

OUR VIEW

Volunteers make fair a success

A big shout out to the volunteers who made the Umatilla County Fair such a success this year. More than 400 people converged on the fair to lend a hand, and Fair Manager Angie McNalley summed up their influence when she said the fair could not happen without them.

The volunteers run the gamut in terms of professions, and they are active throughout the year to help make the county event a success.

We've often used this space to call for more volunteerism in the community because we know how big a difference one or two or even a dozen people can make in their community.

The fair is a great example of what occurs when like-minded people get together and help out — not for monetary gain but to just set a positive example.

In this world we live in, we need more positive actions rather than fewer, so it is always heartening to see what occurs when volunteers arrive.

Volunteering to help your community — in such venues as the fair — is the best way to make a positive impact. But the fair isn't the only place where local residents can help out. There are an array of causes and agencies and nonprofit organizations that could use assistance from volunteers.

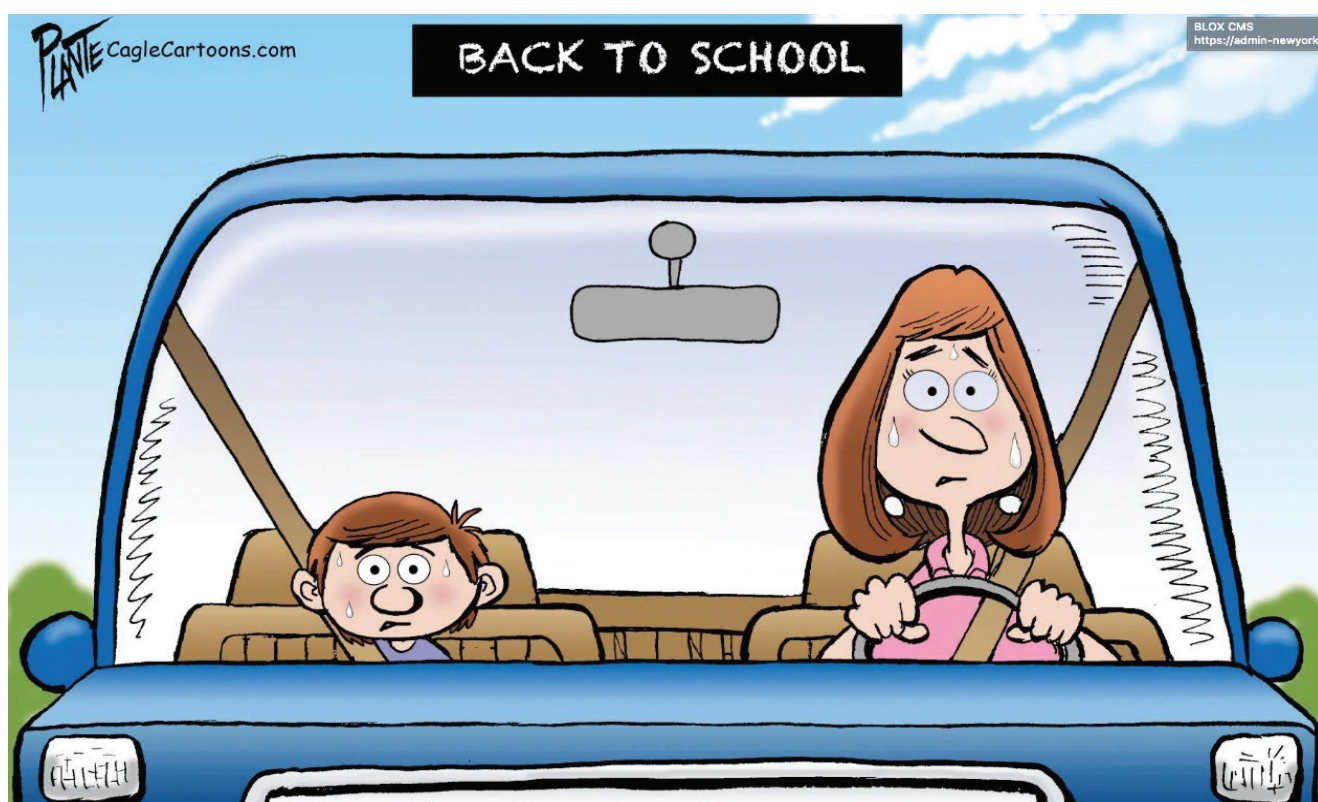
The best thing about becoming a volunteer is how easy it is. That ease means someone can step into a volunteer spot and begin to make a difference immediately.

