

# Hermiston HERALD OPINION & READER'S FORUM

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A4

## OUR VIEW

## Thank you to the people behind the recent job fair

Hermiston is stepping up, and so are local employers. On Wednesday, March 16, the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce and the city of Hermiston worked together to organize a job fair in response to layoffs at the Shearer's Foods plant.

This, of course, followed the boiler explosion and fire that destroyed the plant.

Nearly 50 employers were represented at the fair. They included a variety of different industries, including health care, security, retail and agriculture.

The employers promoted technical jobs, which might be good fits for the former Shearer's employees, but there were other positions that could give workers something new to do.

The excitement and willingness to help were clear to all observers.

Not only were there released Shearer's employees, other unemployed workers were present, too. They filled the community center, especially early in the day, soon after the fair opened.

They were eager to find work, and they were grateful to the organizers, volunteers and company representa-

tives who made this fair possible.

Work is not the only thing in the world. For most people, family is their top priority. Many other people value religion, money, experience, companionship or something else over their employment.

Still, work is more than a job for the bulk of us. Our labor is a vocation, something to which we are called. It gives us title, purpose and a reason to get out of bed. Also, it is the means by which we earn money and support ourselves and our families.

It allows us to help fund charities

and government projects, too.

Employers know of our people's desire to return to work.

When the smoke began rising into the sky, employers started reaching out to our chamber and our city government. And we are glad that members of the chamber and the city picked up the phone and acted.

Thanks to them, the city was able to host a very special and successful event.

So we extend our gratitude to all of the people who made this event happen, and we express our hope that the fair resulted in many new jobs for people.

## COLUMN

## River Democracy Act protects water and restores forest health



**JAMES JOHNSTON**  
ANOTHER VIEW

Oregon's most important natural resource is water. Continued access to cool, clean water is critical for agriculture, high tech industry, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, to say nothing of drinking water.

As a native Oregonian, angler and scientist who studies fire and forest health, I'm glad that Sen. Ron Wyden is working to expand Wild and Scenic River designations on select federal lands in Oregon.

Protecting Oregon's pristine rivers and streams isn't inconsistent with restoring forests and protecting communities from catastrophic wildfire. We can't restore forests without protecting streams and rivers, and we can't protect streams and rivers without restoring forests.

Our climate is changing for the worse. In the coming decades, we can expect hotter summers, shallower snowpacks and longer fire seasons.

The Wild and Scenic River designations that will be created by the River Democracy Act introduced by Oregon Sens. Wyden and Jeff Merkley will keep rivers and streams in their free-flow-

ing state. That means more water will be available for fish, wildlife and people downstream. Forests alongside streams need water from free-flowing rivers to be resistant to fire and drought. Healthy forests in turn provide shade and contribute wood that provides in-stream fish habitat.

New Wild and Scenic River designations respect private property rights and only apply to federal lands. On federal lands, the River Democracy Act will require comprehensive management plans for new wild and scenic river stretches that require protection of native species and active management of areas at high risk of catastrophic wildfire that threaten

clean water.

Equally important, the bill establishes an appropriation of at least \$30 million a year to ensure that fire risk reduction work is carried out.

Many decades of neglect have contributed to degraded watersheds and out-of-control wildfires. Oregonians need to be prepared for many decades of work including storm-proofing road systems, in-stream habitat enhancement, thinning overly dense forest stands and reintroducing fire under favorable weather conditions.

Federal legislation like the River Democracy Act can be part of the solution.

In addition to more federal

investments, we need honest communication and accountability among stakeholders here in Oregon.

There is room for improvements to the River Democracy Act, and I hope Oregonians will read about the River Democracy Act at <https://wyden.senate.gov> and share ideas about the act and other steps that are necessary to protect water quality and restore forests with Sen. Wyden.

*James Johnston is a forest ecologist at Oregon State University. The views he expressed are his own and do not represent OSU.*

## COLUMN

## Using books as barricades



**BETTE HUSTED**  
FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

Stories shape our world, and the stories coming from Ukraine have been so overwhelming that we want to shrink from the horror of this war. A recent Guardian headline, "Books Against Bombs: how Ukrainians are using literature to fight back," seemed to offer a moment of hope — literature, yes — until I saw the accompanying photo: a window blocked by stacks of books. People in this residential area of Kyiv, the story said, are using books as barricades against explosions.

"There is no time to read or write now — everyone is focused on protecting their loved ones," writes Katerina Sergatskova. But she goes on to explain where all those books had come from. To encourage vaccination against COVID-19, Ukraine had offered "culture vouchers" the people could spend on tickets to a movie or concert, a gym membership or books. People bought books, books, books.

