

**OPINIONS**

**Thoughts about the future in the Applegate**

BY PAUL TIPTON

I've been involved with the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation (GACDC) since 2016. For 21 years, since 1996, GACDC managed Cantrall Buckley Park when Jackson County didn't have funds to keep the park open and the community stepped up to run the park. In 2017, after the county once again took over operations of the park, GACDC went back to its roots as a community development corporation and rebranded itself as A Greater Applegate (AGA).

AGA has not only survived but thrived with grants from foundations aligned with our mission, as well as the support of the very generous Applegate community. Our community visioning work was disrupted by the pandemic years, but we used our resources to help those in the community who lacked their daily food needs, including providing food for children particularly affected by the loss of daily food resources through the schools.

After the pandemic, we finished the Applegate Valley Vision in 2022 and continue to implement many of the projects brought about by the voices of the communities, which often overlapped. Over the past four years, we've given out about \$35,000 in Innovation Grants to community projects in the valley, as well as provided technical assistance to over 184 local businesses that just needed a boost to be successful.

I'm really proud to have been a part of this organization, as well as other community nonprofits, through my 52 years in the valley. But as I step back from some of those associations, I'd like to reflect on community versus politics. In any and all of my dealings with my neighbors in the Applegate Valley, politics has seldom,

if ever, been the controlling nature of the conversation. Community has always been at the forefront of the conversation (What are "we" doing? How are "we/you" making out? What can "we" do to help you?). The point is that politics shouldn't and doesn't control how we act together as a community. Anyone attending the recent fundraiser for the Applegate Valley Fire District's new fire truck at the Swine and Wine event at Red Lily Vineyards would have seen the diversity of the community supporting the community's needs. There was no *red* or *blue* or whatever. It was community, which is what we are at our core together and what causes tears of gratitude that this is so.

I'm concerned that AGA still may not be hearing from, and thus not incorporating, all the voices who want to be heard in the Applegate, for whatever reason. We're open to hearing from everyone; we hold no views except those that might benefit the Applegate community. We don't even know each other's political views, just community enhancement views. There are opportunities to be involved in many ways, and I encourage *everyone* who is interested in being part of this nonpolitical, community-centric organization to become part of the solution of the community's needs and desires. We don't do divisiveness, just community, and we welcome your input and perhaps your presence at our events. We truly want to represent everyone—all the different voices—in our wonderful community.

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For more information about A Greater Applegate, visit [agreaterapplegate.org](http://agreaterapplegate.org).

**Does how we vote reflect who we are?**

BY JIM REILAND

"There are two kinds of people in the world: those who believe there are two kinds of people in the world and those who don't." —Robert Benchley, American humorist.

Benchley's quip poking fun at human nature is especially pertinent during elections. We have all occasionally divided the world into just two kinds of people because it's convenient—but it's also inaccurate and unfair.

In America, we tend to lump voters into just two categories because our political system evolved to have just two dominant political parties—Republicans and Democrats. But in Oregon, the largest block of voters is "unaffiliated." According to the Secretary of State's office, a few years ago 34.4 percent of all voters were nonaffiliated, compared with 34.2 percent who registered as Democrats and 24.7 percent who registered as Republicans. Another 4.7 percent registered with the Independent Party.

Still, this "two-kinds-of-people" framework persists, often reinforced by political opinion leaders. Their hurled insults and pasted labels suggest that anyone voting for the Democratic presidential candidate must be "elitist" or "communist," or that those voting for the Republican candidate must be "fascist" or "racist." This oversimplification ignores the reality that most voters are somewhere in the political middle.

Very few of us share *all* of our candidate's views or values. Many of us don't even like the candidate we vote for; we just like the other candidate less. Additionally, many of us hold views that defy categorization. I know self-described conservatives who support a woman's right to choose and self-described liberals who

favor tighter restrictions on abortion. My father was a Marine, a stalwart Republican, and a lifelong hunter who felt that only the military should have high-capacity, semiautomatic guns. My cousin is an Army veteran, registered Democrat, and hunts with an AR15.

So-called "contradictions" abound, but they are only contradictions in a world with just two kinds of people.

I'm writing this a week before the 2024 election, and am looking forward to comparing how Applegate Valley voted in both 2020 and 2024. County voting records show that in 2020, precincts largely within the Jackson County portion of the Applegate Valley voted 51.3 percent for Trump, 43.2 percent for Biden, and 5.5 percent for a third-party candidate, while precincts largely within the Josephine County portion of the Applegate Valley voted 64.9 percent for Trump, 33.2 percent for Biden, and 2 percent for a third-party candidate. (Note: Precincts don't correspond precisely to our valley's watershed boundaries, so this is an approximate picture.)

Hopefully, by early December, the dust will have settled, and we'll remember that most of us don't embrace the extreme positions attributed to the candidates we voted for. Lumping each other into simple categories based on our voting choices glosses over what each of us truly believes. People from across the political spectrum—left, right, and center—have worked hard to make the Applegate Valley a great place to live. If we respect each other and recognize the strength in our differences, we can work together to keep it that way.

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