

Friday November 21, 2008

cheers & Jeers

Post Register editorial board members are Roger Plothow,

publisher; J. Robb Brady, publisher emeritus; Marty Trillhaase,

Opinions Page editor; and Dean Miller, executive editor

Heart of a community

CHEERS to the 19th annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner set for Thursday at the Elks Lodge in Idaho Falls.

By the time the dinner begins at noon, literally hundreds of volunteers will have been involved. Among them are:

The First Presbyterian Church youth group, which will bake some 50 pies for the dinner.

The Skyline High School Basketball team, which will set up the dining hall the day before.

Trinity and St. Paul Lutheran churches, which will donate canned corn.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which will provide Jell-O.

Volunteer cooks. Headed by Idaho Falls City Councilwoman Karen Cornwell, they start at 6 a.m.

The 20 families who will see to it that 360 shut-ins will have dinner delivered to their homes.

So many people have volunteered to serve on the kitchen, serving and cleaning crews that

The Salvation Army began turning people away three weeks ago.

Given the rising tide of need in this valley, organizers expect a 20 percent boost -- up to 1,200 -- in the number of people they will serve.

JEERS to the Idaho Legislature's Medical Education Interim Committee. Meeting last week, it didn't endorse a medical school at Idaho State University. But it didn't kill the idea either. Instead, it passed the buck, directing the State Board of Education to work with ISU as well as with the University of Idaho and the University of Washington on converting the WWAMI cooperative program to a full, four-year Idaho program.



Larsen



Crapo

Perhaps the state can afford to expand its seats in the WWAMI medical school program. But building a new medical school in Pocatello as the state is sinking into a budget hole? What is that?

The state already has spent \$300,000 to hire a consultant. The Legislature has its committee. Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter has his health care task force. All of those meetings command the presence of high-priced university and political leaders. What purpose is this discussion serving?

CHEERS to Rexburg Mayor Shawn Larsen. Earlier this week, he struck just the right conciliatory notes while responding to reports that a small group of Madison children chanted "assassinate Obama" on a school bus.

"I am extremely sorry that this incident occurred, and I do not believe that it reflects the values that make our community a great place to live and raise a family," Larsen wrote in a statement that was picked up nationally.

JEERS to American Land Rights Association of Battle Ground, Wash. Last week, it accused Sen. Mike Crapo of abandoning private property rights. Crapo was backing an omnibus lands bill that included his Owyhee Canyon wilderness bill. That measure included 517,000 acres of wilderness and another 315 miles of wild and scenic rivers. It has since been put off until next year.

"It appears you cannot trust Senator Mike Crapo's heart to protect your private property and access and use of Federal lands," the association said in an "action alert" that urged its members to flood Crapo's office with phone calls, mail and e-mail.

This rhetoric is coming from an out-of state group with no appreciation for the facts in Idaho. Crapo's bill was a model of collaboration among ranchers and conservationists. Among the people coming to its defense was Fred Grant, president of Stewards of the West -- which also champions private property rights.

CHEERS to the University of Idaho. It's embarking on a new molecular research effort to recover spent nuclear fuel and reduce nuclear waste.

Funded by a one-year, \$732,000 U.S. Department of Energy grant, the project would utilize highly magnetic nanoparticles to extract radioactive nuclides, such as uranium and plutonium, from spent nuclear fuel. That would stretch the use of the nuclear fuel. The research also could conceivably achieve a significant breakthrough in the challenge to make nuclear waste disposal easier, safer and more environmentally friendly.

Leading the interdisciplinary nano-research at the UI are You Qiang, professor of physics, and Andrezej Paszczyński, associate professor of microbiology. They are working in collaboration with Linfeng Rao, nuclear chemist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory of California.

JEERS to the George W. Bush administration. It's working to deregulate a wide array of protections for consumers and the environment.

The Washington Post reports the incoming Obama administration will find it difficult to repeal many of these steps.

"They want these changes to continue to have an impact long after they leave office," said OMB Watch regulatory expert Matthew Madia.

Some examples:

The National Marine Fisheries Service would lift a requirement that environmental impact statements be prepared for fishery management decisions.

Coal-fired plants would be allowed increased emissions near national parks.

Oil refineries, chemical factories and other industrial plants "with complex manufacturing operations" would be allowed increased emissions.

CHEERS to the Idaho Falls Youth Hockey Association. To compensate for years of budgetary neglect by the city of Idaho Falls at the Tautphaus Park rink, the association has created a versatile and determined funding effort of its own.

The Tautphaus Park rink is overused. It has the poorest of basic facilities. Quite obviously, it needs modernizing. But the city has left too much of the bare basics to the users.

To install heaters for fans in the bleachers, for example, association President Beverly Hott, parents and young skaters organized an advertising campaign with local cooperating merchants.

Other association fundraising efforts have provided rink ice improvements, a locker room for girls, rubber flooring on walkways to the rink, boarding around the rink and even helped to keep the inadequate restrooms operable.

There are 300 youth from age 5 to 18 in the Idaho Falls area participating in the association. Most of them compete in a four-state area in the Northwest. When they compete in Idaho, Montana, Utah and Wyoming, they always find well-kept, larger rinks with decent facilities.

Not only is hockey a source of winter recreation, it also provides an economic boost to the region. When hockey tournaments are held here, thousands come to Idaho Falls.

With the economy plunging, the city probably can't do much for the rink now. But developer Allen Ball of Idaho Falls has said he would provide a site for an expanded rink and recreation center.

What's needed now is some vision and hard work to modernize hockey facilities.

J. Robb Brady and Marty Trillhaase