of residence are published; street addresses and telephone numbers are used for verification purposes only.

Letters must be submitted from individuals, not organizations, and must be original submissions to the I-O, not copies of letters sent to other media.

Letters of thanks to businesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names. The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday. Letters submitted may not be retractable after this deadline.

Reach us at:  
**Mail:** Editor, Polk County Itemizer-ObsERVER, P.O. Box 108, Dallas, OR 97338.  
**Email:** ionews@polkio.com.

**How to Contact Officials**

- GOVERNOR**  
**Gov. Kate Brown (Dem.)**  
160 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-378-4582  
Email: via website,  
http://governor.oregon.gov/
- STATE LEGISLATORS**  
**Sen. Arnie Roblan**  
(District 5, Democrat)  
S-417 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1705  
sen.arnieroblan@state.or.us  
www.oregonlegislature.gov/roblan
- Sen. Jackie Winters**  
(District 10, Republican)  
S-301 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1710  
sen.jackiewinters@state.or.us  
www.oregonlegislature.gov/winters
- Sen. Brian Boquist**  
(District 12, Republican)  
S-305 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1712  
sen.brianboquist@state.or.us  
www.oregonlegislature.gov/boquist
- Rep. David Gomberg**  
(District 10, Democrat)  
H-471 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1410  
rep.davidgomberg@state.or.us  
www.oregonlegislature.gov/gomberg
- Rep. Paul Evans**  
(District 20, Democrat)  
H-281 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1420  
rep.paul.evans@state.or.us  
www.oregonlegislature.gov/evans
- Rep. Mike Nearman**  
(District 23, Republican)  
H-378 State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1423  
rep.mikenearman@state.or.us  
www.oregonlegislature.gov/hearman

- U.S. CONGRESS**  
**Sen. Ron Wyden (Dem.)**  
221 Dirksen SOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone: 202-224-5244  
Fax: 202-228-2717  
Salem office: 707 13th St. SE,  
Suite 285, Salem, OR 97301  
Phone: 503-589-4555  
Email: via website,  
www.wyden.senate.gov

- Sen. Jeff Merkley (Dem.)**  
313 Hart SOB  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone: 202-224-3753  
Fax: 202-228-3997  
Salem office: 495 State St. SE,  
Suite 330, Salem, OR 97301  
Phone: 503-362-8102  
Email: via website,  
www.merkley.senate.gov

- Rep. Kurt Schrader (Dem.)**  
108 Cannon HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: 202-225-5711  
Fax: 202-225-5699  
Salem office: 544 Ferry St. SE,  
Suite 2, Salem, OR 97301  
Phone: 503-588-9100  
Fax: 503-588-5517  
Email: via website,  
www.schrader.house.gov

- POLK COUNTY Board of Commissioners**  
850 Main St.  
Dallas, OR 97338  
Phone: 503-623-8173  
www.co.polk.or.us

- CITIES**  
**Dallas**  
187 SE Court St.  
Dallas, OR 97338  
503-623-2338  
www.ci.dallas.or.us

- Falls City**  
299 Mill St.  
Falls City, OR 97344  
503-787-3631  
www.falls-city-oregon.gov

- Independence**  
555 S. Main St.  
Independence, OR 97351  
503-838-1212  
www.ci.independence.or.us

- Monmouth**  
151 W. Main St.  
Monmouth, OR 97361  
503-838-0722  
www.ci.monmouth.or.us

Polk County  
**Itemizer-ObsERVER**

Vol. 141, No. 52 (USPS) - 437-380

The official newspaper of Polk County • Serving Polk County families since 1875  
Winner of 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014 General Excellence Awards from the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, OR, Independence, OR and Monmouth, OR. Published weekly at 147 SE Court Street Dallas, Oregon 97338 Phone: 503-623-2373

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**  
Polk County — One Year \$35  
Other Oregon Counties — One Year \$40  
Outside of Oregon — One Year \$45

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: Polk County Itemizer-ObsERVER, P.O. Box 108, Dallas, Oregon 97338

The Polk County Itemizer-ObsERVER assumes no financial responsibility for errors in advertisements. It will, however, reprint without charge for the portion of an advertisement which is in error if the Itemizer-ObsERVER is at fault.

**HOW TO REACH US**

- NEWSROOM**  
Emily Mentzer .....Editor/Monmouth/Independence Reporter .....ementzer@polkio.com  
Lukas Eggen.....Sports Editor .....leggen@polkio.com  
Jolene Guzman.....Dallas/Falls City/Polk County Reporter .....jguzman@polkio.com

- DISPLAY ADVERTISING**  
Heidi Leppin .....Display Advertising Manager .....hleppin@polkio.com  
Rachel Best .....Display Advertising .....rbest@polkio.com  
Karen Sanks.....Client Services .....ksanks@polkio.com

- CLASSIFIED LINE ADVERTISING**  
Dawn Ohren .....ioads@polkio.com

- PRODUCTION**  
Kathy Huggins .....iosales@polkio.com  
Karyn Pressel .....iosales@polkio.com

**Web:** www.polkio.com **Phone:** 503-623-2373 **Fax:** 503-623-2395