

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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.

Camp Sherman in Sisters Country

To the Editor:

Re: Bill Bartlett's "News Nuggets"

If the definition of "Sisters Country" is indeed "up for debate" I would encourage you to include the Camp Sherman community and not limit it to the Sisters School District boundaries.

Our community, while small, is so important to our region both culturally and ecologically. We have a public K-8 school (Black Butte School)

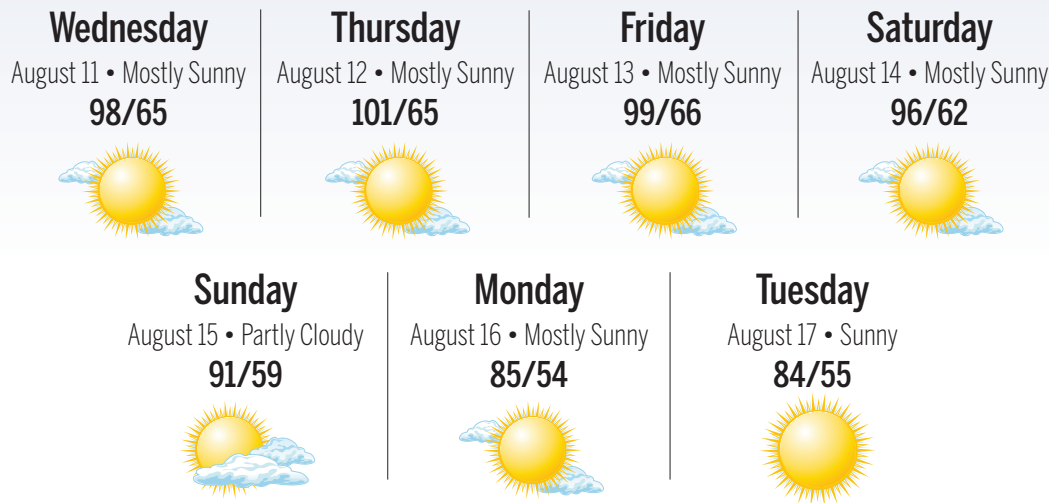
that is often overlooked in the reporting *The Nugget* does on "Sisters Country" schools.

Camp Sherman kids eventually attend Sisters High School. All Camp Sherman residents frequent Sisters business for services. Many of us volunteer for organizations based in Sisters. Our beautiful basin attracts both tourists (which also use Sisters services) and Sisters locals alike. Please include us in your definition of "Sisters Country." Our residents

See LETTERS on page 22

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon



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Helping veterans...



Thanks to the generous participation of the Sisters community in *The Nugget's* Stars & Stripes special feature, *The Nugget* was able to present over \$400 to Central Oregon Veterans Ranch last month. The donation will further their mission to help veterans find a sense of belonging and purpose through meaningful interactions, team projects, education, growing plants, and caring for animals on the ranch.

The Delta blues

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Last month, my wife and daughter and I hit the road to Montana to join some 25,000-30,000 other people at the Under the Big Sky Music & Art Fest, held on a ranch just outside Whitefish. Three days of the best in "Americana" or "alt-country" music on two stages, on grounds packed with people. None of us are much for crowds in general — but there is something primal and exhilarating about being part of an exuberant tribal gathering, joyously caught up in music. And we felt perfectly comfortable doing it — though Marilyn did sometimes mask up when we had to move through dense masses of people.

Now, let me be clear: We didn't get vaccinated just so we could pretend that the music never stopped. But feeling comfortable in a big, music-loving crowd is, for us, one of the most significant perks of "vaccine privilege." Getting the jab allowed us to feel comfortable getting back to a profoundly valued aspect of our lives that the pandemic had pretty much shut down.

It looked like we were well on our way "back to living life before there isn't any life to get back to living," as Dwight Yoakam has it. The surge of the Delta variant was not welcome news. You might say we've got the Delta blues. Bad news on the COVID-19 front keeps falling down like hail. Makes you feel like you've got a hellhound on your trail. (Hat tip to Robert Johnson.)*

Thing is, though, this was bound to happen. Coronaviruses mutate — a lot; that's why there are so many strains of the common cold.

What the Delta blues has taught us — or reinforced, because we really should have known this from the early days of the pandemic — is that COVID-19 is here to stay, no matter how much hot foot powder we sprinkle around our door. Those who are awaiting a time when we can achieve zero risk with COVID-19 are as deluded as those who insisted that the whole thing was a hoax or

that it would somehow magically disappear. We have to learn to live with this hellhound lurking in the treeline of our world, sometimes lunging out to snap, snarl, and bite.

The development of vaccines against COVID-19 is a triumph of science and American can-do ingenuity. You can fault the Trump Administration for missteps and foolish messaging on the coronavirus pandemic — but give them credit for Operation Warp Speed. The partnership between institutions Americans are often (rightly) leery of — the federal government and Big Pharma — in this case provided a means of mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and enabling us to get back to "living life."

They're not a silver bullet that can slay the hellhound, but they go a long way toward mitigating its bite. The vaccines remain an effective means of avoiding getting sick, or avoiding serious effects if you do get bitten.

Way I look at it, getting the jab is like putting on a seatbelt when I hit the highway, or carrying a pistol on the regular — a reasonable and responsible measure to protect myself and my loved ones from the vicissitudes of life.

At this point, mask mandates seem counterproductive. Nobody should be faulted or shamed for wearing one if they choose to. They are still federally mandated at healthcare facilities, and we should respect that requirement, especially with the stresses and strains our local healthcare system is under.

But pushing masks on everyone again — including the vaccinated — sends mixed signals (at best) about the efficacy of the vaccines and needlessly stokes social tensions (see related stories pages 1 and 3). Those social tensions are, in their way, as dangerous to our future as COVID-19.

Like poor, old Bob sang, you "can tell the wind is risin', the leaves tremblin' on the tree."

**Hellhound On My Trail*, Robert Johnson, *The Complete Recordings*

Contact information for the elected officials that represent Sisters residents can be found on page 10: **"Contact your representatives..."**