

Spanish golf courses help in COVID-19 fight

By Tia Duermeyer
Correspondent

Editor's note: Former Sisters resident and Nugget correspondent Tia Duermeyer shares a COVID-19 update from her home in the Costa del Sol area of Spain. In her community private and public sectors are working together to fight the spread of the coronavirus by cleaning and disinfecting local streets, parking lots, and community areas. Tia submits the very simple, grassroots idea with the hope that it might spread beyond Spain's borders.

Atalaya Golf & Country Club is the first golf facility in Spain to offer its machinery and a staff member to clean and disinfect the streets and parking areas nearby its two golf courses. The campaign is spearheaded by Atalaya's Director General Andrés Sánchez, who is encouraging other courses throughout Spain to join the project.

Working in partnership with the municipality of Benahavis, Atalaya's "clean and disinfect" initiative went into effect on Monday morning March 23. The streets of La Alquería Villas, Atalaya Hills and parts of the El Paraiso subdivision were sanitized.

Agromer Golf of Marbella, under the direction of David Fernández, himself an Atalaya member, is providing a second fumigator and operator to work in conjunction with Atalaya to carry out the necessary work.

Sterilizing products and diesel for the equipment are being provided by the Benahavis city council, allowing the service to be provided to all free of cost. This cooperative effort

exemplifies how public and private partnerships are able to collaborate to offer vital community services in times of need.

Sánchez has asked the Andalusian Golf Federation to encourage clubs throughout Andalucía to participate.

He said, "I spoke with the Andalusian Golf Federation to organize all golf clubs of Andalucía to help with their fumigation machinery, and the federation has already posted an email to all the courses of Andalucía to take the example of Atalaya Golf."

The concept is very simple. Golf facilities are being asked to provide their machinery and personnel free of charge to clean and disinfect the streets of areas located near their individual clubs.

"At the initiative of Atalaya, Benahavis will be the first municipality in which this campaign is launched, but surely there are many more municipalities that will be delighted to have this help," said Maria Rosa Giménez de la Riva, spokeswoman for the golf federation. "That is why, from the Royal Andalusian Golf Federation, we encourage all of you to contact your municipalities to transfer this proposal to them. The golf sector will be doing its bit to fight the virus."

With all golf courses closed during the current lockdown, which now has been extended until May 9, other golf clubs are quickly falling in line behind Atalaya. They are welcoming the opportunity to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 virus.

"We will try to make the whole initiative a great success," said Sánchez.

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regarding this pandemic and thereby risk infecting others, including him and his family?

Without any hint he recognizes the irony, he calls my criticism "left-wing talking points" and states that his version of "Conservative values...are values that all citizens should support regardless of political affiliation." He ends with "We are all in this together." That was exactly my point: Suggesting that we can ignore science and do whatever we want in this time of pandemic is dangerous talk.

Gretchen Honen chastises me for using the phrase "right-wing talking points." See above. She apparently missed most of my letter that specifically rebutted Mr. Donohue's points as contrary to current medical science and therefore dangerous to us and to others. I also highlighted his view that up to "a few million" preventable deaths may be a price we have to pay "for the needs of the many." I am not willing to pay that price. Are you?

Michael Wells



To the Editor:

Some of your readers may have read "The Eyes Of Darkness" by Dean Koontz (1981).

It was a very pricey required reading in a creative writing class I had at California Lutheran University. (My professor said it was an example of how a bad author could

eventually write something good).

Toward the end of the book, Koontz refers to a virus that originates in Wuhan, China, that had similar characteristics to COVID-19. His story explains how the virus infected millions of people around the world, causing many deaths, and went away as suddenly as it appeared in the world, only to mutate and resurface 10 years later with a vengeance.

I wouldn't go so far as to say Koontz was the "Nostradamus" of the 1980s, but historically, it is an amazing prediction.

On social media recently, I noticed an increase in people referring to this virus as not that serious, often referencing the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2002 that also originated in bats spread to 26 countries, and had a kill ratio of 10 percent. MERS, (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) 2012, may have originated in Saudi Arabia from bats, to camels, then humans. There were two cases in the US, with both surviving. MERS was said to have had a kill ratio of 34 percent.

While it is true patients have been surviving COVID-19 infection, I am concerned with people being too complacent, too early. I personally think our numbers are down because we have been cautious and practicing social distancing.

The newest, similar to, but, mutated virus that infected several children recently is alarming. I am very optimistic that science will be able to create a safe vaccine. It is not an easy "Dr. Kildare" or "Ben Casey" fix, and it's all better (yes, that dates me!)

Be safe.
Bill Anttila



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