

EDITOR'S DESK

Stop harassing people for doing their jobs

Some of you may have seen a picture that made the rounds online recently, of a sign at a restaurant asking people to be patient with how short-staffed they were, sadly proclaiming that “No one wants to work anymore.”

Honestly, I don't blame them.

The past year has been a really tough one on a lot of professions. Some of that was inevitable — the pandemic has forced everyone to adjust to new situations and taken away much of the casual face to face interaction with coworkers that helped make work more enjoyable (if you had good coworkers). But certain difficulties faced were entirely preventable.

Anyone who has worked a customer service job knows you are always going to have to deal with some number of people who run the gamut from garden-variety rude to screaming-and-throwing-things levels of entitlement. But it seems to have gotten much worse during the pandemic.

Businesses — including some locally — have felt the need to put up signs urging people not to take their frustrations about masks out on employees. Video after video has circulated on social media and in the news media showing adults throwing merchandise, yelling racial slurs, purposely coughing on people and other behaviors they should be extremely



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR



Jade McDowell/Hermiston Herald

“Now hiring” signs can be seen at fast food restaurants and other businesses around Hermiston.

embarrassed about.

Meanwhile other jobs have also faced increased hostility, to the point that it is driving people to leave the profession at higher than normal rates. Doctors and nurses, public health employees, police, educators, journalists, elected officials — all have described increasingly difficult situations that have included harassment, threats and physical assault. Senator Bill Hansell recently shared that he had received messages from people threatening to shoot him for showing up to do his job, and I personally know journalists who have received messages threatening to kill or sexually assault them in the past year.

There is no reason for us to shrug our shoulders and accept that receiving death threats for doing your job is simply part of living in our modern

society, but that seems to be what has happened.

I've also seen an increase in people sharing posts on social media making blanket statements about how all members of a certain profession are dishonest, lazy, racist or some other insult. That may seem harmless, but it can really wear a person down over time. And no, it doesn't make it all better to tell your friends, “Oh, I don't mean you, you're one of the good ones.” People trot out that line to excuse all sorts of mean-spirited generalizations about everything from race to religion, and I promise you that it is never, ever a good look.

I understand that there are a lot of people out there that are bad at their jobs and a lot of companies that handle things badly. But too often people overreact or take out their frustrations on people who aren't to blame. If a

server at a restaurant tells you they're out of an item you wanted, chances are they're not the one responsible for making decisions about inventory, so directing a sarcastic comment at them won't accomplish anything outside of making their day worse.

When I was a college freshman, working at a food court, two of my coworkers didn't bother to show up to work one day. The result was much longer lines at our store than usual — something many customers noted in a critical tone when they reached the front of the line.

A couple of hours into my shift I was feeling frazzled and overwhelmed, when I suddenly realized I had just put the wrong sauce on a customer's order. I began to apologize profusely and moved to start the order over when the customer stopped me and said he didn't mind eating it the way it was.

“When I was standing in line I was watching how hard you're working to keep the line moving, and I just wanted to say I really appreciate it,” he added.

More than a decade later, I still remember that moment, because it's what got me through the rest of my shift. It was a small kindness, but the way he chose to react, with a compliment instead of a perfectly understandable tone of annoyance, made a big difference to me that day.

May we all be a little more like that.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support the first responders who keep us safe

When there's a fire, a wreck, a medical emergency, a hazardous spill, or any number of other potentially disastrous situations, local firefighters and EMTs are the first ones on the scene. They often put their own health and safety on the line to help others.

Measure 30-148 is the community's chance to give back to those first responders. The bond package includes new protective equipment, radio systems, vehicles, and other tools that protect firefighters and EMTs.

It also includes upgrades to current vehicle exhaust systems to reduce the cancer risk. Protecting these responders while they're in the line of duty and in the long term is important.

For around \$4 a month for the average property owner in Umatilla County Fire District #1, investing in our first responders make a lot of sense.

Join me in voting yes on Measure 30-148.

Cathy Stolz
Hermiston

Sherman is dedicated to Hermiston schools

I am pleased to see Karen Sherman is again running for the Hermiston School Board.