And the next day I saw a photo in Ron Charles's Washington Post Book Club column — a Ukrainian mother reading a children's book to a small girl resting on her suitcase. "In such horrific conditions, periods of imaginative escape are essential for children," Charles writes. "And books are the perfect vehicle." A group of Polish publishers called the Universal Reading Foundation, he says, has begun

to buy and distribute Ukrainian children's books for the youngest refugees taking shelter in Poland.

Despite the obvious difficulties, this group found a warehouse in Lviv, Ukraine, that will try to send the first batch of 25,000 books to be distributed to orphanages, day cares, kindergartens, schools and libraries.

If they can get through. As Maria Deskur, chief executive officer of Universal Reading Foundation, told Charles, "A joyful moment of book sharing and talking with a close person is the definitive moment of safety, which builds the fundamentals of our social competence, self-esteem and psychological well-being ... This is true for every child, but for these young Ukrainians who have just lived through a trauma, I would be ready to argue that their future psychological stability depends on it."

She plans to help older children, too, teenagers who will need to redefine themselves in Poland, process what they have seen and find strength to move forward. "Whenever you take a book in your hand, it is an act of openness to someone else's thoughts and emotions," she said. "It is an opening to listen to other points of view; an entering through the door to dialogue and mutual understanding. Building fundamentals for that state of mind is crucial for the future."

For democracy, she means. Who gets to hear which stories? Will the people of Russia ever see the photo of that mother squatting on the pavement to read to her toddler, or the window barricaded by books? Will the Ukrainians who survive this war find the stories they need? And

will our own school children, whose right to know — to learn to understand others as well as the realities of our history and to read the novels of a Nobel prize-winning American writer — is currently under threat?

As I hear news coming from Ukraine and worry about yet another larger European war, I remember images from Wislawa Symborska's poem "The End and the Beginning:" "After every war / someone has to clean up. / Things won't / straighten themselves up, after all. / Someone has to push the rubble / to the side of the road, / so the corpse-filled wagons / can pass. / Someone has to get mired / in scum and ashes, / sofa springs, / splintered glass, / and bloody rags / ... Photogenic it's not, / and takes years. / All the cameras have left for another war."

Katerina Sergatskova is right: first, people need to save their families. To survive. But stories matter. On March 1, 800 American and Ukrainian poets shared a massive Zoom reading, and when American poet Ilya Kaminsky asked a friend in Odessa what he can do, the reply was, "If you want to help, send us some poems and essays. We are trying to put together a literary magazine."

And Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has been quoting "Hamlet." "The question for us now is to be or not to be," he told the British Parliament. "I can give you a definitive answer. It's definitely yes, to be."

*Bette Husted is a writer and a student of tai chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Letter: Support Christine Drazan for governor

I recently became a supporter of Christine Drazan after meeting her at a meet-and-greet sponsored by state Rep. Bobby Levy. Christine impressed me by her commitment to service, her willingness to stand up for Oregonians and her natural leadership abilities.

Christine is a fighter. As the House Republican Leader, she stood up to Kate Brown and Tina Kotek and won. She led a unified caucus to oppose tax increases, stop cap-and-trade in its tracks and protect our rights and freedoms.

Christine understands the challenges we face and how to fix them. She is the only candidate in this race with the experience to start putting our state back on the right track on day one.

As governor: Christine will end Kate Brown's state of emergency and repeal her mask and vaccine mandates on her first day in office. She will repeal Kate Brown's unconstitutional cap-and-trade program.

Christine will support our police officers and hold criminals fully accountable for their crimes.

She will keep our schools open full time and in person, get back to the basics in the classroom, give parents a forum to be heard and leave the politics at home where it belongs.

She will lead efforts to cut taxes, get the government off the backs of our small businesses and make Oregon a more affordable place to live and raise a family.

Here's the good news: We have a unique opportunity in this election to bring real change to our state.

**Debbie Radie  
Irrigon**

### Oregon voter registration reminder

Attention all citizens of Oregon, now is the time to update your registration if you have moved, changed your name or mailing address. Please note that ballots will not be forwarded to you.

Most important if you want to select or change your party affiliation, the time is now, or if you are a first-time voter. (You must be 18 years of age.) Name changes should be done using the paper registration form, so the county elections department has a record of your new signature.

To update your status, you can use the website: Oregon's My Vote. You can visit your local county elections office for assistance. Your ballots will be mailed approximately two weeks before an election. Your vote is the most important thing you can do as a citizen of the United States.

**Kathy Wilson  
Pendleton**

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## SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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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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