

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Opportunities to educate are too often overlooked

Last Friday at Vernonia High School, emergency responders and high school students presented a simulated drunk driving crash that resulted in one death and serious injuries. They did an excellent job, bringing observers to tears even though they knew it was a simulation. (The INDEPENDENT lacks space in this issue for full coverage of the presentation; it will be in the June 16 issue.)

Those involved in the presentation were trying to educate young people about the damage caused by drunk driving. But the primary target audience wasn't there.

The simulation was presented on Senior Skip Day. One school administrator claimed they had no way to know when senior skip day would occur; nearly everyone else knew well in advance.

This is one example of the district's failure to take advantage of educational opportunities.

Another missed opportunity occurred last year, when a student journalist's complaint about administrative style resulted in the article being censored. It should have been used as an examination of what free speech entails.

Some of the missed opportunities have been the result of misplaced priorities. Replacing an experienced music teacher with a rookie whose salary was lower also caused students to lose out on valuable educational experiences such as Music in May and the Lower Columbia College Honor Band. Yes, activities such as these cost money, but so do extracurricular sports, and the current board seems to feel that more coaches are needed.

Sports are fun and sometimes help kids stay in school, but there are other, educational ways to engage curious young minds. Why is there no chess club in the elementary school? Why aren't Vernonia students intrigued by extracurricular activities that involve geography, science, drama or, heaven forbid, the Constitution?

Educating children is difficult, but it becomes almost impossible when schools find it inconvenient.

"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives."

— Robert M. Hutchins
President, University of Chicago



Ike Says...

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



The big wait! That is what hunters are doing right now, waiting to see what tags they have drawn. This year is shaping up to be a good one for hunters. The winter was mild and the unusual weather has actually been very beneficial for wildlife.

Eastern Oregon has received a lot of rain and forage is growing well.

With all the rain, the rivers in our area have stayed fairly high and should have produced a good trout opener. Remember, cutthroat fishing is catch and release only, flies or lures, no bait. I had a good talk with a fisheries biologist a while back and we talked about the local cutthroat situation. When the catch and release regulation first went into effect, it was believed by some of us that the cutthroat in our local streams would get bigger in size. Some of us even wondered if we would some day have a trophy fishery for giant cutthroats. Well, as most of you who fish the river know, that has not happened.

Why? According to the biologist, it is all about habitat. Fish will grow only as big as the habitat will allow. So if the habitat was carrying all the fish it could when the catch and release regulations went into effect, the fish would not get bigger or more numerous. That seems to be what has happened. So the big question now is, what

benefit is this catch and release regulation? While the regulation was put into effect to protect sea run cutthroat trout, one would have to wonder if it is really doing the job. Recent research suggests that there is very little genetic difference between cutthroats that reside in local streams during their lives versus those that go to the ocean. In fact more genetic diversity was found in cutthroats between river basins. With genetics playing such a small role, one would have to wonder if sea run cutthroat trout populations are more influenced by environmental conditions, especially the ocean.

Unfortunately, while we wait to unravel the sea run mystery, a very good consumptive fishery for native cutthroat trout languishes. There are options available to allow a consumptive fishery for native cutthroat trout while protecting sea run cutthroat trout. By using a length slot limit (12 inches and up) during the spring fishery, most sea run trout would be protected. The fall fishery for trout needs to be suspended when the sea runs come into the lower river. Currently these fish are targeted by fishermen, but we need to ask ourselves if this is wise, if the goal is to provide protection for the run. Catch and release does create mortalities.

Dad and I took a trip over East a few weeks back, the goal was to see some desert and to find a few Jack rabbits. Well, we accomplished both goals. We spent most of our time in the Warner basin, just north of Plush. There are good numbers of Jack rabbits and they are wide-

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