

Our City

Have you ever felt humbled by or because of the outcome of something that you played some part in? I have. Over the past three years, I have been humbled by the accomplishments of our City, its personnel and our Council. But most recently I was humbled once again by the awesome students and FFA members I have in my Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources program at American Falls High School.

This past Wednesday began in a discouraging and somewhat disheartening way for me as I sat in on our weekly legislative phone call with Senator Guthrie and Representatives Andrus and Packer. The folks on this end that usually attend are School District Superintendent Dr. Ron Bolinger, School Board member and Harms Memorial Hospital Director Dallas Clinger, Council President Dan Hammond and Norman Wright. As a group, we have been focused on the three major legislative issues; namely education, transportation and health care. I certainly appreciate the work of our three legislators; and while we may not always see eye to eye, we have been able to work together on many things. Were it so in the State Legislature. Two months and nothing on three major issues facing Idaho's future. Frankly I am not sure what that says about Idaho, for all the posturing by so many, we don't seem to be much more effective than the Federal government to which so many are vehemently opposed. I am very glad I am where I am. And, I was more so as I left the phone call early to head to school and the East Magic Valley FFA District (EMVD) Leadership events.

The American Falls FFA Chapter had 31 members participating in the ten EMVD leadership and speaking events. I was humbled Wednesday for good reason as all but five members either placed first or second in their respective area. Three placed third and two placed in the top ten. I don't profess to be a great Ag teacher or FFA Advisor, but I do have some wonderfully talented kids in my program. Kids who know the meaning of dedication. Kids who know what hard work is and aren't afraid of it. Kids who have learned to set aside personal differences and ego while working together towards a common goal and achievement. Kids who everyday teach me what is possible. Kids who embody a growth mindset and wonder how, not how come. Yes I was humbled Wednesday, but I must admit I was so very proud of not only the winners but almost more so of two of those who placed third.

The young Alondra Murillo who picks rocks after school or works at City Hall to contribute to her family's income, as she spoke on our Nation's lack of comprehensive immigration reform brought tears to my eyes. As she told the story of her father who has worked here legally for 22 years, but still is denied citizenship. The younger still Jordyn Boyer who is scared to death of public speaking, yet worked her way to a third place finish in the Freshman Creed Speaking event. And I would be remiss if I did not mention an all freshmen boys Opening and Closing ceremonies team that finished second in that event. Never have I had such a great group of boys who were willing to stand in front of an auditorium full of people and speak, and I have been doing this for over 30 years.

Congratulations to Riely Geritz who placed first in Extemporaneous Public Speaking and Job Interview giving her the choice of events to compete in at the State competition. She will be representing American Falls and the East Magic Valley in Extemporaneous Public Speaking with her first place finish while Garrett Wagoner will compete at State in Job Interview as he

finished second in this event. Congratulations to Abby Rowe for her first place finish in Prepared Public Speaking as she moves on the State event as well. And, lastly congratulations to Skylyn Sprague who was selected by the retiring East Magic District Officers as the 2015-16 District President from a pool of 13 applicants from the seven different schools in the District.

Wednesday evening found me at the City Council meeting. I am sure Preston Crompton will do a very good job of covering it for the Power County Press, as he was there. I would just like to put in a plug for the Fifth Annual American Classic bow fishing tournament that the Council approved for May 16 and 17. I would also like to note that the new boat docks are in place at Willow Bay. Please take the opportunity to use them while the water in the reservoir lasts. The Council also approved moving ahead with the Federal Lands Access Program grant, so hopefully later this spring the County Highway District and City can get the emergency access built to Willow Bay. On a bit of a side note the Council passed a motion to form a committee that will look at somehow amending the way the City charges for sewer when a premises is vacant and not connected to City water. The committee will also be looking at the circuit breaker payment for those on limited fixed incomes along with a way to allow folks to water their lawns around homes that are vacant and for sale.

Towards the end of the Council meeting the FFA Ag Issues team presented the public forum on the current Idaho Ag Gag law. Thanks Dan Hammond and Kurtis Workman for your excellent questions and critiques. The kids did a great job representing both sides of the issue. They are a ways away from being ready for the State event next month. But then they are just like the rest of the 31 one kids that competed earlier in the day as they are learning to put their differences and egos aside (they are as vast and stark as I have ever seen in a group of high school kids) while working towards the good of the whole. Why do some of us lose that characteristic, forget what it means to put your best effort forward and remain receptive to the thoughts and desires of others. I remain humbled by their ability to do so. Kids, at least mine, are excellent teachers.

Perhaps more of our State legislators should spend some time in our classrooms and programs. I know Senator Guthrie has; which may be why he remains an advocate not only for education in general but also for Agricultural Education and the FFA. I look forward to his remarks as he presents the keynote address during the sixth session of the Idaho FFA Association's State Convention on April 11th; the same convention in which 25 of our members will be competing in the various leadership events. Yes, I remain humbled by my kids.

Until next week...