We frankly need more volunteers in our community. The need for assistance for a plethora of issues only grows with each passing month.

The Umatilla County Fair by almost any measure proved to be a rousing success. We think that is excellent because we believe in county fairs. They are a great gathering place every summer where children and adults can find entertainment and see the excellent work of those who are in FFA and 4H.

The volunteers make a difference, but without the great work of McNalley and her staff throughout the year the fair wouldn't be what it is every year. McNalley and her group remain dedicated servants to the fair and that pays real dividends for the residents of Umatilla County. Without a successful fair our county would lose something essential and timeless.

Congratulations to all who made this year's Umatilla County Fair an excellent success.



COLUMN

Community should care how Port of Morrow fulfills its role as an environmental steward



BRIAN MAAG
OTHER VIEWS

"Those who are in charge at the Port of Morrow need to stand up and publicly respond to what was an apparent decade-long plan to ignore state rules."

— East Oregonian editorial July 12, 2022

Since 1986, when the Port of Morrow began using industrial wastewater for farm irrigation, there has been constant and consistent improvement. The port hasn't ignored state rules, which incidentally promote wastewater reuse. Instead, the port has sought to follow science in support of responsible farming practices.

To comply with environmental and health regulations, the port installed networks of monitoring wells at the three farms irrigated with wastewater, including municipal wastewater from the city of Boardman. In coordination with ag experts and partner farmers, port-supplied irrigation water has been used in innovative ways to cultivate higher-value crops and avoid use of commercial fertilizers.

Since 2007, the port has invested more than \$45 million in capital improvements to maintain compliance with state rules.

In 1994, the port constructed a 196-million-gallon pond to store water during the winter.

In 2007, East beach wastewater line extensions.

In 2010-2013, the port upgraded piping so all industrial wastewater would be processed through the storage pond, allowing for greater consistency in water applied as irrigation.

In 2011, the pond was reconfigured into

large and small sections. The smaller section is used as a surge basin to aerate wastewater. The larger section enables water storage for critical times in the growing season.

In 2012, the storage pond was further expanded.

In 2015, ConAgra Wastewater Pretreatment.

In 2014 and 2015, more than 1,000 acres of additional farmland was piped to receive processed wastewater from the port, with an eye toward reaching cropland that could absorb processed wastewater without contaminating groundwater.

In 2017, expansion at the Madison Ranch added a new 350-million-gallon winter storage pond and 2,822 acres for land application.

In 2018 to current, digester in construction.

In 2021, land application was added at the Mader-Rust farms with an additional 1,600 acres.

In 2021, wastewater piping extension and replacement.

The Department of Environmental Quality's decision in 2017 to modify the port's permit to apply industrial wastewater for irrigation changed a fundamental dynamic of the program — distributing wastewater year-round to support crop rotation. Suddenly, the port needed to find a way to store 1.3 billion gallons of winter wastewater in a pond with a 256 million-gallon capacity.

With port support, Oregon State University has undertaken an independent five-year study to determine the sustainable use of irrigation in the Lower Umatilla Basin, which includes Morrow, Umatilla and Gilliam counties. This is in the context of a water quality problem caused by the drawdown of groundwater for public drinking supplies and farmland irrigation dating back decades. The study is looking at farmland irrigation generally and specifically examining how to make the port's

wastewater reuse program for irrigation more sustainable.

