

EDITOR'S DESK

# Good pet owners make our community a better place

Years ago, when my brother was a young Cub Scout, members of his troop each came home from an activity with their very own goldfish, to the surprise of their parents.

None of the fish lived long. One fell victim to a cat. Another jumped out of its bowl, likely trying to escape water that had become too warm from sitting next to the radiator. A third was poisoned by pencil shavings that were accidentally dropped in its bowl.

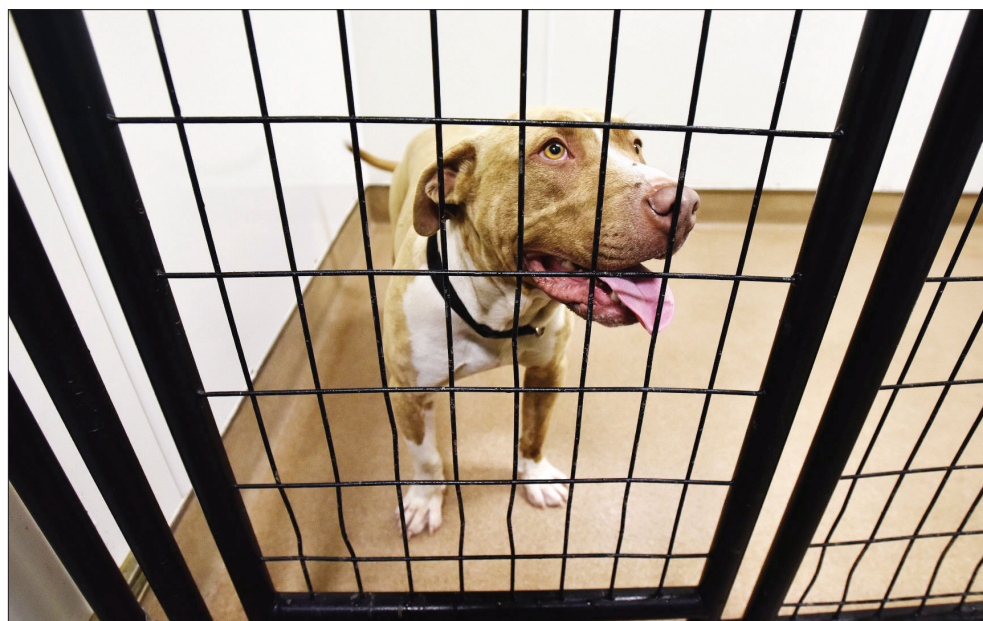
I'm not sure if the exercise taught exactly the lesson that was intended, but it was a lesson nonetheless: responsible pet ownership goes far beyond simply remembering to feed your pet.

Pet ownership is a serious responsibility and yearslong commitment. But over the years, I have met far too many dogs here whose owners frequently let them roam the streets, untrained and unneutered, dodging cars and nipping at neighbors.

If you're considering pet ownership, please don't do it impulsively. Research each animal's and breed's needs and temperament and consider how they might fit into your home and whether you feel confident you can continue to meet those needs during your pet's entire lifespan. How much space does the ani-



Jade McDowell  
NEWS EDITOR



A pit bull terrier, confiscated from a home near Hermiston, sits in a local animal shelter in 2017.

Hermiston Herald, File

mal need? How much mental stimulation? Exercise? Food? Specialized grooming or veterinary care? And how much will all of that cost?

Once you have your pet, be prepared to do the responsible thing by providing them vaccines and other needed preventive care. If you're getting a dog or cat, make sure they're spayed or neutered so you're not contributing to the overpopulation that results in about 3 million cats and dogs being euthanized in shelters each year, according to the Humane Society.

In that vein, I would also urge you to strongly consider adopting from a shelter. Adopting from a shelter has a lot of advantages beyond the altru-

istic ones — it's cheaper, the animals can be more unique, you have a better idea of their personality and often someone else has already gone through all the work of house training them. I loved the shelter dogs I grew up with.

Once you bring your pet home, be prepared to give them a safe environment that fits their needs. If you get a rabbit, for example, you should know that they love chewing wires and can electrocute themselves if you leave them unattended with cords. If you get a dog, it's your responsibility to make sure they can't easily escape your yard and run into traffic if you're leaving them to run around unsupervised. If they're a "frequent

flyer" at the local shelter, that's on you. Dogs also need proper training and socialization. That doesn't necessarily mean a full repertoire of show tricks, but basic manners and house-training are important.

Also, definitely don't be like the guy who once got angry at a photographer and I for showing up to a house fire and asked, "Do I need to bring my pit bull out? She bites." Owners like that are why certain breeds have a bad reputation.

It's also up to you to recognize that not everyone loves your pet as much as you do. I personally love dogs, and am delighted when I get to interact with my friends' pets, but it's also important to respect that some people have allergies or phobias or simply don't enjoy unfamiliar, unleashed dogs bounding up to them unexpectedly at the park.

Asking, "Is it alright if I bring my dog/cat/snake?" and respecting a "no" is important.

Lastly, clean up after your pets. Don't be that entitled person who lets their dog do its business in other people's yards and walks away, or makes everyone have to watch their step at the park.

