

~ Letters to the Editor ~

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10.

In search of additional host families

To the editor:

We have had a successful year and were able to experience the countries of Columbia, Germany, Kazakhstan, South Korea and Thailand through the eyes of a new generation. The exchange Student Program is amazing in that it meets the needs of people on so many levels. You may have a need individually to open your life up to a young person and give them an opportunity of a lifetime.

On a community level we have the chance to really show these students how a small town operates. Most of the students come from communities in the millions and do not know their neighbors.

Educationally you can be a part of helping fund new programs, possibly pay for a teacher or for some small town schools this program is the only means to keep their doors open. In Heppner this year we had eight students and Mr. Stone, principal at the high school has asked for additional students for the upcoming school year. It is so nice to have the support of the staff. The Lone School eagerly opened their doors this year for us as we had more students wanting to come.

Part of the experience for these students is to play in organized team sports and they want to learn about commitment to a team. As we know, sports are an important way of life in small communities.

And last, but not least, by hosting a foreign exchange student you and your family are able to affect our country in a positive way globally. What an opportunity to show the world truly who we really are in the U.S.A. These students only know us through what they see on television or what their media has told them. They will get an up close and personal view of our lifestyle in the western United States. They are ambassadors for their countries in some part and we too have the ability to create awareness of the American way of life.

We are a unique blend of race and religion and you can show the world your part. We do not just touch one life but a family, a district, and a country. The impact of influence that we are able to provide to bring peace on a personal level really can create a circle of life. The students leave this program changed forever. They have matured, broadened their scope of hopes and dreams, seeing the possibilities for their future, making lifelong lasting relationships with real families living real lives.

Many of the parents we have talked to were concerned at first that our communities were too small. On the contrary, many of the students we have talked to said they really like the small town closeness that we have. It gave them an opportunity to meet people at every age level. They need conversational English and the close knit families and communities have enabled the speaking skills to increase considerably. Things we take for granted like looking at the stars, smelling clean air and being able to look up and see the vastness of our great land. Rural communities are essential and successful in giving the students the time and ability to learn the English language.

We have learned so much about our country and our community as we have opened our homes. There is a slogan, "We are looking for a few good men." Well our slogan is "We are looking for a few good homes" that will open their hearts up to a generation eager to know who we really are. America is so diverse and amazing. Whether you are married, single or retired, we have excited students waiting for a chance to experience America through your perspective.

Also through this program the students come with their own insurance and spending money to meet their needs during their stay. They will budget all their school lunches, sports activities, clothing and food outside of their homes. This way there is not financial stress put on the host families as they open their homes.

We have two different school programs available. Some students come for a semester only. This would be a four to five month commitment for the host families. The other program is for the entire school year and is a 10 month commitment giving you your summer free. So if you are concerned about time, we have several options that can meet your needs and yet affect a student for their lifetime.

You will have a support group of parents that you can call on for help and assistance. We are very team oriented ourselves and believe if we work together as a unit, even with our diversities, we will give these kids an opportunity that will affect them for a lifetime.

If you have been looking for an opportunity to make a change, to open your home and or make a positive influence on someone, then come to an open house at Willow Creek Diner, 348 N. Main in Heppner. Come and meet our team of dedicated parents on Tuesday night, May 20, at 7 p.m. for a question and answer time. Our team of area representatives will be on hand to answer your questions. You will be able to meet our students and ask them questions. We look forward to getting to know you.

If you cannot make it to the open house and would like more information about the foreign exchange program contact Kathy Marick at 541-965-1713 or Teresa VanDoorn at 541-377-2162.

Kathy Marick
Heppner

Gazette-Times to run senior page

The Heppner Gazette-Times will once again be running a "Congratulations Seniors" page on May 21. Anyone wishing to extend their good wishes to graduating Heppner and Lone students by adding their name can call 676-9228, fax to 676-9211, or send an email to david@rapidsolve.net or steph@rapidsolve.net by Monday, May 19. The cost is \$10.

Heppner High School graduation will be May 31 at 2 p.m. Lone High School graduation will be May 30 at 7 p.m.

