

O P I N I O N

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer’s name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

Go to five-day schedule now

To the Editor:
The Sisters School District recently went to a four-day school week for all grades. This is a step in the right direction.
Currently Oregon State regulations and guidelines would allow for Sisters Schools

to operate five-days-a-week, in-person school. The Sisters School Administration has decided four days is enough. Fridays will be for “pushout, professional development, and common planning time for our staff.” Somehow in previous years, these

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday

Sunny
55/34



Thursday

Sunny
59/35



Friday

Sunny
65/37



Saturday

Sunny
73/39



Sunday

Sunny
79/42



Monday

Partly Cloudy
74/39



Tuesday

Partly Cloudy
68/37



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Planning for a post-vaccine Oregon

By Crista Munro
Executive Director, Sisters Folk Festival

It’s been nearly 13 months since the world as we knew it was sent into a tailspin from COVID-19. Literally overnight, businesses closed, school children were kept home, people were told to work remotely if they could, and commercial planes around the world were grounded for weeks.

Movies, concerts, and sporting matches became distant memories. The impacts to people’s lives and livelihoods since then have been immeasurable, including the staggering number of our friends and loved ones lost to the pandemic — more than a half million in the U.S. alone. The necessary safety precautions instituted have laid waste to our shared communal experiences over the past 13 months; collectively we’ve altered or postponed plans for weddings, memorials, holiday gatherings, vacations, graduations and proms.

We’ve made these sacrifices — to our income, to our social lives — to flatten the curve and keep our friends and neighbors out of the hospital and off of ventilators while the world’s scientists figured out treatment and prevention options to combat this insidious enemy. Oregon has done a remarkable job, consistently staying at the bottom of the pack in terms of per capita infection rates.

In November of 2020, beyond all reasonable expectations, a safe and effective vaccine was rolled out to the world, quickly followed by three others and even more in development. At the same time, the medical profession has learned more about how to better treat severe COVID cases, including drug therapies that significantly reduce COVID-19’s morbidity rates.

Astoundingly, just a little over one year past the upheaval, 20 percent of Oregonians are now fully vaccinated, with another 33 percent having received at least one dose, and the state is poised to open up vaccine availability to all people age 16 and over on April 19, months ahead of schedule. This fact is giving great hope to many that we may be able to return to a semblance of “normal” life in the coming months — a life that will hopefully include rodeos, outdoor quilt shows and music festivals.

But a key part of those things returning includes adequate ramp-up time to plan. Volunteers need to be recruited and trained. Contractors and

suppliers need to be lined up, licenses and permits acquired. Performers need to be booked months ahead to coordinate complicated tours and travel.

Recognizing this fact, other states are beginning to look beyond infection rates toward a “post-vaccinated world” and defining the metrics that will be used to assess risk once we get there. As an example, California recently announced plans to fully lift all capacity limits and social-distancing restrictions for outdoor and indoor events on June 15, subject to continued mask-wearing, sufficient vaccine supply, and low hospitalization rates. This is a significant shift away from only monitoring new infections (which could be mild in nature) and instead looking toward severe illness rates as a defining metric.

It’s too soon to tell whether full reopening will indeed happen in California under these guidelines, but it must certainly be a relief to event planners and venue owners around the state who now see a path toward getting back to business.

On March 31, a coalition of event planners and venue owners from around the state of Oregon met with a representative from Governor Brown’s office and a physician from the Oregon Health Authority with the hopes of hearing that some post-pandemic planning and new guidelines were in the works. No such message has been delivered yet, and we are still awaiting guidance as our neighboring states move ahead with booking acts and planning events for the summer and fall.

What a disappointing and potentially economically devastating summer it would be if the population is largely vaccinated, relegating COVID-19 to a disease akin to the seasonal flu, but Sisters Rodeo, Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show, Rhythm & Brews Festival, Sisters Folk Festival, and Harvest Faire don’t happen because organizers weren’t given guidance from the state government in time to plan in good faith. Those events are important to Sisters’ economic ecosystem, yes, but beyond that they are embedded in our city’s cultural identity. They bring our community together in celebration, and we could all use a celebration or two after the year we’ve had.

It’s time for the Governor’s office and OHA to start issuing planning guidance for a post-vaccinated, post-COVID Oregon. It’s time to offer a glimmer of hope to our beleaguered citizenry for more normal times to come.

Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Signs of spring...



Tom Nechville and Linda Leavitt added some bluegrass licks to a warm and sunny Sisters afternoon last week.

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK