

OUR VIEW

# In praise of free stuff

Starting last week, the Hermiston Rite Aid started giving away free masks. The masks are piled on a table near the entrance. Visitors can pick up four masks for each member of their household.

“Free” in this context means the masks are without cost to the people who receive them. Of course, the masks were not free to produce and distribute. This bill was picked up by the federal government. Four-hundred million N95 masks are being given away throughout our country as part of a plan to reduce COVID-19 infection.

We are glad for the masks, as we are happy about free vaccinations. We look forward to receiving free tests, when they arrive. These tools will be useful in our shared fight against the coronavirus.

It is good that they are free. This means we will all be able to receive them, regardless of our income.

No one should be at a disadvantage to survive this awful pandemic because of their poverty.

Picking up the masks, one is reminded of the great many resources that are free and the benefits we all share as a result.

The Hermiston Butte, Hat Rock and

the Columbia River are not exclusive to the rich. The poorest of people have access to them. Visiting them, as well as our many local public parks, individuals gain peace of mind, which leads to better societies.

There are many government services from which we gain much. Police, fire and roads are a few. Having officers come to your door a few minutes after making a call can be taken for granted, until you do not have this free service.

Governments have not cornered the market on free stuff, though. Much of what is done at many charity groups is

also free. The Agape House provides free food. Martha's House gives free shelter.

As housing becomes more difficult in the area, many could need Martha's House, where people can live rent-less lives until they get back on their feet. Most of the rooms are now vacant, but that soon could change.

So we appreciate our free masks, and all the things that are costless to us. They serve us in times of emergency, as now, but they also help us in our day-to-day lives.

COMMENTARY

# We want to see the straight stretches



**LINDSAY MURDOCK**  
FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN

It's quiet. I've found myself in an office in the early hours of the day, waiting and watching.

My heart beats slow and steady as I settle into the not-so-comfortable chair I have found myself in more Fridays than I can count. There is a hum of air coming through the vent in the ceiling above me. I hear the clicking of keys on a computer keyboard through the frosted glass across the room. The receptionist I had just spoken to moments before has her work cut out for her it seems. Papers shuffle, and a phone rings. I catch the sound of laughter but dismiss it as fast as it arrives.

I wonder what there could possibly be to laugh about right now. I breathe deep, reminding myself that while I wait, it's best for my mental state to count the gifts, look for the good and acknowledge that this space and this time has already been mapped out for me, just as it has been for her. See the good, Lindsay, see the good, I whisper to myself, and hear it, too.

The door opens to my left, and a young mother and her young child walk in. They stand at the same frosted glass, ring the same bell and wait as patiently as my own son and I had moments before. My mind flashes back to the very first time my boys

and I walked into this office. They weren't much older than the boy standing in front of me now, and I wasn't much older than the woman. I wonder, as I watch, if she knows that as hard as it may be to come here, it's worth every amount of effort it takes. I wonder if she knows that she doesn't need to worry.

The glass moves and the familiar voice and words I know by heart echo through the room, not for me this time, but for the young mother I find myself relating to, but really not knowing at all. The glass closes and she takes a seat near me while watching her son play with a toy car she had handed him moments earlier. Her son smiles at her, and she smiles back, as she sits like me, waiting.

I hear the phone ring again, and I glance at the clock, wondering about my own son who has outgrown playing with cars in this office, but hasn't outgrown his need for this place. Does he know that the time spent here each Friday is meant to help, not hinder? I don't really know. Does he feel the love I have for him here and now as I wait for his session to end? I don't know that either. He's down a short hallway, talking about the paper he was supposed to have memorized, only I know that he doesn't have it memorized at all. The paper he was supposed to have practiced reading with me hasn't been touched all week.

In fact, he crumpled the paper the minute he left the office the week before, frustrated and disappointed, more at himself than the paper. Deep in my heart, I know this part of

his story. This address we have visited each week more times than I can count, is where he needs to be, but oh how it tears my heart apart knowing that he sees it as a hindrance, not as an advantage.

I hear laughter again, and am brought back to the present. I shift in my chair, watching the young mother and her son make their way through the doorway toward their scheduled appointment. I smile at them, cheering them on silently, knowing that the journey they're on isn't for the faint at heart. A few minutes later, my son walks through the same doorway with a smile on his face, stepping toward me with a sparkle in his eyes.

“Today was my last day mom,” he says. His speech therapist grins as they take turns explaining what had happened during the appointment. His goals had been met. He did what was asked. The waiting was over. Tears filled my eyes and a lump in my throat formed. I knew as I listened that there would still be work to do and setbacks could possibly occur, but the time we had spent putting one foot in front of the other across a parking lot and into an office each week had taken us on a beautiful journey. One that was now over.

