

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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.

In defense of McDonald's

To the Editor:

I am writing this in defense of McDonald's [regarding false reports of firefighters being turned away].

The people that work there are always courteous and treat us with respect, and believe me, we eat there more than we should. The help is always primarily young people that are trying to do what they are told to do. Some of them are from foreign countries and may not speak English as their first language.

When the firefighters come in the morning, they are not charged for their breakfast. I know the manager would not treat them poorly. I'm sure there was some confusion by the young people as to what to do that close to closing with such a large group coming in. Granted, it was not the best response, but I'm sure they did not mean it to be disrespectful.

I know the manager has received a lot of calls with people swearing at them. That doesn't need to happen, and shows no maturity

See **LETTERS** on page 24

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday

August 4 • Sunny

95/59



Thursday

August 5 • Mostly Sunny

82/54



Friday

August 6 • Partly Cloudy

74/51



Saturday

August 7 • Mostly Sunny

78/49



Sunday

August 8 • Sunny

80/49



Monday

August 9 • Mostly Sunny

81/52



Tuesday

August 10 • Mostly Sunny

83/56



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**Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Nugget Newspaper,
P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759.**

Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon.

Editor in Chief: Jim Cornelius

Production Manager: Leith Easterling

Creative Director: Jess Draper

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Classifieds & Circulation: Angela Lund

Proofreader: Kit Tosello

Owner: J. Louis Mullen

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area. Third-class postage: one year, \$55; six months (or less), \$30. First-class postage: one year, \$95; six months, \$65.

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Making music...



Tony Furtado Trio played Sisters Art Works in the Sisters Folk Festival's Summer of Festival Concert Series last Friday. The series wraps up later this month.

PHOTO BY BILL BARTLETT

Vaccinated and masking up

By **Cliff Brush**
Guest Columnist

COVID-19 is going Delta and making a comeback. Here is how I'm responding and trying to help get it under control. Please consider your own response.

I accept the virus mutates and creates variants. Bomb-throwing accusations that a doctor or researcher lied because they said one thing earlier, and something else later, don't help. In my teens, doctors operated on my right leg, already amputated below the knee, to straighten the femur. After seven months in a modified body cast, I could not walk. It was too painful. The knee cartilage had disintegrated. The doctors didn't lie when they said the operation would help me. They were right, at the time. But my body changed. We looked at the X-rays together. It was clear. I needed another amputation. It turned out for the better.

This virus will change. We deserve straight, factual talk about Delta and other variants as they emerge. Which they will. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) needs to get its communications act together. The CDC's message just went from masks off to masks back on. The data came later. That's backward. The explanation should come before the action. The CDC's latest message, a combination of higher vaccination rates and masking would flatten the infection curve in a few weeks.

I read and try to understand the supporting data. But that's not my job. The CDC needs to explain its findings and advice in ways the public can understand. Politicians aren't doing any better — starting at the top. The former and current president sent misleading or confusing messages. COVID-19 will not magically disappear. The pandemic did not end July 4. Both took a vaccine. They should appear together, on camera, and encourage eligible citizens to get the job. Oregon has its own unsolved leadership issues.

Meanwhile, there's Delta to deal with. Information I rely on tells me the Delta variant is many times more infectious. One of my sources is Dr. Irwin Redlener, physician, pediatrician, and founding director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute. He's careful

to say what he knows today, not predict what he'll know tomorrow. In an interview for the Daily Beast, Dr. Redlener reports someone infected with the original COVID-19 strain could infect another two or three people. Someone with the Delta variant could infect five to nine. On July 27, Oregon recorded 1,032 new COVID cases, roughly a recent week's worth. Hospitalizations increased 25 percent overnight. Forecasts by Oregon Health & Science University and the University of Washington show Oregon's winter infection and hospitalization levels could match last year's.

Higher vaccination rates will help prevent that. Rates in this area are mixed. On July 30, the Daily Situation Update reported these percentages of fully vaccinated citizens in local counties: Crook, 51; Deschutes, 72; Jefferson, 56. The tri-county area is highly mobile. So is the virus.

I use two defenses: the jab, and the mask. Vaccines work. Reliable sources report 97 percent of newly hospitalized patients are unvaccinated. That's the point. To avoid serious illness and hospitalization. Vaccination does not guarantee I won't be infected. No vaccine is 100 percent effective. Masking is my second line of defense against an unlikely, but possible, breakthrough case. There's video evidence for masking. For example, on YouTube at bit.ly/YouTubeMasks1 (includes brief reference to condoms); or at bit.ly/YouTubeMasks2 (includes brief appearance of adult beverage). You can skip the ads. Consider this: Should a surgical team feel free to leave their masks off? Why? Then should we feel free to leave ours off during a COVID breakout? I don't want anyone to become a patient like the ones described by Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. Brytney Cobia.

"I'm admitting young, healthy people to the hospital with very serious COVID infections. One of the last things they do before they're intubated is beg me for the vaccine. I hold their hand and tell them that I'm sorry, but it's too late."

I'm doing what I can to keep COVID inside the vaccine and masking control line until we contain it. Please do the same. Just asking. One viral wildfire was enough.

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