

~ 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. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

COVID cases on the rise in states with lockdowns

To the editor:
Ben Franklin prudently spoke the words "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Fortunately, the Governors of Idaho, South Dakota, Texas and Florida understand this principle. They understand the ounce of prevention in protecting their states businesses and individual liberty is better than the pound of government lockdowns. Forty-one states have mask mandates and varying states of lockdowns. Cases of COVID-19 are on the rise in 39 of these 41 states.

Kristi Noem, Governor of South Dakota said, "We already know that lockdowns don't stop the spread of the virus, however they destroy small business and jobs, and they make it difficult for families to put food on the table." (Dec. 7, 20) A national reporter wrote of Noem, "Governor, if you had not stood against the lockdowns we would have no proof how useless they have been." (Oct. 6, 20)

Florida Governor DeSantos has kept Florida free from lockdowns since a short disastrous lockdown last spring. "Every Floridan has a right to work, all businesses have a right to operate and Florida is better for it." (Jan. 29, 21)

The state of California has dictated draconian lockdowns yet the virus spreads without restraint. Fortunately, the citizens of California have had enough and are about to recall their tyrant Governor.

Unfortunately, Oregon still tolerates their like-minded Governor. Oregon may never recover from Governor Brown's pound of cure. This dictator uses executive edicts like a sledgehammer to smash a fly, in this case innocent businesses and our

EOU to waive application fee

Eastern Oregon University's admissions office recently announced that it would waive all application fees Feb. 13 to March 15.

The decision applies to all student types and modalities intending to start at EOU in fall 2021. Applicants for graduate programs, undergraduate programs, online and on-campus can save up to \$50 by submitting their application during this period.

"Students and families everywhere are already juggling a lot," Director of Admissions Genesis Meaderds said. "This is one way we can help remove barriers and improve access and affordability."

Although the university's application deadline isn't until September, Me-

youth denied an education and sports. Expect that to change now that Trump is out of office.

An ounce of prevention against the virus is the best antidote to this pandemic scrooge engineered to end our Republic, "one nation under God." God's word tells us to "fear not." Fear debilitates. Fear compromises our immune system. Fear destroys our courage and heart to do what is right. Trust in God and love God and our fellow man, that is how we conquer fear.

An ounce of prevention against this pandemic dictate: 1) building our immune system with healthy diet, nutrition supplements, exercise and rest/recreation. 2) exercise grace toward one another. We need each other to get through this. Grace for those that take the vaccine and trust masks. Grace for those that do not.

An ounce of prevention is the best way to deal with the next threat to Heppner, Dollar General. Dollar General and Dollar Tree have grown from 20,000 stores to 30,000 in the last decade. They are planning on building another 24,000 across America. It will not be easy to deny them access to Heppner, however no prudent business would want to invest in a community where they are not welcome. Now is the time to convince them Heppner is a poor choice. One is rumored to be coming to Irrigon and that would be a better location.

A pound of cure being shoved down our throat by the dictates of a Governor, acting without restraint, has damaged us more than all the multitude of threats to our communities and liberty. Chose the ounce of prevention.

Stuart Dick, Irrigon.

Research shows Dollar General may impact grocery store

To the editor,
With all the talk and concerns about the prospect of a Dollar General coming to Heppner, I did some research on the impact Dollar General had on other rural towns of similar population.

Three examples popped up of rural towns with populations between 1,200 and 1,900 people: Haven, Kansas; Merville, Iowa; and Kingsley, Iowa. Each of these small towns had a single grocery store before Dollar General came to town. After Dollar General opened, the local stores lost 20 to 40 percent of their previous revenue.

Eventually the full-service grocery stores in each of these small towns closed. The residents of these town no longer have access to fresh meat, vegetables or fruits. Instead, their choices are limited to the processed and packaged foods that Dollar General was able to sell at a cheaper price than the local grocery store.

The question we now face is what impact a Dollar General store would have on our community? Obviously, it would bring an option to purchase certain food items at a lower cost, such as processed and packaged food. Will a Dollar General store reduce the sales of our local grocery store to the point of closure, as in the case of the rural towns mentioned above?

Fair competition is not a bad thing. When I was growing up we had three grocery stores in Heppner. We also had three car dealerships, three or four gas stations, two hardware stores, two drug stores, several clothing stores, a shoe store, a Sears, a dry cleaner, an appliance store, a pool hall, a bowling alley and a host of other businesses that covered main street from one end to the other.

A major driver behind all that commerce was a steady flow of logging trucks rolling down main street to our sawmill, which ran three shifts in its hey day. All of that former economic activity has dwindled down to a handful of fulltime businesses that provide essential goods and services to our community.

Now it is evident from the fate of the sole grocery stores in the rural towns of Haven, Kansas; Merville, Iowa and Kingsley, Iowa that a Dollar General store poses a real threat to the availability of essential food items in our community. That brings us to the question as to what action can or should be taken.

The small town of Scio, Oregon recently blocked Dollar General by denying a zoning change. They were able to do that since the pro-

posed location was zoned industrial instead of commercial. However, Dollar General would not need to request a zoning change in Heppner since the proposed location is currently zoned for commercial business.

The city of Mesquite, Texas has adopted an ordinance that requires businesses like Dollar General to obtain a conditional use permit. The ordinance was passed to protect the supply of essential food sources. Some parts of the city have been overrun with Dollar General type stores and forced the closure of full-service grocery stores, creating "food deserts." This has become a problem in many urban areas; especially in low-income neighborhoods where transportation is limited.