We often find ourselves in situations where we wish for lives that are completely mapped out. We want to see the straight stretches, and like to know when to expect sharp turns or roadblocks — lives that are easy to navigate, without many challenges or obstacles to hurdle. That kind of life doesn't exist. The thing that I learned, espe-

cially in that specific waiting room, is that those challenges and obstacles that we may not know about until they are upon us, are often exactly what we need them to be.

In the waiting, in the worry, and in the anxiousness of sitting in that office space each week, I learned two very specific things. One, giving my attention to the good that is happening in the places and spaces around me, rather than getting worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow, was, and still is, crucial for navigating any part of life I'm in successfully. And, two, it's absolutely OK to be honest and vulnerable in admitting when we're stuck, and maybe even sick and tired of the journey.

The professional we saw each week was like a compass, pointing us in the right direction and giving us tools to get where we needed to go. Holding a map or a list of addresses of places we need to visit is comforting, but trusting in an unseen and unknown future, with a hope in something or even someone that is bigger than that map, is where I believe we find out what we're really made of.

So if you find yourself waiting somewhere any time soon, like in the pharmacy line, at the post office, in a doctor's office or even waiting for a ride somewhere, look and see what's good around you. It's a part of your story and worth every second of the wait.

*Lindsay Murdock lives and teaches in Echo.*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Funny, how some things never change

I read a recent editorial concerning the urban/rural divide in Oregon. This divide dates back to more than 100 years ago.

I was reading “On this date in History” section that in the early 1900s, residents of Eastern Oregon were discussing joining Idaho. Funny, how some things never change. I think if we ever want to have a truly represented form of government in Oregon, we need to challenge the 1964 Supreme Court ruling of Reynolds vs. Sims.

The court ruled that voting districts should be based on population. The one dissenting justice felt it was an over reach of the federal court verse states rights to dictate state elections. I feel the same principle that applies to states should apply to counties within a state. The founders wanted to ensure no matter how small or populated a state maybe they had an equal say in the governance. That is why each state regardless of size only has two senators. It was their feeling that each state played a role in the makeup of the Union and should have an equal say in the administration of laws and governance.

Oregon's own constitution says state senators can be selected by county or districts. I contend the 36 counties that make up the state of Oregon should have an equal say in the governance. The only way to finally put to rest the urban/rural divide is to allow each county to be

represented in Salem by one senator. Just my opinion.

**Joe Mesteth**  
Hermiston

## Did Zuck Bucks influence the 2020 election?

There have been both articles and letters about the election being bought, but no information that would ever point in that direction, or disprove it that I have seen in the East Oregonian. I would like to point out that Mark Zuckerberg has provided what is known as Zuck Bucks to the tune of more than \$400 million to nonprofit groups that were in positions to influence the election. Most was funneled through the Center for Tech and Civic Life, a group led by three Democrats with a long history of activism, and the Center for Election Innovation and Research with connections to People for the American Way, that group funneled Zuck Bucks to governmental entities, according to [influencewatch.org/non-profit/center-for-election-innovation-research](http://influencewatch.org/non-profit/center-for-election-innovation-research).

According to the Foundation for Government Accountability, Georgia received more than \$31 million in Zuck Bucks for the general election alone. The money went to salaries, laptops, vehicle rentals, attorney's fees for public records requests and mail-in balloting. Trump leaning counties received \$1.91 per registered voter, Biden leaning counties received on average \$7.13 per

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voter. The money flowed into the run-off election as well.

Democratic counties in Pennsylvania also were targeted for Zuck Bucks infusion. Wisconsin received Zuck Bucks, which outsourced much of their election operation to private liberal groups.

A statement that the election was bought has to be backed up, and a statement saying it ain't so needs proof, too. Check out the Foundation for Government Accountability, Feb. 25, 2021, NPR on Zuck Bucks, or the Capital Research Center May 20, 2021, Broad and Liberty April 13, 2021, NPR Dec. 8, 2020, to name just a few sources. These sources certainly give pause to think about the undue influence bought and paid for, and certainly concern about the consequences of such expenditures from a moral/integrity perspective. One man's influence in elections to this level is cause for concern. There are other financial influences, not just this one.

I don't know that goes as far as saying it was bought, but it certainly has an odor of impropriety and outright corruption to it. It is one area of many that I would like to see cleaned up for future election integrity.

**Granella Thompson**  
Weston



## 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 A2. 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 541-278-2673 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

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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.

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