I first met Karen when she came to teach at the junior high in 1970. I quickly realized she was an effective teacher with a lot of empathy for the kids. When she retired in 2001, I asked her what she was going to do. She

responded, “I am not giving up on the kids because I am planning to run for the school board.” She was elected in 2001 and has served continuously since then, many times as board chairman.

There have been few board members who have been as dedicated to this district as Karen has been. We need her experience at this time to lead us through the state COVID mandates placed on the schools. We also need her experience in directing the schools through the construction of two new elementary schools. She has been there and done that.

Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston

Support the first responders that support you

I'm proud to be part of an area that cares about our first responders. And now is a time we can show our gratitude for what they do as we create a safer community.

Bond Measure 30-148 funds critical and necessary equipment for our firefighters and EMTs. Budget shortfalls impact their ability to safely do their jobs, and this bond will alleviate that.

Emergency personnel are on the clock 24/7, and having adequate housing for both men and women and an upgraded alert system will make sure they're prepared to do their jobs. The bond will also replace vehicles in the emergency fleet that need to be phased out so responders can meet the needs of a growing region.

Umatilla County Fire District #1 leaders wrote this bond to pri-

oritize the most necessary investments, and has committed to an oversight committee to ensure the dollars are spent as intended.

For all these reasons, I'm voting in support of Measure 30-148. Please join me in supporting our first responders.

Ginny Holthus
Hermiston

A vote for Gomez is a vote for the future

I am writing this letter in support of Lili Gomez for Hermiston School Board Position 3.

I have known Lili for over 20 years, both as a classmate and a respected friend. Lili and I both attended Rocky Heights Elementary, Armand Larive Middle School and Hermiston High School together. Lili is a strong, experienced and compassionate leader.

Lili understands the challenges that students who grow up in Hermiston face, because she was a student who grew up in Hermiston. Lili understands the complexities and challenges that first-generation college students from Hermiston face, because she herself was a first-generation college student from Hermiston. Lili's unique lived experiences allow her to relate to the growing challenges that so many young people in Hermiston are impacted by.

There is no question in my mind that Lili Gomez is the most prepared, most experienced and most willing to do the work for all of our students. A vote for Lili Gomez is a vote for representa-

ENDORSEMENT LETTER DEADLINE

The Hermiston Herald will accept endorsement letters for the May 18 special election until Monday, May 10 at 5 p.m.

Endorsement letters must be less than 300 words and may be edited for length, spelling, grammar or clarity. They should include the author's name and city of residence, which will be published, along with the author's phone number, which will not be published. Letters are run on a first-come, first-served basis.

You can email letters to editor@hermistonherald.com or drop them off or mail them to the Hermiston Herald, c/o Jade McDowell, 333 E. Main St. in Hermiston.

We will publish our last letters on Wednesday, May 12. Any letters received after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 18.

tion, a vote for our students' future and a vote for a Hermistonian. Please join me in supporting Lili Gomez for the Hermiston School Board.

Mitch Thompson
Hermiston

I support Dain Gardner for the school board and I hope you will give him your vote.

Mark F. Gomolski
Hermiston

One BMCC board candidate supports another

As a candidate for the Blue Mountain Community College Board of Trustees, I participated in a candidate forum sponsored by the BMCC Faculty Association. Carrie Sampson-Samuels is also a candidate and likewise participated.

I listened to her responses to various questions and have rarely been so impressed at the grasp of the issues and ability to articulate personal perspectives and positions as in her presentation. I hope my strong endorsement will not negatively impact her candidacy. The college will be well served by her unique skills, talents, abilities and perspectives.

Kim B. Puzey
Hermiston

Gardner will be a voice for students

Over the past 4 years I always spoke up as a school board member on matters the public held. I thank you for the chance to serve. It has been an honor. I support Dain Gardner for the school board. I could not think of a better person to take my place.

His independent ideas on reopening our schools and keeping them open impressed me. He will be an advocate for the people. Dain attends board meetings, so he knows the issues. He ran for the budget committee just weeks ago. He has shown me that he will be a voice of the community for the betterment of our children's education.

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 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, by email to 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.