

~ 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 \$15 Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

HISTORICAL FACTS

Morrow County is a rural/frontier county and has approximately 2,000 square miles and a population of around 13,000. This means there are large areas of the county with many miles between residents. The Emergency Medical System (EMS) is required to operate not just within city limits or close proximity to city populations but to serve all of the 2,000 sq miles of Morrow County. The Morrow County government is responsible for making sure an EMS provider is competent, reliable, fiscally sound, compliant with all regulatory state and county laws and all areas of the county are served. The Morrow County Health District (MCHD) was formed by the Morrow County Board of Commissioners (BOC) and assigned EMS to the MCHD to serve all of the county because it was recognized that cutting up the county would leave many areas without reliable, responding EMS. A county wide approach was the most efficient, dependable, EMS service for the county and still is today. MCHD is and has been providing county wide excellent service without interruptions for 30 years. During this 30 years MCHD has been investing and improving service to the county. It started with 3 ambulances, one full time staffed, and was operated primarily by volunteers. Today the district employs 25 full time and 35 part time highly skilled EMS staff, 24/7 with 7 ambulances stationed across the county. The EMS team is completely integrated countywide using a 911 app which allows for instant communication that provides always available EMS with the right level of service when and where it is needed. On 12/13/2023 MCHD had to give notice to the county when the county submitted a new Ambulance Service Area (ASA) Plan and Ordinance to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) that gave them authority to seize the assets of MCHD by changing the definition of the word "board" to mean the county instead of the health district. The MCHD had seen an earlier version they objected to but had never seen the final version of the ASA Plan submitted to OHA with the definition changes.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

1. First and foremost, we believe a swift resolution to

this situation is in the best interests of our communities and our ambulance crews. The resolution to this situation is necessary to mitigate serious, ongoing safety issues occurring in the field as a result of the conflict over which entity should provide ambulance service, sometimes even during occurring emergencies.

2. There are still 7 weeks of the notice period remaining. We believe that period of time is sufficient to resolve most of the issues that caused MCHD to give notice if the BOC prioritizes a resolution and signs a contract with MCHD to continue services.

3. In April of 2023, the BOC determined the county would act under the 1998 ASA Plan and Ordinance. At the present time MCHD is following the 1998 ASA Plan and Ordinance. But the county is not following the processes laid out in those documents with regard to updating the ASA Plan and evaluating service providers. Without a plan to fall back on, the County is making up the process as they go. This has created a lack of transparency and a moving target. When this subject was brought to the county commissioners, the County Administrator answered stating the commissioners "may repeal the 1998 Ordinance" resulting in not following the processes and the rules the county chose to follow developing a new ASA plan.

4. In a press release on January 5, 2024, the County Administrator stated that MCHD has refused to participate further in the process of developing a new ASA Plan. This is not correct. Since giving notice, MCHD and the board chair have met with the County Administrator twice to work on the new ASA Plan and another meeting after that with just MCHD leadership and the administrator. A total of 3 meetings since the notice. The MCHD leadership and board chair have attended both meetings of the Board of Commissioners at which this topic was discussed. The MCHD Board Chair and CEO publicly read statements at the Irrigon BOC meeting stressing that MCHD wanted to work with the county to resolve all concerns and be the county wide EMS provider. MCHD has never ceased to participate in this process and has been publicly transparent and consistent in all discussions of MCHD wanting to be the EMS countywide provider.

5. Due to the uncertainty of the BOC changing the rules and processes or possibility of not following any rules the MCHD requires a written and signed service contract to continue to provide county wide services. The need for an EMS contract was discussed before the notice and again after the notice on 1/2/2024 with the county administrator by MCHD at a ASA meeting and the county administrator asked to see the contract for review. The district agreed to provide it. On 1/19/2024 a public statement by the health district board during a public session with the county administrator present was made of a soon to be coming service contract to the county for action. The countywide contract will provide long term certainty to staff and county residents with no disruption of services. Again, a swift resolution to this situation is in the best interests of our communities and ambulance crews. Additional information available at <https://www.morrow-countyhealthdistrict.org/>

Sincerely,
Diane Kilkenny RN BSN
Morrow County Health District Board Chair

STUCK

We've all had those moments when we are reminded of the frailty of life. I personally have had my share....but none quite like I experienced one day as I was innocently feeding my friend's horse.

I was in a bit of a hurry, as usual, and was anxious to get the chores done so I could get on with my list of to-dos I had lined up for my non-workday. I opened the 6' wide door to the feed room, unhooking the cleverly bent piece of wire that kept the latch closed. I took a few steps inside, grabbed an armful of hay and turned around to head out the door and to the trough inside the paddock.

Hmmmm... that's weird....the door's closed. Dang wind. So, I nudged it with my shoulder. Nothing. Pushed it with my boot...still nothing. What the heck? Don't panic... it's probably just stuck. Put the hay down and gave it a good shove. Nope...not stuck....locked. Apparently, if you don't put the wire back in a precise spot on the latch, it can and will decide to fall forward and latch itself. Nice.

Let's see. I will quickly size up the situation and make a plan. I'll just call and have someone come

let me out. Reach for the pocket...no phone...which I remember is in the Ranger 10' away and on the OTH-ER side of the door. Keep in mind....I do NOT live within shouting distance of anyone. People rarely come and go here. Hollering for help is currently not an option.

I'm not exactly Mac-Gyver but raising 7 kids and being an EMT has given me a little edge on resourcefulness. So instead of giving way to sheer terror, I grabbed an ax that was leaning up against the wall. Fine. There's already a 4" gap under the door and it can't be that hard to shimmy underneath....I'll just dig my way out. No problem... except:

- #1 Axes weren't made for digging.
- #2 Dry dirt can be harder than it looks.
- #3 I have lousy depth perception.
- #4 The size of my girth is something I try not to be acutely aware of but apparently underestimate.