Schizophrenia does not respect sex, race or religion

Letter to the Editor:

In my lone community I have recently observed with growing alarm at how easy it is to hold those individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia to a higher standard of conduct and accountability than we do others.

Schizophrenia is not a respecter of sex, race, or religion. It can affect anyone usually in the mid teens to early 20's. Schizophrenia is one of the largest causes of disability in the U.S. but through improvements in medications and a heightened understanding of brain function it is also becoming a very treatable illness.

As a parent of children within the susceptible age range, I am deeply concerned with how some the community has begun to view one of our own who has recently been diagnosed with schizophrenia. To those who know her, we can look on the past year and in view of the diagnosis see that everything makes sense now. It is difficult to pin point an exact beginning of the symptoms because they came on gradually but most of us have no doubt been made aware of the exact day that they escalated to point of requiring police intervention during school hours and on school property. The student was placed under arrest and taken into police custody. In view of what took place at the school this was the appropriate action to be taken at the time. Should there be consequences for the behavior? Absolutely. The student did receive consequences through the judicial system and was eventually hospitalized for treatment of her illness. However, contrary to popular belief, she has never been formally expelled from school. So as far as I understand it there is no legal reason she cannot participate in the graduation ceremony, and I would assert that she has been restricted due to fear of public sentiment and lack of 'backbone' of those making the decision. If there is a legal reason to restrict participation in graduation then say it, other wise those making the decision should seriously reconsider or maybe you are comfortable with slander, defamation of character and discrimination of the mentally ill.

So how far do we go to "punish" her, make her "sorry" for what she did? In the acute phase of schizophrenia, delusions, hallucinations, paranoia have complete control over the person and in fact the person themselves can not differentiate between those symptoms and reality as you and I may see it. Often times no memory of that specific event even exists once the symptoms are under control. If it is remembered it is often a source of great embarrassment and humiliation to this person. If a student with a medical illness that can temporarily alter mentation had a similar episode we would undoubtedly find it a great deal easier to have compassion and acceptance in our hearts than for the student with a mental illness. Instead we teach our students to continue with 'status quo' behavior and not compassionate understanding.

I have heard that some have voiced strenuous opposition to allowing this student to participate in the graduation ceremony even to the point of restricting their child from the ceremony if she participates. Then I would say, put your 'money where your mouth' is and do it. Stop making a circus out of what should be a time of celebration in honor of high school completion. How sad I am to think that in a community that prides itself on banding together in times of crisis has not seen fit to do so at this time. Is it so difficult to understand the pain this family feels as they watch their child suffer through no fault of her own?

Leann Rea listens

To the editor:

Leann Rea will make a great Morrow County commissioner because she listens to all sides of an issue and works well with people to achieve solutions. Those could be the two most important reasons to vote for Leann for Morrow County Commissioner, but there are many more reasons to vote for Leann.

Leann is a lifetime resident of Morrow County and has lived or worked in about every community in the county. She has a great understanding of the entire county and the needs of the different communities. She served on the Morrow County Budget Committee for 10 years so she understands the county budget process. Leann has also volunteered with the AARP tax assistance program for almost 10 years. She worked for the North Morrow County Irrigation District for six years. Her understanding of Morrow County agriculture has been enhanced by her years of working with her family farm and with farmers through the irrigation district.

These and a lifetime of experiences in Morrow County give Leann the knowledge to serve Morrow County as a County Commissioner.

Please vote for Leann Rea for Morrow County Commissioner.
Bill Broderick
Hermiston

Ione to hold Youth Track and Field Day

The Ione National Honor Society will hold their third annual Youth Track and Field Day on Sunday, May 18. The track meet will take place at the Ione Community School football field at 2 p.m.

Competitors in the track meet are children 0-5 years old and up to 5th grade, but spectators of all age are welcome.

Events include the 25 meter dash, 50 meter dash, 100 meter dash, tennis ball throw, standing broad jump, and new this year is the one lap race. The meet is a fun family activity and will take place rain or shine.

Admission to the track meet is free, but donations are welcome. All proceeds will go to the Ione Creative Care Preschool. For more information, contact National Honor Society advisor Ryan Rudolf at rrudolf@ione.k12.or.us, 422-7131 or 422-7401.

