

From our readers

Kids should get a second chance

My most sincere thanks goes out to Jack Burchard, for his very informative article in last week's Chronicle, pertaining to the possibility of closing our own Juvenile Detention Center.

Why??

- 1) Perhaps to save money.
- 2) To put 140 miles between the young offenders and their families, parents, grandparents, lawyers, judges, counselors, people who care.
- 3) To transport them to their new location in a special van, in a cage, handcuffed, with belly chains and leg irons in place.
- 4) Then letting someone else take charge of them - whatever they decide.

We then have given up our chance to let these young people know we care ... that they can turn the corner ... learn some new ways of living and become good citizens.

We all make mistakes - but we should get a second chance.

**Maureen Walsh
Omak**

Detention worker supports facility

As I am employed at the Okanogan Detention Facility, I have a vested interest in the outcome of the discussion that would remove incarcerated youth from Okanogan County to Martin Hall in Spokane County.

However, since the commissioners have stated that they will base their decision on the facts, I am more at ease. When presented, the facts will show Okanogan provides superior rehabilitation services, education, quality of care, access to family, and cost for housing youth. I am sure of this because two years ago many of the same questions were asked and answered during the Feb 25, 2014, commissioners' meeting.

A recent guest column brought up several concerning issues from a proposal prepared for grant purposes.

It is interesting to note that most of the concerns presented in the proposal have been addressed in the four years since it was written. It is also important to note that there were two engineers' reports on the

structural integrity of the building, both stated the building was safe and there were no serious structural issues. One report had suggested the possibility of minimum reinforcement issues, while after further investigation, the second says the facility did meet code requirements. Both reports are being uploaded and can be viewed with other relevant documents/comments by going to the Okanogan County Office of Planning and Develop website

I am looking forward to Feb. 23 at 8:15 a.m. when the county commissioners and the public will have the opportunity to discuss this critical issue.

**Roy Johnson
Okanogan**

Keep detention center at home

Do not move the Juvenile Detention Center.

I hope the county commissioners are listening to the public on this matter. The extra cost alone should get their attention, but public dollars are not all that is at stake here.

The reason the youngster are in the facility in the first place is because they are in trouble. They need the support of families, teachers, ministers and friends who care about them. To remove them such a distance would impair their chances of rehabilitation and correction. It takes a caring community to help children to maturity, to remove them from the people they know will support them is definitely detrimental to their chances to live as good citizens.

If you look into the history of this situation, this is not the first time people with "outside" interests have tried to suggest this very move. Look at the numbers; it would cost more in the long run, just in transportation and housing, and the unnecessary hardship upon our youngsters would be out of reason.

Jack Burchard in last week's guest column hit the nail on the head. It would cost the county more, put hardship on the detainees and gain nothing but a higher debt to the taxpayers of Okanogan County. Of course, Medical Lake facilities want our business, they are floundering for dollars to stay alive. Let them solve their problems another way. We have a good facility, and if it

needs improving, then let us put the extra dollars in reserve for that need, not just throw our money to the first opportunist with their hands held out.

Please read the column by Jack Burchard. As a retired judge, defense attorney and prosecuting attorney, he has lived through the facts he mentions and wants only what is right for Okanogan County.

**Nora Rappe'
Malott**

hearing from the spouses, children and friends of alumni and professors alike who might have information, stories, and memories to share. Even the smallest contribution would be greatly appreciated - do not hesitate to reach out!

Please contact me at claire.thornton@wsu.edu or 509-429-5969.

**Claire Thornton
Pullman**