Any escape by squeezing under a door is not considered a success until more than 50% of you is free. I figure I stopped at about 40%. My posterior refused to continue and as I was trying to convince it to do so, my jeans got caught on the metal attached to the door frame. More stuck.

Next came a blur of random thoughts and questions...and the knowledge that not far beyond me were the 30 red ant hills I had tried unsuccessfully to annihilate. Are ants vindictive? Can they see me? How long before the Ranger runs outta gas? The animals are all gonna starve. What if I have to go...you know...potty? What if the pager goes off? If I hadn't eaten that ice cream out of the carton last night I would probably fit. If I'm stuck here long enough....I'll lose weight then I'll fit. It's gonna be pretty dang embarrassing to die like this. And finally....Lord...I could really use some help right now.

Remember how the angel let Peter out of prison? Well, I didn't exactly see an angel, but that door spontaneously opened about 2 seconds later and I think I could hear the Lord say "I wondered when you were gonna ask?" Well...not exactly that...but I think He was smiling and saying, "Next time....try asking first."

By Susie Crosby from Prineville

Good News Only by Doris Brosnan

One can find "The Streets of Baltimore" on the list of country-music songs, but locally, "Baltimore Street" holds more significance for at least one resident of that street: Carolyn Willey is immensely grateful to her neighbors in Baltimore for their variety of help during the recent snow events. The challenge of the growing snow berm at the end of her driveway was insurmountable for her but not for the Calvert's, Roy's, Skaggs's, and Greenup's, who took care of her property and offered other services throughout the shut-in kind of weather. And nephew Joe Armato brought Carolyn her mail and added some shoveling. Carolyn had her hands full inside her home for some of the time all these kindnesses were being rendered, as she had to remove a vole (yes, a vole), a "wise and fast" mouse, and whatever was plugging her kitchen sink! Maybe "it never snows but it pours"?

Earl and Peggy Fishburn spotted three bright-red breasted robins in their yard on Monday, so Peggy suggests that we all "Get out your yardwork tools!"

So, a question is whether Bev Harris, leader on the "Prime Time Fitness" video, has a sick sense of humor or is simply clueless: Why else would she say such things as "Is your tummy tucked in?" and "You have springs in your feet!" when the only focus is on keeping up and not collapsing?!

Troy Morgan and some HHS students (with excellent reporting/writing skills) took time to share the following good news from the BEO wrestling tournament last Saturday: The Heppner High School wrestling team had a very successful weekend. Earning sixth place in his weight class was Kaden King (157 lbs.). Hayden McMahon (144 lbs.) and Junior Gallardo (190 lbs.) both placed fifth in their classes, and it was Junior's first-ever meet. Landon McMahon (175 lbs.) and Gino Gallegos (285 lbs.) earned fourth in their respective weight classes. Sarah Munkers, a first-year wrestler, placed third and Keeley Nairns, also a first-year wrestler, placed second in their weight classes. Also placing second were Loren Trujillo (120 lbs.) and Zach Brown (157 lbs.). Finishing in first place in their classes were Denisse Braccamontes (115 lbs.), Journey Cavan-Harris (135 lbs.), and Jaime Cavan-Harris (215 lbs.). Both Journey and Jaime finished 3-0 in the event, with Journey pinning all three opponents. Other wrestling participants were Tyelor Moore, Owen Guerra, Connor Wilson, Joe McMasters, Chris Humphries, and Brayden Desclos-Curtis. These wrestlers gained a ton of positive experience from this tournament. A special thank you to the Bank of Eastern Oregon and their volunteers for their support of the wrestling program.

Far beyond any expectations," Kim Lindsay reports as she marvels at the turnout for the "Barney Lindsay Scholarship Fund Dinner and Auction" last Saturday evening. Not only was the dinner sold out at 190, but the number of individuals allowed to join for the later auction had to be limited to maintain G & B capacity limitations. "Barney would have loved this event," Kim adds, as it was serving what was so important to him: the education of Morrow County students – present and future – serving generations to come. "We could feel the love in the room," Kim says, with her heart overflowing. Because so many diners and bidders opened their hearts and wallets, the goal of sustaining the scholarship fund through interest-only has moved closer to a reality, and the \$54,000 made (before expenses) enables the fund to grant over 100 scholarships over the next 27 years!

Reading good news items contributed by others is so enjoyable! And sharing your very own good news item will add to their pleasure - dbrosnan123@gmail.com or call 541-223-1490 to get it into the Good News Only column.

Here's hoping that good news comes to everyone reading this!

Ladies Night
Thursday, February 8, 2024

TACO BAR

Prepared by Regi Lazinka
Dinner at 6:00 pm
Lodge at 8:00 pm
Member and guests only



HEPPNER ELKS 358
676-9181 "Where Friends Meet" 142 North Main

Have You Heard?
Introducing Interpretation Services
Pioneer Memorial Clinic and Irrigon Medical Clinic now have dual-role staff interpreters who are fluent in both English and Spanish.

Also available is a third-party remote video interpretation service in multiple languages offered at all clinic locations, including Boardman Immediate Care.



¿Has oído?
Presentamos los servicios de interpretación
Pioneer Memorial Clinic y Irrigon Medical Clinic ahora cuentan con intérpretes de doble función que hablan inglés y español con fluidez.

También está disponible un servicio de interpretación remota por video de terceros en varios idiomas que se ofrece en todas las clínicas, incluido Boardman Immediate Care.

