

## Hermiston Herald

VOLUME 109 • NUMBER 29



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Delivered by carrier and mail Wednesdays and Saturdays  
Inside Umatilla/Morrow counties.....\$42.65  
Outside Umatilla/Morrow counties.....\$53.90

The Hermiston Herald (USPS 242220, ISSN 8750-4782) is published twice weekly at Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838, (541) 567-6457, FAX (541) 567-1764. Periodical postage paid at Hermiston, OR. Postmaster, send address changes to Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main St., Hermiston, OR 97838.  
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National Dialog on Race

## Legal monkey business

Legal rights for animals? Not so fast. A few weeks ago, says the New York Post, Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Barbara Jaffe “inadvertently bestowed human status on two chimpanzees being used for biomedical research at Stony Brook University on Long Island.”

The chimps, Hercules and Leo, were granted habeas corpus — a legal action through which human detainees can seek relief from unlawful imprisonment — in response to a lawsuit filed on their behalf by the Nonhuman Rights Project. The lawsuit requested that Hercules and Leo be moved to a South Florida sanctuary. Justice Jaffe ruled that the university must establish cause for holding the two chimps (to be reviewed at an upcoming hearing).

Well, the Nonhuman Rights Project people quickly claimed that the initial ruling “implicitly determined that Hercules and Leo are ‘persons,’” which could, potentially, open a big door to granting legal rights to animals.

An angry Jaffe said she had no such intention and quickly amended her court order by crossing out the words “Writ of Habeas Corpus” — which means Hercules and Leo do not have any human rights at all.

The issue of legal rights for animals has been a source of debate for some time.

According to Science Magazine, some legal scholars take issue with the current legal system that treats animals as property and not independent beings. Cases like that of Hercules and Leo are intended to call attention to the matter and eventually grant some legal rights to animals.

Other legal scholars argue that apes and chimps and other creatures that are fairly well advanced should have rights similar to those of a human child.

According to The Washington Post, legal scholar Stephen Wise, a longtime advocate for legal rights for some animals, said that “Certain species are capable of complex emotions, can communicate using language, and have a sense of self. I don’t see a difference between a chimpanzee and my 4 1/2-year-old son.”



**TOM PURCELL**  
Cagle columnist

That may be so, but perhaps your son could use a shave?

Wise said that chimps, for instance, have complex social interactions. They use tools, count, do sign language (at a 4-year-old human’s level) and demonstrate an idea of the future, while remembering the past.

Well, so do members of Congress, but we don’t want to grant more special rights to them.

Wise said that when you give a mirror to an orangutan, he uses it to explore parts of his body he can’t see otherwise. This indicates a sense of self, according to Wise.

It’s also a sign that orangutans have a lot of free time on their hands.

In any event, advocates who want legal rights for animals want to give animals “basic rights of bodily integrity and bodily liberty,” said Wise.

If animals have some legal rights, for instance, zoos and carnivals would not be able to detain and use them for entertainment and medical labs would not be allowed to use them for testing.

Maybe there is something to be said for that. Perhaps a majority of people will look back in the not-too-distant future and think it barbaric that animals were caged in zoos or paraded around carnival tents for so long. We should treat all of God’s magnificent creatures with dignity and respect (though, admittedly, I intend to keep eating the tastier ones).

Still, it must remain clear that, though humans and some animals may have similarities, our differences are significant. Only humans have moral capacity, the free will to choose right or wrong.

We are, said Mark Twain, “the only animals who blush — or need to.”

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Tom Purcell, author of “Misadventures of a 1970’s Childhood” and “Comical Sense: A Lone Humorist Takes on a World Gone Nutty!”, is a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review humor columnist and is nationally syndicated exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc

### Bond passage will help support county’s economy

Editor,  
We would like to urge voters to support the BMCC bond, found on the current ballot. BMCC has served our region’s students of all ages for over 50 years, providing convenient, affordable and quality educational opportunities and training while continuing to work and live in our area.

We believe support of the BMCC bond is important because it will provide new state-of-the-art training in job areas critical to our unique agricultural and manufacturing needs, as well as enhance existing programs in key areas of nursing, dental and diesel tech. Agriculture and manufacturing are the backbone of our eastern Oregon economy. A trained workforce in specific areas is critical to the economic development essential to continue our region’s growth. BMCC is partnering with our region’s agriculture and manufacturing communities to address needs for our growing economy.

Hermiston will benefit with a new Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center. Boardman will receive an Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Training and Early Learning Center. Pendleton will have a renovated Agriculture Center to support livestock, soil and horticulture agriculture curriculum. In addition, the school can be a better steward of taxpayer money by cutting operational costs of its facilities by replacing aging and inefficient heating, cooling, plumbing and electrical systems at all BMCC locations.