Owning a pet is a truly wonderful thing. But our community will be a better place if everyone makes sure their pet ownership is as enjoyable for their pets and their neighbors as it is for them.

COLUMN

## Teaching United States history

Over the last several months, we have witnessed history happening in our country that has not happened since the Civil War. It is United States history in the making.

Now is a good time to reflect on our U.S. history from when we were in school. Do you remember your U.S. History classes? In Oregon, U.S. History is usually taught in 5th grade and again in high school. How well do you know the Constitution and its amendments and what they stand for?

Yes, there are people who do understand really well and people who think they know them, and people who really don't know. What does the First Amendment really mean?

In many schools dealing with remote learning, especially at the elementary ages, the teaching of Social Studies has sadly taken a back seat. Understanding the schools are doing their best in these unprecedented times, now is a great time to review for all of us what our founders felt would make us a leading country. The United States is a network of people and cultures working together for the betterment of the world and was designed 246 years ago knowing the country would grow and change. Have we taken it for granted?

This is a great time for us as adults to refresh ourselves and bring our children into the discussion of what it means to be a United States citizen. Below are some general questions along with general resources you might consider when locating and fact-checking yourself. There are many ways of using the internet to search and locate information. Engaging with your children on this quest will help them have a stronger understanding of just how to locate and discuss information about questions that

develop during their life.

Our government is built on three areas; the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments. Understanding them and discussing why they were written might provide for a better understanding of just why our government operates the way that it does along with what our responsibilities are as United States citizens.

The Constitution: When was it written? Who were the authors? Where was it written? How many parts are there in the constitution? See [kids.britannica.com/kids/article/constitution/352996](https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/constitution/352996).

The Bill of Rights: What is the "Bill of Rights?" Who were the authors and why? Do they still apply today? How? See [ducksters.com/history/us\\_bill\\_of\\_rights.php](https://ducksters.com/history/us_bill_of_rights.php).

Amendments: What are constitutional amendments? Who and how can you make an amendment? How many amendments are there? You hear people say, "It's my First Amendment right." What does that mean? See [ducksters.com/history/us\\_constitution\\_amendments.php](https://ducksters.com/history/us_constitution_amendments.php)

How do the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments impact our daily lives? Do they really mean what you assumed they did? What are some ways you might be able to support our government? We are a diverse country made of multiple cultures each having its own perspective and understanding. Over the last couple of months has our government been in jeopardy?

These are all questions we should reflect on as Americans, United States citizens, and how these issues could be peacefully addressed.

*Scott Smith has been an educator in Umatilla County for more than 40 years and is on the Decoding Dyslexia-OR board as their parent/teacher liaison.*



Scott Smith

COLUMN

## Solutions for child care recovery

Rural Oregon is facing a difficult post-COVID economic recovery. The \$1.9 trillion federal coronavirus relief package will undoubtedly help, but without addressing some long-standing barriers to economic development, we will not grow and thrive.

The lack of child care is one of those barriers. We live in a child care desert, where the number of available slots is a fraction of the need.

Without adequate and affordable child care options for children younger than age 5, a laundry list of problems arises. Parents may need to drop out of the workforce or college, employers face difficulties recruiting, professionals leave rural Oregon, school districts suffer diminishing enrollment and many 5 year olds are not prepared for kindergarten.

A strong child care system is needed to solve these problems.

The Ford Family Foundation's recent report, "Child Care in Rural Oregon," charts a path to improve the quantity and quality of child care. Their five recommendations should be quickly enacted.

Their first recommendation is for the Oregon Department of Human Services to use data from surveys of child care providers across the state to accurately model the actual costs of providing child care, to calculate reimbursement rates that are fair across the state and don't put rural areas at a disadvantage.

Second, do away with the state's current system of paying more for child care in urban areas than is paid in rural areas, and permanently waive or significantly lower the co-payments for

low-income families who receive child care assistance.

Third, recognize that both home-based child care providers and child care centers need consistent and reliable funding. They need to receive payments based on a child's enrollment rather than their daily attendance.

Fourth, launch a statewide system to link child care provider networks so that administrative services, such as bookkeeping and payroll, can be shared by home-based child care and child care centers across the state, lowering costs for all.

Fifth, make changes in Oregon's child care regulations to allow small child care centers to be located in non-residential settings, so they can be licensed as "Certified Family Child Care." This would allow for mixed-age groups of up to 16 children in "micro-centers" located in schools and other existing buildings.

These steps don't solve the underlying problem causing the shortage of child care: This care is expensive to provide because of the high caregiver-to-child ratios needed for the safety of very young children, and is not subsidized by the government except for very low-income families.

Ultimately, we as a nation need to face the fact that a child's education does not start in kindergarten. It starts at birth, so the more tax dollars we spend on high-quality child care and education, the less we will spend on remedial services and social welfare systems, and the better off we will be in the long run.

*This editorial was published by the East Oregonian editorial board.*

### CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at [editor@hermistonherald.com](mailto:editor@hermistonherald.com) or call (541) 564-4533 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

### SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

### OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at [hermistonherald.com/obituaryform](http://hermistonherald.com/obituaryform), by email to [obits@hermistonherald.com](mailto:obits@hermistonherald.com), by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, x221.