

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writer and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer. Letter writers should include sources for any facts and figures they cite.

Strong schools equal strong property values

Ten years ago, after retiring from military service, we moved to Woodmoor. We knew the schools were outstanding, so with a child in high school and one in middle school we felt good about settling down here in the Tri-Lakes area. We love the peaceful setting of our home and the friends we have made. We don't have plans to ever move again. We also like the way our home values have increased in the last 10 years. I definitely appreciate living in a place where as I grow older my property values increase.

The proposed D38 bond and mill levy override (MLO) on the November ballot is a vital component to ensuring that our property values continue to be excellent. Families moving to our area are moving here for our peaceful locations, our strong community, and primarily for our excellent schools. November's bond and MLO will allow the district to build a new elementary school and convert Bear Creek Elementary back into a middle school, as it was originally constructed. With sales of new homes in our area tripling since 2010, and the 10-year expected growth of our school districts to increase by 1,800 students, these measures are imperative to sustaining strong property values.

Also on the ballot, the MLO will allow the district to hire necessary security and counseling personnel allowing our schools to be as secure as they are excellent. As an empty nester and small-business owner looking forward to the future, I believe strongly that well-supported schools are the key to peaceful, strong, and vital communities. Please vote yes to pass the bond measure and MLO in November.

Annamarie Brachfeld

Hail and climate change

On Aug. 13, the Colorado Springs Gazette published an editorial, "Don't Blame Climate Change for the Hail." As I believed the editorial was misleading, actually disingenuous, I wrote a letter to the editor expressing my views. Not to my surprise, the letter was neither acknowledged nor printed. I understand completely that the paper must receive many letters and, of course, cannot print them all. Nonetheless, I hoped mine would make the cut. But as I "attacked" the veracity of the editorial, its absence from their Letters section was not unexpected.

The editorial's main point was that our recent devastating hailstorm was not the result of global warming, but then went on to cast aspersions on the science quoting various scientists to validate their messages. They also managed to insert their political beliefs, albeit subtly.

As I said in my letter, "Reputable climate scientists have repeatedly stated that no one particular weather event can be directly attributed to climate change. Rather they, the overwhelming majority of them, have stated categorically that our climate is changing—rapidly—and that it is caused mostly by human activities. As the climate warms, the atmosphere holds more moisture and that can—and certainly seems to—favor more storms."

It seems that many citizens, actually far too many, continue to deny that our climate is changing rapidly—"rapidly" being the essential element. Clinging to "The climate has always changed," or "The sun is the culprit" these people simply will not accept the settled science.

Climate change is real, it is accelerating, and it portends challenging, if not severe, outcomes. Please, cast aside any political predispositions, and, if not already a "believer," become knowledgeable of the facts so that you can act (vote) accordingly.

Ross Meyer

Concerns regarding local eldercare facility

One year ago, I put my Mom into a memory care facility. The dementia affecting her brain and body were too much for me to provide care. I thought a sparkling new facility would be best, but I was wrong!

Mom went to Bethesda Gardens in Monument, a beautiful-looking facility with a dark secret—the memory care staff doesn't know how to care for late-stage dementia patients. After Mom's "care" worsened, the head nurse admitted to me that they didn't know what to do.

Before placing your loved one in someone else's care, tour the facility and ask:

- Will mom see the same familiar caregivers' faces every day, get help with activities of daily life, and be kept from harm or abuse?
- How do current patients react to the caregivers—are they afraid? Confused?
- Notice whether or not residents are wearing clean clothes, look tidy, and have been getting bathed every day. Mom never received a bath from Bethesda employees.
- Look for bruising on patients. People with dementia are vulnerable to abuse because they cannot communicate an issue and have impaired memory.
- Visit resident's rooms, not just a model. Look for stains on the furniture. Mom was routinely left in a soiled diaper staining her couch and ruining sheets.

When we realized the deplorable conditions, we notified Bethesda staff, hoping her care would improve. Instead her treatment deteriorated. So, we brought in an outside company to care for Mom while we searched for a different facility. I visited Mom daily, bringing my husband along with me because I was fearful of the staff after being threatened by their vice president.

The guilt I feel for putting her in such horrid conditions will probably never go away.

Allison Robenstein

Safety and security?

This November, voters will be asked to decide on a \$1 million mill levy override (MLO) for school safety and security. Unfortunately, 70 percent of the money won't be used for safety and security. It will be used to hire 12 mental health workers.

The remaining 30 percent will be used for safety and security, to hire four armed security guards and pay for dogs to visit schools on occasion. Without question, everyone wants their kids to be safe at school. But, our district should look into other options before burdening the taxpayers yet again. Colorado lawmakers approved \$35 million in March of 2018 to be used specifically for hiring police officers for schools and building upgrades to improve security. D38 can also apply for a Best Grant with the purpose of updating building security. And, the FASTER program offers free training to school districts so staff members can deal with unfortunate situations on the spot and not have to waste valuable time waiting for law enforcement to arrive on the scene. It truly can save lives. Plus, the STOP School Violence Act of 2018 recently passed the House. It will provide funding for school districts to enhance safety and security via trainings, developing safety plans, monies for improved building locks, lighting, etc.