BMCC has listened to community members and responded to concerns by offering a leaner, more targeted budget. This new bond will come onto the tax rolls at a rate less than the bond that expired in 2014.

Support of the BMCC bond is an investment in the future.

ANN AND DEAN FIALKA  
HERMISTON

### BMCC bond a worthwhile investment

Editor,  
For more than half a century Blue Mountain Community College, BMCC, has educated thousands of students, many of whom live and work in Umatilla and Morrow counties. Family businesses have been established, job training has expanded opportunities and lives have been enriched with specific coursework. Theater, music, the Arts and Culture Festival and numerous other activities

have brought depth to rural life.

Beginning in 2014, President Cam Preus, board members and staff held 12 “active listening” sessions throughout both counties. They heard the constructive criticism and the priorities of our citizens. The bond proposal reflects this wealth of community input. The highest priorities were workforce development, safety, protection and updating of existing infrastructure and equipment. Partnerships have been established in Hermiston utilizing existing OSU facilities for precision agriculture and critical workforce training at the Port of Morrow in Boardman. BMCC is collaborating with the Energy Trust of Oregon and could see an annual savings of around \$100,000 in utility costs with upgrades to heating, cooling and electrical systems.

*Over 50 years ago, the citizens of Umatilla and Morrow counties made a wise decision to establish Blue Mountain Community College. Please join us in the continuing support of this worthwhile investment in the education, training and well-being of both counties.*

State and lottery funds will provide \$4 million as a match to further leverage the bond. The college shaved \$5 million from the original bond and reduced the cost to 25 cents per \$1,000 assessed property value. The medium home value in Umatilla County is \$145,000 for an estimated bond cost of \$36.25 per year.

Over 50 years ago, the citizens of Umatilla and Morrow counties made a wise decision to establish Blue Mountain Community College. Please join us in the continuing support of this worthwhile investment in the education, training and well-being of both counties.

PAUL AND MARY DAVIS  
PENDLETON

### BMCC levy not affordable

Editor,  
Yes, BMCC is a major asset to our community of northeast Oregon. As I have told the BMCC president and BMCC board chair, our family has much to appreciate about BMCC. However, for this letter, we will only discuss the “affordability” of this levy.

Many of the taxpayers cannot afford this loan that the voters are being asked to take out for their local college. At this point in Oregon history, “Taxes are a big deal.” The property tax on a \$120,000 valued local residence per year, in 2002, was about \$1,500. In 2008, it was about \$1,900. In 2011, it was about \$2,100. In 2014, it was about \$2,250.

With the federal increase in fees, fines, co-pays, taxes and Oregon’s new upcoming taxes and fees, what will 2015’s property tax be competing with? We do not have a choice on these levies. We do have a choice on the BMCC levy/loan. By the way, what do you think “the carbon tax” will cost us directly and indirectly (in the cost of living)?

Recently, “The East Oregonian” newspaper published an article concerning “The United Way.” It reported that the United Way no longer generates enough volunteer donations from individuals and businesses to contribute to several nonprofit organizations in Pendleton. Nor do they generate enough income to fund other nonprofit organizations at the level they are used to getting from The United Way. One of those unfunded organizations will be the Pendleton Salvation Army Meals Program.

What about the lower end of the economic food chain? For those who recycle metal, they have noticed, over the last year, that a pick-up truck load of metal scrap gets, on the average, less than one half what it did a year ago.

Yes, the BMCC levy supporters paint a “rosy” picture of why we should take out another loan for BMCC. Well, right now, economically speaking, all is not “rosy.”

LARRY AND JEAN NYE  
ATHENA

### Recycle day very helpful

Editor,  
I would like to thank the City of Hermiston for its recycle day at UEC last Saturday. I took advantage of the free service with near empty cans of paint. Thank you, and I hope it was a success so that it can become an annual thing.

PIUS HORNING  
HERMISTON

### ELECTED OFFICIALS

#### STATE

**District 29: Sen. Bill Hansell**, R-Umatilla Co., 900 Court St. N.E., S-423, Salem, OR 97301, 503-986-1729. 101 S.W. Third St., Pendleton, OR 97801 (541) 278-1396. E-mail: ssen.billhansell@state.or.us.

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**District 57: Rep. Greg Smith**, R-Morrow, 900 Court St. N.E., H-280, Salem, OR 97301, 503-986-1457. P.O. Box 215, Heppner, OR 97836, (541) 676-5154. E-mail: smith.g.rep@state.or.us.

#### FEDERAL

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**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley**  
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**U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (2nd District)**  
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### Letters Policy

The Hermiston Herald welcomes original letters for publication on public issues and public policies. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. Phone numbers will not be published. Letters may be mailed to the Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main, Hermiston, OR, 97838; or emailed to editor@hermistonherald.com