

Hermiston HERALD OPINION & READER'S FORUM

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OUR VIEW

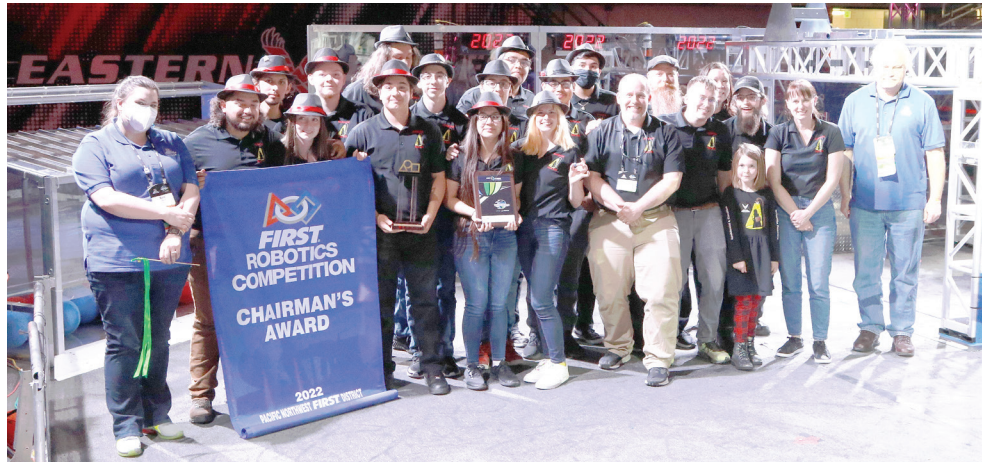
Houston is receiving our best robot heroes

At this moment, Umatilla High School robotics team members, along with a handful of teachers and administrators, are in Houston, Texas. The students are representing their school for a competition that pits them against schools from across the country and around the world.

For anyone who lives in Umatilla, or who has even passed through the town, this does not come as news. Not only has the Hermiston Herald published stories on the team, dubbed Confidential, signs throughout Umatilla have announced the recent success and the following trip.

Confidential won a regional competition in Cheney, Washington. Earning the Chairman's Award on April 9, the team qualified for worlds in Houston. This contest starts Wednesday, April 20.

The team has been the subject of chatter around town. People have been talking about the tough competition and the very real possibility that, by this time next week, our



Umatilla School District/Contributed photo

The Umatilla High School robotics team poses for a photo April 9, 2022, at a regional robotics competition in Cheney, Washington, after winning the Chairman's Award.

kids will be returning with a title that names them as the best in the world.

On Saturday, April 16, many of these team members were in Umatilla hosting a yard sale to help fund their journey. This gave the public the chance to meet the kids, talk to them and toss money into their cash box.

For some of the students, this trip to worlds is not new. The team is widely known in the robotics

world, and high-level competition is expected. Some of the kids, who are fresh to the team, will be taking their first trip.

Regardless, whether they had been to Houston before or if this was their first trip, each of the students at the Saturday yard sale were beaming with excitement. They spoke of their enthusiasm for the outing and their hopes of not letting anyone down.

Of course, they will not let us down.

By working hard and doing their best, they have already made us proud. Confidential members have spent nights and weekends honing their skills, preparing for whatever would come next.

And when they reached higher and higher levels, they stuck with the team. Many of them braved the unknown, traveling outside our region to explore a wider world.

Taking such a trip, at such young ages, is thrilling, but it also can be frightening. The students boarded a bus Sunday afternoon, April 17, to travel across multiple states.

Following this departure, the team took a trip that ended on Wednesday in Houston. They will return to us the following week.

However the competition turns out, they have made us proud. We are beside ourselves whenever such trips are made, and we will greet them with hugs and cheers.

Congratulations, Confidential. You are our champions.

COLUMN

Oregonians don't want party hack in governor's office

For some Oregonians, the race for governor isn't about who can raise the most money.

And these voters aren't interested in who can parrot party platforms without flaw.

Instead, they seek a new governor who is somewhat blind to party affiliation.

Such a governor, they think, can unite the state. That governor would energize more Oregonians.

Beneath those feelings is a sense that Oregon can do better.

In recent weeks, I gathered by Zoom with voters from around the state. Our partners were Rural Development Initiatives and the Agora Journalism Center.

I was eager for voters — they were from all parts of the state — to share two points. One was to share what they wanted to learn about those running for governor. The other was to learn how the Oregon press can more effectively serve up information about the candidates.

