

OUR VIEW

Our great community looks for ways to help

The local area should be proud of the effort made to help those less fortunate over the holiday season but more needs to be done throughout the rest of the year to help stave off hunger in our community.

Volunteers assembled for a Thanksgiving community dinner and a similar event for Christmas where they helped prepare heat-and-serve dinners.

The dinners were possible only through the work of volunteers, and the fact both events proved to be a success illustrates how important civic service is to many residents

Civic service can be difficult. There is no monetary gain in such efforts, and they can take up a lot of time. Yet here we have groups of people who care – care enough to donate their time and to jump in and lend a helping hand.

That type of dedication is commendable and such sacrifices help enhance the community and send a message that we care about each other.

The work, though, doesn't end after the holidays. That is why it is important for those who care to remember that their assistance is needed throughout the year. The

plight of those among us who are less fortunate, or homeless, doesn't have an expiration date. The struggle for many continues through winter and into spring and summer.

So, it is important – in fact crucial – that we all stay focused on the ongoing challenge of homelessness and helping those who struggle to feed their families.

In a great nation such as this, a mighty engine of economic democracy, no one anywhere should go hungry. The fact is, though, many still do. As a community, we should not tolerate anyone going hungry at any time.

That's why finding a way to help local food banks is not only a good idea but the right thing to do. Food banks generally can count on some help from the state, but they are always in need of more assistance.

Finding a way to donate some food to a local bank is a good, small way to help. Instead of watching from the sidelines and dismissing the problem, a donation to a food bank will help someone, somewhere.

We are a great community, and our future is bright. Let's make sure everyone can participate in that bright future.

ANOTHER VIEW

The tradition of change

Tradition: The way we pass customs or beliefs to each other, from one generation to the next, to secure the continued practice or shared value persists.

Tradition, or common practice, tells us this time of the season we are to look forward to the next year, to set our goals, resolutions and affirm all that it will take to improve upon our fortunes and futures.

Here at Blue Mountain Community College, we have a rich tradition of serving our students and communities through educational opportunities that result in brighter futures. May this tradition always persist! However, adjustments are needed. The tradition of our commitment to serve is and must remain constant. How we apply that commitment to action is however in need of change.

Our world is changing daily around us. The education consumer has spoken. Loud and clear. We must be more adaptable and innovative in our approaches, our delivery methods and our expected outcomes and more.

The emerging industries, along with very strong futures in many traditional fronts, suggest a myriad of opportunities for our students and for BMCC. We need to adjust. A number of community colleges across our country are heading into these new approaches with vigor and equally encouraging results. We as consumers vote through our choices as to how we spend our money. Education customers should expect the same. You learn of new opportunities in a quickly growing field such as data and cyber security. Why should you have to wait until the next start of an academic year to begin? Why should you have to wait even until the next quarter or semester? Shorter-term courses, more focused training with an eye to outcomes are critical to our future success. A new Blue, if you will, moving forward.

These types of shifts

in delivery approach will require all of us to adapt and change. Funding partners such as the Oregon Legislature and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission will need to rethink how they support not just BMCC but all of the 17 community colleges. The role each of those 17 plays in our various regions and communities is



J. Mark Browning

unique and acutely needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of our economies and citizens. Here at BMCC this is going to require all of us, primarily faculty, staff and administration, to think, plan and act differently. To think, plan and act proactively, to truly be "students first" and put their interests and outcomes foremost in our efforts. This is a tradition which we have held to strongly here at BMCC over the years previous. New markets, new industries, new methods and consumer trends really are mandating that we change our approaches for everyone involved: our students, our business and industry partners and the region.

This work will begin as we start to formulate our long-term outlook, budgetary supports and operational plans in early 2022. It's never easy changing or adapting a tradition, to be sure. But the outcomes that await students who are readily employable — who have the skills and abilities to succeed in their endeavors — make any effort worthy of our time and commitment.

Lastly, both Kym and I would like to thank the BMCC community, the Pendleton and area communities who have been so welcoming of us as we've started our next chapter of our lives here. You have been warm in reaching out, so very helpful in getting settled — it truly is feeling like home for us!

May each of you enjoy the season and have a wonderful new year ahead. Go Timberwolves.

J. Mark Browning is the president of Blue Mountain Community College.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Greg Smith earns deep gratitude

This is sent in response to the editorial "Our View — Where has Rep. Greg Smith been."

Over the past several weeks Community Counseling Solutions has spent 40-plus hours responding to a grant application that would provide increased capacity to behavioral health services in our five-county region. We followed the application instructions and submitted our response, only to find out on Dec. 21 that our application had been rejected based upon a different interpretation of the instructions. We were devastated.

Given the significance of the funding, I called legislators the next day, including Rep. Greg Smith. Within 30 minutes, I received a call from Greg. Patiently and intently, Greg listened to the issue, shared his concerns with the decision and conveyed to his aide and myself exactly what he was going to do. Over the next several hours, a multitude of emails and phone calls were made, and at the end of the day there was an email response to Greg from the state indicating that a path forward had been found.