Why is their personal tragedy less acceptable than that of a family that suffers with a terminally ill child who also can not be blamed for their illness? I would suggest that their pain isn't different just more publicly acceptable then mental illness (remember, if you have children in their mid teens to early 20's this could be you). I have lived in this community for 10 years now and I know of other students (usually with the knowledge that they were breaking the law) have been charged with crimes during high school and have been allowed to participate so why the change of rules now? Most of these students did the right thing and took responsibility for those actions and I applaud them for that. However, this student, at that time, was not capable of understanding what she was doing and as far as I know the legal action was halted due to the diagnosis.

Maybe we are not aware of how prevalent mental illness is in our society and our communities (even those with small populations like Ione). In researching current statistics on the internet I found that approximately 2.2 million American adults or approximately one in every 123 people in the U.S. are dealing with schizophrenia. World wide it averages about 1% of the population. (National Institute of Mental Health; CureResearch.com). So it is safe to say that at the very least, there are two to three people in the Ione community who are currently living with this serious and persistent mental illness. So my question is: if mental illness, schizophrenia specifically, is so prevalent among us, why does so much stigma and discrimination against those diagnosed continue to exist? We are bombarded with images of 'psychotic killers', but violence perpetrated by people with a psych illness is rare and most likely to take place if the illness is left untreated (either by being undiagnosed, as in this case, or in non-compliance with a medication regime) or if the person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol (schizophrenia.com).

Mental illness of any kind has long been kept as a secret, tightly guarded within families in order to protect themselves from public ridicule and judgment (and I can certainly understand why). However, times are slowly changing. We don't lock "them" away in attic rooms or chain "them" to basement walls anymore. If they commit a crime they are no longer cut out of the family album (or school yearbook). New medications and therapies are emerging that have provided some sense of normalcy for the mental ill, but while modern science leads the way for change us human beings and our prejudice have lagged behind. Instead of being like everyone else on this issue, why doesn't Ione lead the way in defeating stigma and discrimination and allow our community member to participate in her own high school graduation. The mentally ill are not unaware. They often know when they are being mistreated and feel great pain from this. While the general public is good at rationalizing our behaviors, they are just as good at seeing through it and we fool no one but ourselves.

'Psychiatric patients are scared, and scarred, by their diagnoses.... They are usually terrified at their initial consultation and feel that they are blamed for their illness in a way that other patients, say those who require orthopedic surgery, are not... Stigma is borne out of fear and ignorance. Stigma is created, not inherent, and it can and must be eradicated.' (Dr. Bijlani, Priory Group, UK)
Beth Heagy, Registered Nurse
Ione

Little League gets a boost

To the Editor:

In the early 1990's Heppner Little League was facing a dilemma. The program was expanding rapidly with literally hundreds of kids in our community were signing up to play. Adequate field space to practice and play did not exist.

Morrow County Grain Growers offered the land and Pat Kilkenny opened his heart and poured thousands of dollars into the construction of the two fields. Heppner High has offered a softball program and Heppner Little League has offered baseball and softball to as many as 150 kids each year because of Pat and his generosity. Pat has funded many projects and those that directly affect kids and the Heppner community seem to be high priority.

This year, Heppner Little League again faced a dilemma. Equipment, uniforms and facilities needed attention, some mandated by Little League International. Funding was again a huge obstacle and again Pat Kilkenny and his dad, Bob, asked if they could help. Pat purchased a lawn mower, uniforms, balls, concessions equipment, fencing, and much more. He gave a struggling program the boost it needed at the time it needed it most.

Heppner Little League has 110 kids in its program this year thanks in large part to Pat Kilkenny.
Craig Gutierrez
Heppner

Morrow County Health Department calendar

Thursday, May 15 - Heppner Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1)
Monday, May 19 - Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Tuesday, May 20 - Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Thursday, May 22 - Heppner Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1)
Monday, May 26 - Closed for Memorial Day.
Tuesday, May 27 - Boardman Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12:30-1)
Thursday, May 29 - Heppner Clinic 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed 12-1)