This wasn't a scientific poll. I'm not going to suggest the views of three dozen people perfectly mirror Oregon attitudes.

But the messages they delivered are well worth considering. That's especially true for the 30 or so people running to succeed Gov. Kate Brown. She is in her final year and by law can't run again.

Let's take what they want in the next governor. An earlier column described the hope for a governor who blurs the urban-rural line in Oregon.

But equally important to the people I talked with was the idea that party politics must be tamed.

These citizens are worn out by the focus on party over per-



LES ZAITZ
ANOTHER VIEW

formance. They recognize the impact — in Oregon and across the U.S. — of Republicans and Democrats treating each other like the enemy. For these voters, those party affiliations seem to be more about who has power, not who is doing best for Oregon.

There's no getting away from party dominance, at least in the primary election. Candidates with a "D" or an "R" as part of their credentials campaign through the spring to their political tribes.

But the two main political parties are watching a deep erosion in voter ranks. That's influenced in part by automatic voter registration and the "non-affiliated voter" who doesn't pick a party.

But the declining party representation may reflect what these voters had to say. They are hungry for a governor who can lead all of Oregon. They don't want someone who comes into office waving their party banner.

And these voters generally recognized that the governor is not just a political animal. They want a governor who has some record of managing large enterprises. They don't want a greenhorn attempting to manage multibillion-dollar budgets and a workforce in the thousands. Too much is at stake in Oregon, they believe, to turn the keys over to a management rookie.

Along that line, a couple of the voters said it'd be helpful to know what kind of team the next governor will take to Salem.

Governors set the tone for state government in large measure by the people named to direct state agencies, from the massive Department of Human Services to the Corrections Department to the Oregon Health Authority.

That's an interesting idea, for most governors wait until they are elected to start naming names. And one voter had another idea to make the next governor more effective — remote office hours.

This rural resident thought the next governor could learn a great deal by setting up shop and working for two weeks at a stretch from someplace other than Salem.

Imagine a governor working from Pendleton or Klamath Falls or Astoria. That could provide a useful and real world perspective that a factory tour just can't provide.

No matter the details, the voters I listened to are hoping the next governor will moderate the political tensions in the state.

They hope the next governor will be — and be perceived as — a generalist interested in helping the entire state.

No doubt, Kate Brown or John Kitzhaber or Ted Kulongoski would push back on some aspects. They did travel the state. They didn't remain creatures of Portland. Yet they also know better than most that how the governor is perceived is as essential as how they work.

These voters are giving candidates valuable clues about how to weld a coalition of Oregonians. They should heed the message — and demonstrate they are listening.

■ Les Zaitz is a veteran editor and investigative reporter, serving Oregon for more than 45 years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Marc Thielman is the fighter we need

Kate Brown has been boasting about her "Future Oregon" bill. Oregon doesn't need a \$200 million government bailout. It needs a Governor who doesn't shackle farmers, ranchers, loggers and fishers so we can all benefit from Oregon's natural resources. Marc Thielman is that candidate. Oregon's potential is being ignored because politicians and courts have caved to radical special interest groups. Marc will revitalize Oregon's deep water ports. He understands the needs of farmers because he has worked the land, grown trees and grew up in a farming community. Marc Thielman is the kind of fighter we need in Salem to rebuild our economy and bring back this state.

Jeffrey Lawton
Tigard

I'm voting for Melissa Lindsay

When I cast my vote in May, I will be voting Melissa Lindsay for Morrow County commissioner.

Melissa's grandfather, Gar Swanson, was one of the founding members and a visionary for the Port of Morrow and the Bank of Eastern Oregon. He was committed to Morrow County agriculture and economic development. Her father, Ken Turner, a descendant of Irish immigrants, expanded the farm that she and her husband have been on for 28 years. Her son will be the fifth generation to run the business. The Turner family has been farming as well as promoting growth in Morrow County for more than 135 years.

Melissa is a graduate of Mt. Hood Community College and San Diego State University with degrees in social science and business administration. Melissa was instrumental in initiating the formation phase of the Bank of Eastern Oregon's mortgage lending department and headed up the profitable mortgage division as a vice president for 15 years.

Her roots run deep and have instilled the desire to serve Morrow County and its residents. Over the past six years, while serving as county judge and commissioner, she has learned about government business and serves on boards and committees to the great benefit of the residents of Morrow County.

The example her forefathers set, generations before her, have instilled a desire to work diligently representing all of Morrow County, and with our support, Melissa will continue doing so.

Please join me in support of Melissa Lindsay as Morrow County commissioner.

Donna Rietmann
Ione

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