

EDITOR'S DESK

Giving health care workers their due

Each year, Time Magazine famously dubs a particularly influential person or group of people as its "Person of the Year." While Time went with president-elect Joe Biden and vice president-elect Kamala Harris, I'd like to recognize one of Time's runners-up, front-line health care workers, as the *Hermiston Herald's* own Person of the Year.



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR

Primary care doctors, emergency room nurses, surgeons, respiratory therapists, certified nursing assistants and other health care workers are absolutely crucial to this country's well-being. Their services save lives, prolong lives and improve lives. And yet, as an American, I have been deeply ashamed of how we have treated them this year.

In the spring, we sent them into hospitals where people were dying in hallways because there were no beds available, attempting to fight a deadly disease about which little was known, all without proper protective gear because our country was under-prepared and slow to respond to the need. Some died as a result. Others lived in hotels or slept in their car, terrified of what they might bring home to their families.

At the time, Good Shepherd Medical Center was fortunate to not be so overwhelmed and under-equipped as hospitals in cities like New York. But when I interviewed nurses partic-



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

Jadie Wick, a front line nurse, poses for a portrait at Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston on Friday, June 12, 2020. Wick was honored in Gov. Kate Brown's statewide virtual commencement address on Sunday, June 14, 2020.

ipating in the "Essential not Sacrificial" car parade protest through town in May, they told me that, while they couldn't reveal details due to privacy concerns, what they had seen as they treated local COVID-19 patients had left them scared of the virus in a way no season of influenza ever had.

Throughout the year, as waves of the virus have overwhelmed various hospitals across the country, doctors and nurses have described working inhumane hours in conditions worse than anything they have ever experienced in their careers. The personal protective equipment they've been grateful to finally have has left dark purple bruises across their faces during the long hours they've

spent treating patients who complained it was too much to ask someone to wear a mask for 15 minutes in Costco.

They have had to bear more of the emotional burden of patients' deaths as families have said goodbye to their loved ones via video while a nurse held the dying patient's hand instead of the patient's spouse or child. The mental health toll of the pandemic on health care providers has been extensive, workers say, but they feel they must keep pushing through burnout because they are so badly needed.

All of that would be bad enough, but an ignorant segment of the population has, instead of being grateful, reviled and vilified health care

workers. On social media and in the news, doctors and nurses have described patients who sneer and scream insults, accusing them of injecting them with poison to perpetuate the "hoax" of COVID-19 or insisting on a magic cure they're sure the doctor has but is withholding in order to make sure they die for political reasons.

Imagine dedicating your life to saving lives, only to have the very people you're working to save use their dying days to baselessly accuse you of murdering them.

Others have not gone that far, but on the *Herald's* social media pages and other community Facebook pages I have repeatedly seen local residents falsely claim that local health care workers are committing fraud by lying about what patients died of because they "get more money for COVID" — along with other slander against their integrity that would get someone challenged to a duel were we living in the 1700s.

Enough is enough. We need health care workers, and we owe them a great debt of gratitude for their service. It's time people who appreciate that speak up again and reminded them that we're with them, cheering them on as they help us get through a dark winter and on to a world where vaccines have helped tame this beast.

To the hundreds of local health care workers, from hospitals to nursing homes: Thank you for your service.

COLUMN

All I want for Christmas — family and friends

One gig I would never want to do is serve as Santa Claus.

Sure, I can be as holly and jolly as the rest, but I would have a hard time listening to the wish lists of children that are filled with all the new-fangled toys and latest gadgets.



Tammy Malgesini

I think we lose the spirit of the season when the focus becomes a big old gift grab. Don't get me wrong, I'm not the bah humbug type. I love to give — especially presents that are chosen specifically for the person.

In addition, utilizing one's creativity with gift giving is very special. Whether making sweet treats, crafts, artwork or even writing songs, poetry, creating a video or putting a favorite photo in a frame — gifts made from the hands or heart can truly be a priceless labor of love.

When John and I were first married, we lived on an extremely tight budget.

John was in college and worked part time while I had a full-time job. We sometimes got creative with Christmas presents.

We had some friends that owned a filbert farm. They

invited us to pick all the hazelnuts we wanted. After they dried, our evening entertainment included cracking nuts — lots and lots of nuts. I then roasted some (not on an open fire), while others were dipped in chocolate and topped off with festive sprinkles. I also made dozens and dozens of spritz cookies.

We packaged the homemade treats in festive tins and gave them to several close friends and family. Everyone was so gracious, commenting about how wonderful they were. And they were — I wish I still had unlimited access to filberts.

During recent holiday seasons, my husband has experimented in the kitchen — making everything from caramel and chocolate dipped pretzel rods to a variety of cookies. Last year, he even made canine cookies for several of our friends who have dogs.

With the onset of the global pandemic, I found myself with a lot more time on my hands. Rather than immersing myself in TV and the news of the day, I have enjoyed being able to get in touch with my crafty side.

My friends, hairdresser and parents have been the recipients of my dabblings in painting on rocks and small wooden elephants.

In addition, I've had more time to go through photos and have made and ordered special gifts utilizing some favorites.

In a recent conversation with my bestie, she said she was having a hard time deciding what to get her oldest granddaughter for Christmas.

In past years, Carol said the 10-year-old would readily share what she wanted.

In order to go to school during the pandemic, the girl's parents made the heart-wrenching decision to have their daughters temporarily live out of state with their other grandmother.

When Carol pressed her granddaughter what she might like for Christmas during a recent video call, she responded, "Grandma, I just want to come home."

It is my hope this holiday season that people truly recognize what's most important — family, friendships and creating memories.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas and good riddance to 2020.

Tammy Malgesini, the former Hermiston Herald community editor, enjoys spending time with her husband and two German shepherds, as well as entertaining herself with random musings and being crafty.

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No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

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