While the Mesquite, Texas ordinance does not ban Dollar General type stores from setting up shop and selling groceries, the conditional use permit does require them to dedicate a percentage of floor space to fresh meat, vegetables and fruits. As a result, Dollar General chooses not to build since their business model basically consists of packaged and processed foods they can sell cheaper than full-service grocery stores.

It is evident by a quick Google Search that Dollar General stores have led to the closure of full-service grocery stores in both large cities and small towns across the nation. An ordinance similar to that of Mesquite, Texas does not ban fair competition. However, it sets a level playing field by requiring stores like Dollar General to provide a full range of groceries. That is turf Dollar General will not play on. Their game plan is to stock items they can sell cheap and take away a significant market share from the established full-service grocery stores.

Dollar General is a publicly traded company that operates in a corporate environment where the CEO and executives are rewarded for growth and market share. I urge the leaders and members of our community to examine the negative impact Dollar General has taken on the food supply in similar small towns; and then take the action needed to protect ours. (Viewers can obtain links to the sources of the above information by contacting danielrvan@yahoo.com)

Daniel Van Schoiack, Heppner

BEO reports 2020 earnings

BEO Bancorp and its subsidiary, Bank of Eastern Oregon, announced consolidated year end 2020 earnings of \$5,499,000; average earnings per share of \$4.64. Total assets were \$666.1 million; net loans were \$491.7 million, while deposits ended the year at \$607.8 million. All measurements show improvement from 2019.

"2020 can only be referred to as strange. Our communities, counties, states, country and world have been impacted by COVID-19. Future generations will read about, and hopefully learn from our experiences. Face masks, quarantines and lock downs have been added to our everyday vernacular. On top of the pandemic, many of our communities have dealt with floods, fires and various calamities. Our hearts go out to all that have been impacted by the events of the past year," said President and CEO, Jeff Bailey.

According to Chief Financial Officer, Mark Lemmon, "2020 Return on Average Assets is 0.95 percent compared to 0.94 percent in 2019. Return on

Average Equity is at 13.81 percent compared to 11.81 percent in 2019. Our book value per share is \$34.94 compared to \$31.90 one year ago. Shareholder equity is also up 11.3 percent year over year."

Chief Operations Officer, Becky Kindle said, "We are so very proud of our employees that have faced the challenges of 2020 with resolve, as they continue to provide banking services to our customers through whatever means necessary. Our bank has worked hard to keep our lobbies open as much as possible, while implementing the necessary safety measures for our staff and customers. It has been a great team effort."

"Our loan portfolio is performing well as we enter 2021. Agricultural commodity prices have seen their ups and downs over the past year, but our producers persevered, as they have for generations. I continue to be impressed by how our communities have worked together to support local businesses, neighbors and friends during these often-trying times," concluded Bailey.

The Loop schedules work session

The Loop - Morrow County Transportation will be holding a STIF/STF Advisory Committee work session February 16 at 10:30 a.m. at the Bartholomew Building lower conference room, 110 N. Court St. in Heppner. In response to the current health emergency resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, county facilities have limited seating capacity and meetings are being held electronically to provide participation other than in-person.

The work session will

be available for viewing via Morrow County Zoom meeting. To schedule a Zoom Meeting invitation please provide your name, phone number and email address with The Loop - Morrow County Special Transportation via phone message at 541-676-5667 or email to kimes@co.morrow.or.us

The agenda includes welcome and roll call, draft review annual operating plan for fiscal year 2021/2022 and other business as needed for the good of the order.

Lent will be different this year

Lent begins next Wednesday. The Episcopalians and Lutherans of Hopeful Saints Ministry have traditionally hosted a pancake supper the night before, on what is known as Shrove Tuesday (February 16).

The pancake supper has been an annual fundraiser for the Mission and Outreach local needs fund. However, this year the pandemic is interfering with that tradition. Home-cooked pancakes are always an option, but if members of the community would still like to support local needs, they may contribute by check payable to Mission and Outreach (with "Shrove Tuesday" in the

memo line), addressed to the church at PO Box 246 in Heppner.

On Ash Wednesday, February 17, the intended return to Main Street with "Ashes-to-Go" is also not possible this year. For those who the imposition of ashes and personal absolution is a meaningful beginning to Lent, call Pastor Katy Anderson at 541-676-9970 to schedule a time in the church for private imposition and/or confession, with appropriate COVID safety measures.

In addition, throughout Lent (February 17-March 24), Evening Prayer will be offered on Facebook Live every Wednesday at 6 p.m.

Hi, I'm Linda, your Morrow County Veterans Services representative, aka VSO- Veterans Service Officer. As your local VA Advocate, accredited under Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs, I'm here to assist you and your family access benefits that you may be entitled to. VSO's are trained and accredited to provide assistance to veterans, their dependents, and survivors. This includes not only applying for federal and state benefits but also providing resources related to the following:

- Compensation and Pension
- VA Health Care
- Education & Training
- Employment
- Burial & Survivor benefits
- Housing, & VA Loans
- Transportation
- Military Records
- Vital Records
- Disabled Veteran property tax exemption

We also assist with other Oregon State benefits such as Veterans License Plates, Emergency Grant funds & more. Call our office today 541-922-6420



February Specials! Love is in the Air!

20% off Montana Silver through Valentine's Day



\$2.00/bag off Purina Equine Senior through February

Morrow County Grain Growers Green Feed & Seed

Heppner - 242 W Linden Way - 541-676-9422