I cannot express how deep my gratitude is to Rep. Smith. Three days before Christmas he made himself immediately available to our small agency's concern and diligently worked to address the issue. We now have hope in a situation that felt hopeless. Thank you, Rep. Smith, for your genuine concern and quick response.

**Kimberly Lindsay
Director, Community
Counseling Solutions
Heppner**

Keep 'purple' Umatilla County in Oregon

As a teenager growing up in Moscow, Idaho, I heard talk supporting the idea that eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana should all band together to form a new state called "Washidamont." You can see where that idea went.

Now I hear talk that several Oregon counties should become part of Idaho with the reasoning that the rural counties don't agree with the politics, policies and laws passed by the Oregon congress.

Let's take a look at some of the ramifications of joining Idaho.

Umatilla County has more than 47,000 registered voters. They would all have to reregister in Idaho, and that state does not have mail-in voting except for absentee voters. Umatilla County would have to reset its election systems, and many voters in rural areas would face hardships to vote.

Driver's licenses would have to be issued by the state of Idaho. Passports would have to be updated and

addresses changed. All of this costs money. Jobs with required certifications such as registered nurses, teachers, lawyers, real estate agents would all have to be recertified, and again that costs those employees money. Schools would have to be accredited according to Idaho law. It goes on and on.

Oregon state employees who live and work in Umatilla County would no longer be employed here — will Idaho replace these workers? What about those jobs and the economic effect on the communities? What about the land that Oregon owns as state parks and Eastern Oregon University? And if we became a part of Idaho, how would that affect the current county employees?

Our lives are bound by laws regardless of where we live; are you sure Idaho's laws are better? Without a massive review how could anyone really decide? There could be any number of unforeseen consequences that frustrate us — no state has a perfect set of laws.

Many Umatilla County voters feel disenfranchised from the Oregon Legislature, but I can tell you growing up in Idaho that the voters of rural communities felt the same there. I don't see that the Boise-based Legislature is going to be any more aware of Umatilla County and its voters. The issue is promoted as "red vs. blue," but it is more an issue of population density; where there are more people, they are given more attention. That is what needs to change: giving equal attention to all citizens.

We are not just red or blue. In fact, we are purple — a mix of people, cultures, political ideologies and values. If you want change in Umatilla County, then speak up with constructive ideas and tell the public exactly what you want changed. Just saying that "I'm unhappy" doesn't really give much information; what are you trying to accomplish?

Let's hear some positive ideas on how to promote Umatilla County and rural communities. Let's hear positive ideas that include all our people on how to solve our problems. And let's keep Umatilla County a part of Oregon!

**Margaret Normington-Jones
Pendleton**

Everyone deserves share of good life

I was born toward the end of the Great Depression. The young couple who bore me and my siblings had very few resources, but they took advantage of the possibilities offered through the government programs that edged the country out of those troubling times.

A new irrigation reclamation project allowed young farmers like my dad to change sagebrush desert into productive farmland. As time went on and my parent's family

grew, a government housing administration loaned money to improve our dwelling and the land. Of course, we eventually paid off the financial obligations incurred during the process. I say "we" because the entire family worked to make the venture a success.

I must say that I never heard my parents complain about taxes. They were always grateful for the advantages provided by the United States government. All their children became productive and valuable citizens of their communities. We eight siblings attended the public school; we all had the opportunity to attend one of the state colleges or universities. I had a grant from the state legislature to attend the state university to become a teacher.

Looking back and remembering the hard work on the farm, jobs while attending school and during summers, I am grateful for the opportunities that my state and national governments provided me. Even now with the advantages of Social Security and health care insurance, I benefit by living in this country. I do not discount the advantages of passable roads and highways, police and fire departments and the many other government programs that I seldom think about.

Yes, the United States came out of the Great Depression because the government created programs to assist people getting their basic needs met. Since then, the country prospered, and some people have become extremely wealthy and often passed their wealth from generation to generation. Others have fared less well. For many reasons, the middle class has virtually disappeared, and there are families struggling to provide necessities for their survival. We have millions of people in great need. Raising a family for many is fraught with hardships and barriers. Struggling families need assistance just as the people at the end of the Great Depression received help to rebuild their communities and the country.

The whole point of this letter is to say that I want others to have advantages such as I had in my 85 years. I remember the hard work, even physical labor I endured, but I realize that even then I had help that is not easily available to everyone now. My desire is that in this century people who are disadvantaged have opportunities, as I had in the last century, to build productive lives and contribute positively to their communities. We need strong families and strong Americans.

We need the programs that will be available when the bills in front of the U.S. Senate pass and become law. When our fellow citizens receive their share of the good life, my share is not diminished. It is even better.

**Evelyn Swart
Joseph**



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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.

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