

EDITORIALS

Sometimes it really does take a village

As we are busy investigating our local Community Champions, digging up all the good things our neighbors are doing in our communities, organizations and groups in Dallas, Falls City, Independence and Monmouth are putting the finishing touches on plans to host Santa and light trees.

It takes a crew of volunteers to make our towns festive, from Dallas Downtown Association collecting sponsorships to light up downtown Dallas, to the Independence Downtown Association Parade of Lights committee changing lights on the wreaths that adorn Independence Main Street.

The Dallas Area Visitor's Center and volunteers from Morrison Campus Alternative School recreate Santa's Village right on the Polk County Courthouse lawn, while volunteers in the WOU Athletics Department prepare to entertain kids and families with crafts in the Werner University Center.

This year we've noticed a new group of faces in Independence who worked quickly to bring back a tradition we thought we'd lost.

Cynthia Jaramillo started a beautiful tradition of the Santa Train in Independence. She was an engineer for Portland & Western, and made the connections to bring Santa to town in style, giving children a chance to visit with the big man himself, get photos with him and receive small gifts. The event expanded to include hot chocolate, popcorn, hot dogs and music. She moved to New Mexico earlier this year. We thought that was the end of Santa Train.

But thanks Traci Cathcart, Kim Hanson, and a handful of people making connections, Portland & Western engineer Zach Van Patten will pick up where Cynthia left off, driving the train to bring Santa to Independence Cinema for the seventh year. The energy brought by these volunteers and passion for the event will help Cynthia's legacy live on to bring Christmas joy to all the good boys and girls in Independence.

The Parade of Lights committee jumped in to help raise donations and collect toys for Santa to hand deliver to children at the event. The Monmouth-Independence YMCA stepped in to help kids write letters to Santa. The city of Independence acquired a special mailbox for said letters.

The entire community came together to donate toys and trinkets to the event so that children who otherwise may not have a gift will get one on Saturday at Santa Train.

The spirit of giving resonates throughout our county through volunteers such as those responsible for bringing the season to light. We hope you'll bundle up and bring the family down to celebrate the tree lightings, parades, and hot chocolates, and thank the ones who made it happen.

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, NOV. 29

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

MONDAY, DEC. 4

• **Central School District Board of Directors** — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence.

• **Independence Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.

• **Dallas City Council** — 7 p.m., Dallas City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502.

TUESDAY, DEC. 5

• **Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.

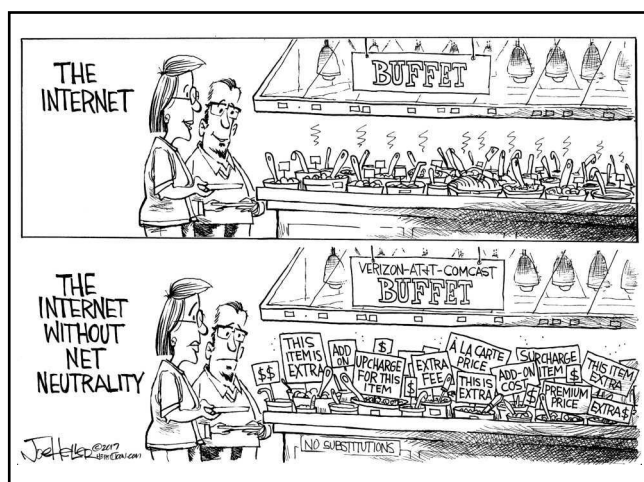
• **Polk County Board of Commission work session** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, BOC office, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 6

• **Monmouth Historic Commission** — 6 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.

• **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 Warren St. S., Monmouth. 503-838-0725.

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, first floor conference room, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Be mindful on your daily commute

On Friday, Nov. 10, I was working in the Monmouth Montessori School at 1140 E. Main St. when I heard a crash outside.

I looked out the front door and saw the last kicks of a big orange kitty that had been hit by a car. (Are you missing your kitty?)

While I stood frozen in shock with tears in my eyes, my partner arrived at the perfect time and jumped into action. He removed the cat from

the side of the road and put it in a box. We took the cat to Ash Creek Animal Clinic where they scanned it for a chip; there was none. Thankfully they were kind enough to take care of the body for us.

Have you ever noticed that there is not a sidewalk for pedestrians along East Main Street as you head toward the S Curves?

Instead, there is a path that gets covered in mud puddles as soon as it rains, making it impassable. The only dry place to walk is in the bike path, right next to the speeding cars.

Every day I have to make the trek across that busy street with my new baby in tow to check the mail.

Every day I watch as people fly past me while I wait to cross, without giving me a second thought.

Unfortunately, the sound of a crash in front of the Montessori School is not uncommon.

Please bring mindfulness into your commute. I ask that you please slow down and use more caution as you drive, no matter where you are.

Juliet Sloan
Monmouth

SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

We have exciting news to share; distinguished educators and a Polk County Commissioner's grant.



Johnstone

First, this year we have celebrated two distinguished educators. Mrs. Pedersen, who teaches third grade at Lyle, was recognized in September. She inspires and helps students achieve their goals.

Mr. Hughes teaches math at La Creole Middle School. He motivates students to do their best in math. Great work Mrs. Pedersen and Mr. Hughes. Thank you to our community sponsors of this award.

Please consider nominating a distinguished educator. The nomination process is simple, and the form can be found at www.dallas.k12.or.us/distin-guished-educator-award.

We have received a grant in the amount of \$24,700 from our Polk County Commissioners to try a new idea.

The grant will create 38 job opportunities for high school youth to earn direct experience in future career areas within Polk County.

There will be up to eight positions at a time, each running for eight weeks. Upon completion, students will receive a stipend.

Business partnerships will provide opportunities for students to be exposed to various industry jobs. We will report back how this is going. Thank you Polk County Commissioners.

Lastly, let's talk about school safety. We recently had a "lock-out" situation at Dallas High School. There were concerns expressed over communication during the lock-out.

A "lock-out" drill means we are keeping business as usual inside; however, not allowing students to leave or

people to enter the school.

In this instance, as the police department conducted their search, we didn't want to place students heading to lunch in the middle. We always work hand in hand with Dallas Police Department.

There is no communication going out from the school or district during the emergency unless we have evacuated the school and need parents to pick students up. We don't want parents in harm's way either.

Once the emergency was concluded, Dallas Police Department quickly provided the communication message. Dallas Police Department knows the best way to communicate the information. Thank you Dallas PD.

We did have communication from the district following via email and Facebook. We do value the feedback we received.

Thank you for supporting Dallas School District.

— Michelle Johnstone
Superintendent

WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

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

Election-related letters of all types are limited to 100 words. Writers are limited to one election-related letter per election season. Election letters from writers outside of Polk County are not accepted.

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 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.

poses 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.

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