

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Support local merchants this holiday season

SLOWLY, BUT SURELY, BLACK FRIDAY ADS ARE BEGINNING TO CROP up.

As we all start combing through them trying to figure out what new electronic device we'll pick up for a steal, or how many sets of 5 million thread count sheets we'll fight strangers for, let's not forget the stores on our main streets.

Over the next month, shopping carts will be piled high with trends of the season, while mom and pop shops struggle to keep their lights on.

This can be a very tough time of the year for hometown businesses.

Our neighbors could use the business, as a large portion of our purchases likely go to Amazon and other big-box online stores these days.

This week we include our Hometown Holidays section, which features a roundup of many of the holiday events around the region, as well as advertisements from our local merchants showcasing some of their products and services.

Going though it, one can quickly see that local businesses have some unique items that you can easily place in holiday stockings or fill out the Christmas tree's skirt.

Our local economy could use the extra funds and it could mean even more than you think to people who may even live next door.

When we shop local it helps to support the community. A local purchase means a pair of shoes or new backpack to your child's friend — not a corporation CEO's third vacation home.

Experts have said for years that money spent locally stays in the community, and often turns over multiple times as business owners bring on additional staff, expand inventory and/or support local groups and charities.

Local merchants are also more likely to stand behind your purchase and the products they sell, should you encounter a problem.

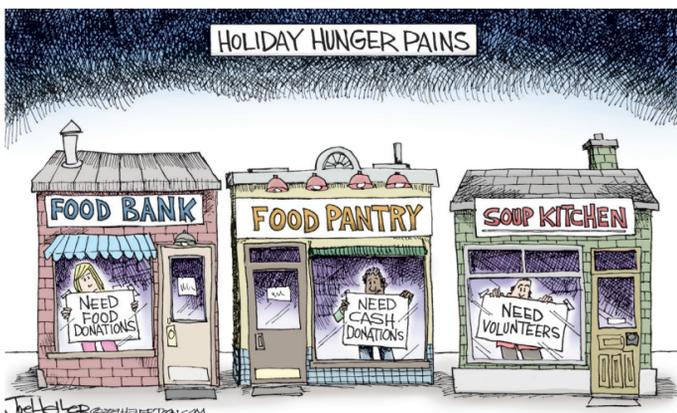
Customer service is the name of the game and you can't get the same service when you dial a call center halfway across the globe.

Speaking of local merchants, Nov. 27 we will be honoring your picks for the Best of Okanogan and Ferry counties. Most of the categories focus on local businesses in our area. While it may not have specific gift ideas, it may alert you to a business that you may not have heard of before.

A strong community needs a strong economy.

CORRECTIONS

The Chronicle staff strives to be accurate. If errors occur we want to correct them promptly. If you believe a correction is warranted, please call 509-826-1110 or 800-572-3446 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.



GUEST OPINION

The thanks of a grateful nation

IHAVE NEVER MET A VETERAN who did not inspire me. From the hundreds of veterans who receive assistance from my office seeking lost medals or help with VA benefits to the veterans and their families I meet at community events and pinning ceremonies throughout central Washington, each of them has a unique story.



REP. DAN NEWHOUSE

I have met men who served together and became family, traveling across the country every year for a reunion. I have met women who, after being told that they should stay home and become a housewife, packed up their bags and served in the Vietnam War. I have met families, grieving the loss of their sons, daughters, and spouses, who are hoping their story and their sacrifice live on.

Our nation's veterans deserve our eternal gratitude because they choose to stand up for Americans.

They choose to fight. They choose to sacrifice. They choose to protect and defend the United States because they are proud of their country, and we must return the favor.

I have hosted several Vietnam veteran pinning ceremonies over the last year to recognize the men and women of Central Washington who fought for our country in the Vietnam War. Many of them did not receive the hero's welcome home that they deserved, but now, 50 years later, I was proud to be able to honor them in partnership with the Vietnam War 50th Commemoration.

I was in high school during the Vietnam War, and I remember many of our friends and neighbors going off to war and some — but not all — returning home. Some of them gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and the others gave up more than I can imagine. Their service for our country cannot and should not be forgotten.

The lapel pin and certificate of congressional recognition are just small tokens, but they mean so much more. I believe they truly represent the thanks

of a grateful nation.

Thanking them is not enough. We also must ensure our veterans receive the highest quality care and benefits we can provide. I recently visited the Walla Walla VA Medical Center, which serves many of the veterans from the 4th Congressional District. I toured their facilities — including the newly-opened same-day clinic for veterans — and learned about how they are implementing the VA MISSION Act. This legislation was signed into law in 2018 and expands access for veterans to receive care outside of VA hospitals and clinics, which is critical in rural areas like Central Washington.

Allowing veterans to seek health care options close to home can not only greatly improve their quality of life, but it can be lifesaving. I was proud to support the VA MISSION Act, and I look forward to its continued implementation.

REP. DAN NEWHOUSE represents Washington's 4th Congressional District, including part of Okanogan County.

NEWS

Working it: Students test skills for future jobs

Story, photos by **KATIE TEACHOUT**
The Chronicle

STUDENTS FROM 10 school districts put their knowledge to the test in real-world applications in the FFA Apple Judging and Shop Contest Wednesday, Nov. 6.

In the shop contest, 58 students tested their gas welding and ARC welding skills.

"They're doing basic welding tests just like they would if they were going to apply for a job," said shop teacher and FFA advisor Matt Deebach. "They get one chance at submitting the welds."

Deebach said certified welder Keith Montanye from Apple Valley Machine Shop volunteered to come and judge the welds on industry standards and rate the students, so they would know where they stood county-wide.

"It really tests their skills in a life-like setting, including safety-standards, using different equipment than they are used to in their own shop," said Deebach.

Taking first and second in bead arc welding were Manson's Miciah Peterson and Gunnar Rosmussen.

Trace Buchert of Okanogan took first in bead gas welding followed by Tonasket's Evan Vanetta in second.

Tonasket swept the arc



Tonasket FFA student Keegan Huston chips away to clear the slag off the cover weld during testing.

welding, with Athena Reietveld in first, Carter Barrocca in second and Angel Depaz in third.

Tonasket also won first through third in gas welding, with Carson Sasse in first, Aidan Nelson in second and Lane Bolich in third.

In the campus greenhouse, the noise, heavy metal smell and flashes of light from welding torches were replaced by soft sunlight,



Tonasket FFA student Logan Brock performs a welding test along with students from other schools Wednesday, Nov. 6 at Tonasket High School. Shop teacher and FFA advisor Matt Deebach said the basic gas and ARC welding tests were performed just as a welder would do when applying for a job. They got one shot.

students speaking quietly but excitedly and the harvest smell of apples.

"It's exciting to have the Apple Judging Clinic here. This is the first year for me to be a part of this," said principal turned horticulture/agriculture teacher and FFA

advisor Brian Ellis as students tested their skills judging apples on variety, blemishes, fruit maturity, entomology, apple grading and the pressure test used for pickers to determine if apples are ready to go into cold storage.

Ellis said some of the

students had been in apple judging contests before, and others were new to the contest. Tonasket's clinic wasn't judged, but rather a learning experience for students, with teachers going over results with their students afterward.

District competition for

apple judging is in Manson Nov. 19, with the state competition in Wenatchee Dec. 11.

"The cool thing about this is, it's all real-life stuff," said Ellis. "Kids can go to work in an orchard already know this. That's why I love teaching what I do."