Our district is getting a 6 percent increase in per student funding, the biggest increase in over 10 years. That's \$3 million more to work with. It is shameful to use the Parkland tragedy as a fundraiser for D38. To help rebuild trust with the community, they should utilize all of these existing resources. Vote no on the upcoming MLO this November. Vote no to mental health workers in our schools.

Sharon "Sam" Schaffer

Save the character of our community

I oppose Sunshine Behavioral Health's (SBH) (San Juan Capistrano, Calif.) proposal to reconfigure the property at 1865 Woodmoor Drive (formerly Ramada Inn) into an inpatient drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility. My opposition is not to dispute the need for drug and alcohol facilities but to challenge the location.

I'm opposed because: SBH's facility would be in close proximity to schools, establishments that serve or sell alcohol, public buildings, and convenience stores. The success of any facility is dependent on its aftercare program; SBH's aftercare is minimal at best. Willow Springs Recovery Center (WSRC) in Texas owned by SBH would serve as the model for the Monument facility. The monthly fee at WSRC is \$12,000, and it does not accept Medicaid or Tricare, only private pay and/or private insurance. WSRC is "settled on over 38 acres of beautiful Texas—just close enough to the city for convenience but far enough that you don't have to worry about temptations triggers." Obviously the advantages of WSRC can never happen here.

SBH's subsidiary, Elite Rehab Placement, is under investigation by a U.S. House committee to determine if patient brokering and financial kickbacks are being used to attract patients to their treatment centers. SBH provides treatment only to patients who voluntarily admit themselves. What is the effect on the community when a patient self-releases himself/herself? Eventually SBH will accept 150 patients, resulting in potential revenue of \$1.8 million per month.

I suggest the land be used to construct a park/playground or build a middle school to alleviate current overcrowding. The entire community will benefit from these structures. SBH's proposal will alter the character of and have a negative impact on the community. I have pride and passion for Tri-Lakes. SBH does not and is only focused on profit.

Cynthia Fong Smith

Stronger security needed in D38

We love our community. We love our schools and teachers and enjoy the general safety we feel for our kids. It is an unfortunate fact, though, that D38 needs to improve security. Portions of the bond and MLO will go toward safety upgrades and security and counseling staffing, necessary to keep our students and teachers secure in what has become a different world than the one we, as parents, grew up.

Safety improvements include entry vestibule improvements for more secure access to buildings and electronic door hardware for school lock down of all entrances and exits in the case of an active shooter. Our teachers are carrying more of the burden for the safety of our kids and need further support.

Our neighboring school districts have made similar upgrades in recent years, and it is time that D38 does the same. In fact, districts are required under the Safe Schools Act to address building safety concerns. Furthermore, the act requires schools to have regularly updated safety plans and incident/threat assessment procedures, in addition to trained crisis response teams.

Beyond physical safety, our kids increasingly need educational environments that provide psychological and emotional safety. We are now in a time where a single bully can attack another kid while hiding behind an electronic device, often without any adult being aware that it is occurring.

Not only do we have an intrinsic responsibility to keep kids and staff safe at school, the district also has a legal obligation. The Claire-Davis Act, signed by Gov. John Hickenlooper three years ago, dissolved school districts' immunity in cases of negligence that results in death or certain assaults.

The requested bond and mill levy override will help D38 kids grow up into the adults we all aspire them to be.

Matt and Erin Vineyard

Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

Celebrating women authors

By the staff at Covered Treasures

"We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better."—J.K. Rowling

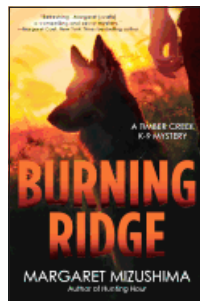
Dive into these novels by local and international women authors. Some are debut novels that make us look forward to more to come.

Burning Ridge: A Timber Creek K-9 Mystery

By Margaret Mizushima (Crooked Lane Books), \$26.99

When a body is discovered on Colorado's Redstone Ridge, Officer Mattie Cobb and her K-9 partner Robo

are called in to spearhead the investigation. But this is no ordinary crime, and it soon becomes clear that Mattie has a close personal connection to the dead man. Joined by local veterinarian Cole Walker, the pair scours the mountaintop for evidence, and then the unthinkable happens. Could Mattie become the next victim in the murderer's deadly game? This is the third book in the popular K-9 mystery series by Colo-



rado author Mizushima.

Little French Bistro

By Nina George (Broadway Books), \$16

Marianne is stuck in a loveless, unhappy marriage. After 41 years, she leaves her life behind and sets out for the coast of Brittany. Here she meets a cast of colorful and unforgettable locals, who surprise her with their warm welcome, and the natural ease they all seem to have, taking pleasure in life's small moments. Marianne learns it's never too late to begin the search for what life should have been all along.