This is not the port's study. But port officials are paying close attention to its informed findings to shape their further actions. Meanwhile, the port's strategic plan calls for expansion of its anaerobic digester, larger storage capacity, capture and reuse of methane from processing wastewater and other innovative strategies. The port is self-financing these investments while seeking federal and state funding to cover their full cost.

It's worth remembering what else the port does in our community. The port continues to expand its role as a regional trade hub that supports and benefits local farming, industry and workers. Port and port-related businesses have brought in more than 8,000 jobs to our area. It is the second-largest port in Oregon behind the Port of Portland with an annual economic output of more than \$2.5 billion.

Finally, the port continues to join with community partners to address housing needs, commercial development, local services and other improvements that enhance the region's quality of life.

The community should care how the port fulfills its role as environmental steward. Asking questions and getting answers is constructive. Solving the region's serious, decades-old water contamination problem is imperative.

Cooperation and collective action is the path to the solution. Science should be its guide. The port will be its willing partner.

■ Brian Maag is the president and co-founder of Boardman Foods, a tenant and member of the Port of Morrow business community since 1992. Boardman Foods processes ingredients for some of the largest food companies and relies heavily on the production of the agricultural community in the Columbia Basin.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Write in Rick Pullen for Umatilla County commissioner

Community Counseling Solutions director and Umatilla County commissioners didn't get the memo. In February 2022, out of 36 Oregon counties, Eastern Oregon has the five top overdose counties: Umatilla, Gilliam, Union, Wallowa and Malheur.

Under current commissioners' leadership, our county has grown in drug deaths and incarceration as our county commissioners enjoy more salary individually than several governors. Having newly remodeled buildings and pretty signs at CCS's many locations demonstrates the commissioners are motivated to look good, but the drug death count is the truth teller.

Community Counseling Solutions has been transitioning since January 2017 from Lifeways. The wait time is now five months for an assessment. Commissioner John Shafer defended this

failure for addressing the current drug issues in our county by stating the situation is nothing new and the demand has risen for mental health services. Of course, demand is up when none of the programs are successful. He added the problem is not unique to CCS. Citizens were sold the idea CCS would be great communicators and effective. After four years of transitioning, families are asked to understand as their loved ones die.

Commissioners have shot down any Blue Mountain Community College drug counseling program ideas since 2015 yet Shafer complained of staff shortages.

Struggling families could start a write-in campaign for Rick Pullen for Umatilla County commissioner. He will honestly address the drug crisis without shying away. Rumors and mistruths were spread that he was not eligible. Rick Pullen is a worker with follow through. He cares more.

Sally Sundin
Pendleton

Someone was missing from Oregon governor's debate

I am writing to thank the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association for hosting the first gubernatorial debate of 2022.

I was watching the debate you hosted, and noticed someone was missing. Of the multiple candidates running for governor of Oregon, only three of them were invited to attend. A duly elected Libertarian candidate, R. Leon Noble, had been excluded, and I would like to know why.

Noble earned the nomination of the Libertarian Party of Oregon during the primary election held in June. Unlike other "minor" parties, Libertarians do not need to spend millions of dollars on a primary campaign in order to ensure ballot access.

Could it be that Noble was excluded because, in this day of "pay-to-play" politics,

he has yet to raise the millions of dollars? Betsy Johnson is still collecting signatures to appear on the November ballot. Noble has no such hurdle to overcome, yet he was excluded from the debate.

Are you trying to silence candidates who haven't "paid their way" into the governor's race? Or are you concerned that the people of Oregon might hear a message that disturbs the status quo?

Most Oregonians can agree that neither Tina Kotek, Christine Drazan, nor Johnson represent them. Why can't those disenfranchised voters hear from a candidate who will?

For more information on the Libertarian candidate for governor, please visit his website, SetOregonFree.com.

Sharlyn Cox
Legacy media director, Set Oregon Free
Roseburg

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

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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; death notices and information about services are published at no charge. Obituaries can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol can include. Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at hermistonherald.com/obituaryform, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 800-522-0255, x2211.