

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Valuable volunteers

Editorial from The East Oregonian:

The incident had all the earmarks of a daring rescue. A woman fell off a cliff. A group of emergency responders just happened to be near and quickly deployed to save the day.

That scenario played out recently when Jacki Mulhair fell from Indian Rock Overlook near La Grande.

Mulhair stepped too close to the edge of a cliff and then fell 86 feet, suffering numerous serious injuries.

Luckily, just over 2 miles away, personnel from the La Grande Rural Fire Protection District and Union County Search and Rescue were wrapping up training when Mulhair fell. The search and rescue team eventually rescued Mulhair. She is now in a Richland hospital recovering from serious injuries, including broken ribs and nose and a broken leg.

But she is alive, thanks to the quick action of the search and rescue personnel. Granted, a lot of things had to go right in this incident and it was very fortuitous that the search and rescue squad was relatively nearby and could react quickly.

The incident appears to be one of those “what ifs,” where a lot of things could have gone wrong but didn’t.

The incident, though, also highlights one of those key facts about our emergency service personnel that often is overlooked. The members of the Union County Search and Rescue team are volunteers.

They were not getting paid to go out and rescue an individual who was in a life-and-death situation. They were there because each one feels a sense of duty to the larger community.

Volunteers are a key strand in the fabric of all our communities. Without them many events and other community enhancement efforts simply would not occur. Without dedicated men and women who choose to take time out of their own busy lives to give back, someone like Mulhair might have ended up in a far worse situation.

Mulhair’s case is significant and out of the ordinary. Someone trapped and seriously injured after falling off a cliff isn’t a day-to-day event. However, when such emergencies do occur it is up to people who volunteer to help.

We are all busy and we all have other priorities — jobs, children, etc. But volunteering your time for any event or agency — such as search and rescue — isn’t just the right thing to do but a noble endeavor.

Communities across the region need more volunteers, more people that choose to step forward and help out their communities.

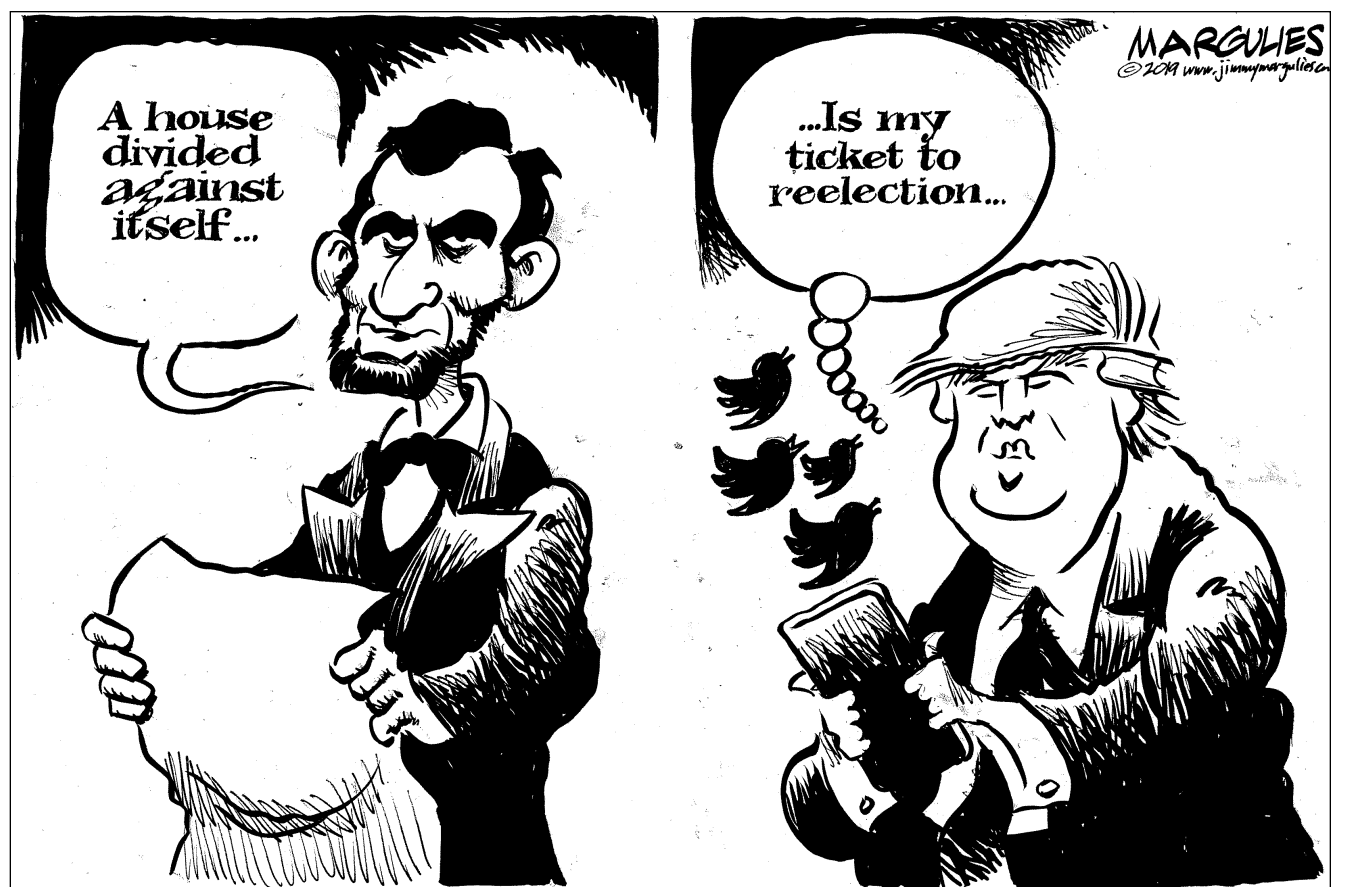
Sure, devoting a chunk of time to the community isn’t easy. It takes commitment and courage. But, in the end, volunteering is a rewarding act that pays off.

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.
- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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Planned Parenthood’s charade

I’ve often been a critic of Planned Parenthood, because I believe that despite its arguments to the contrary, the organization is primarily a political tool for the abortion industry. Those who support Planned Parenthood are quick with the statistics about how they provide counseling, general check-ups and health care, mammogram referrals and other female-centric health services and that abortion is just a small percentage of the services it provides. I never believed that, but many people do.

But the Tuesday firing of Leana Wen, the first physician to head the organization in 50 years, is a sure sign that the organization defines women’s health as access to abortion, and all the rest is secondary. Firing a physician whose goal was to advance healthcare for women (which, yes, probably includes abortion) is indicative of an extreme mindset that sees access to abortion as more important than cancer detection, avoidance of sexually transmitted diseases, services to expectant mothers and all the other unique and specific services that are designed to improve and protect women’s health.

I’m glad that Planned Parenthood

CHRISTINE M. FLOWERS

made this move, because it underscores something I have always known: that the organization doesn’t actually focus on women’s health.

This reminds me of recent events in Philadelphia when State Rep. Brian Sims gave the pro-life movement a jolt of energy when he posted videos of himself harassing a woman praying the rosary and two teenage girls in front of the Planned Parenthood on Locust Street. The video went viral, emboldening hundreds of pro-life supporters to take to the streets to rally against Sims’ comments.

Just like Sims’ comments gave the pro-choice movement a black eye, the same is true when it comes for the firing of Dr. Wen. It is moves like this that advance the cause of those who want to defund Planned Parenthood. In turning its back on a more holistic view of health and focusing in a single-minded way on access to abortion, the organization has shown itself to be

nothing more than a political lobbying group that does not deserve federal funds.

It will be hard, going forward, for the organization to pretend it is anything more than an advocacy group for abortion rights. And that’s okay, since there have always been groups that lobby for one particular cause, to the exclusion of all others. The National Rifle Association never pretended to advocate for criminal justice reform. The American Bar Association never pretended to defend the rights of doctors sued for malpractice. And groups like NARAL Pro Choice America has always, and only, been about protecting access to abortion.

So Planned Parenthood should just give up the charade about women’s health, and declare itself to be what it always has been: a federally-funded lobbyist for abortion.

The truth shall set them free ... from our federal dollars.

Christine M. Flowers is a lawyer and columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News. Readers may send her email at cflowers1961@gmail.com.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Accentuating America’s goodness

Editorial from The Dallas Morning News:

We want to join the many voices rightly celebrating one of the greatest moments in our history. How hard it must have been to even imagine that journey 50 years ago that saw America reach out and touch something so distant, mysterious and powerful.

The iconic images of the moon landing that returned to us became instant symbols of our ability as a people and a culture to make real what we could only imagine.

Not even the confines of the planet itself were enough to contain American, and human, ingenuity and will.

We want to celebrate that today, but we have some pause.

We find ourselves asking if the America we live in today is capable of such wonder and awe.

We don’t mean technologically. Every day seems to bring us some advancement that would have seemed impossible a decade ago. We are so washed in technology that we take its abilities for granted. We assume the impossible

now.

No, what more worries us today are the political and cultural questions that reflecting on the moon landing draw up.

Are we a nation that can gather around a singular goal and make it ours? Are we a country that can be unironic and patriotic enough to take seriously President John F. Kennedy’s call that we sacrifice our individual selves for the whole of the republic?

We aren’t convinced the answer to those questions is yes.

This isn’t to cast a hazy glow on the past. Apart from the Civil War, it’s hard to name another era so politically torn as the late 1960s. And the country was torn for good reason. We needed to expand civil rights, to make good on the promise of equality, and that pain was part of the price for that work. The nation was also embroiled in war, and armed conflict is something that always leads to intense public debate.

What might have been different, though, was the sense of what America, as an idea, represented.

Today, the most prominent voices on the left too often cast America more in the light of its sins than its promise and achievements, as a place of division where power and privilege are simply an accident of birth or the spoils of faction and tribe. And, from the loudest voices on the right, the nation seems ever more unwelcoming and isolationist and fearful, not as the leader of nations devoted to the expansion of human freedom and democracy.

We believe that America is much better than those negative voices would pretend — voices amplified ironically enough through technology.

We believe Americans want to see the nation the way we were able to see it when our flag was planted in the dust and rock of the moon.

This is a country capable of making human life better and that has made human life better through all of our achievements — scientific, political and social.

Let’s consider that for a moment in wonder and awe. Then, let’s go together to achieve the next great thing.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Dustin Newman, police chief; John Clark, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m., Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.