

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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.

Patriot’s Pen

To the Editor:

It was so heartening to read Jonathan M. Burks’ Patriot’s Pen Award essay in *The Nugget*. His essay had tremendous insight on what it means to be a true American patriot.

Any serious student of U.S. history will tell you that we became the United States of America against all odds. And I can see our Founding Fathers’ spirit of independence, fortitude, and responsibility is still alive in our young people! Many people could learn a lot from his essay.

As a first-generation American and vet, I have always loved the rich history of our

amazing and unique country. Both my parents were orphaned due to the ravages of World War II in Europe. They immigrated to this country in the early 1960s, and always had a deep love and appreciation for our unique form of democracy. As Jonathan so eloquently articulated, “No matter where you come from, no matter who you are, you decide what you want to do, and who you want to be.”

This is exactly what my parents taught me and my siblings — you are the creators of your life. It’s a message of independence, fortitude, and responsibility. Risking their lives, our

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Wednesday Nov. 17 • Partly Cloudy 45/33 	Thursday Nov. 18 • PM Showers 52/40 	Friday Nov. 19 • AM Light Rain 47/32 	Saturday Nov. 20 • Partly Cloudy 52/33 
Sunday Nov. 21 • Partly Cloudy 54/37 	Monday Nov. 22 • Partly Cloudy 54/36 	Tuesday Nov. 23 • Partly Cloudy 46/34 	

The Nugget Newspaper, LLC

Website: www.nuggetnews.com

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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.

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area.
Third-class postage: one year, \$70; six months (or less), \$45. First-class postage: one year, \$110; six months, \$80.

Editor in Chief: Jim Cornelius

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Carol Statton captured a richly colored sunrise last Friday morning.

The ignored pandemic

By **Ryan Moffat**
Guest Columnist

We’ve been in what seems like an indefinite holding pattern with COVID-19 since March 2020. Clearly the first few months were a time to walk circumspectly, do good research, check the data, and make wise choices. What we learned is that COVID is real, some folks have a real adverse reaction, and for those who have suffered greatly through the virus, I grieve with you for what you have lost. What has been abundantly clear from the health officials is that they have seen COVID-19 as a clear and present danger in which we should take every effort to mitigate spread. But is it possible that the very measures taken to limit the pandemic have sadly and ironically created a greater threat?

What has become clear is the solutions offered by many health agencies and officials are far too narrow of an approach in responding to COVID. Our health officials and elites have limited the definition of health to simply “keep the body breathing,” as if that’s the only factor in how we navigate and govern through this situation. It’s as if our health officials and elected leaders see humans as merely material bodies to try and keep alive at all costs.

Meanwhile, drastic steps have been taken to shut down gatherings, to avoid people at all costs (even at holidays), and to hide in your house because, after all, “you don’t want to get or spread COVID.”

While this approach might keep the virus at an arm’s length, what it fails to take into consideration are the many other dimensions of human health and flourishing; things like emotional health, relational health, mental health, and spiritual health. These dimensions of “health” were all but dismissed overnight. Instead of a holistic approach to health and wellness, we distilled a narrow solution that lacked a comprehensive view of what it means to be human. And what this approach has revealed is that the medical elites have a definition of healing and of “safe” that happens to show their philosophical, theological, and psychological cards on what it means to be human.

So what toll has this approach taken on our lives? What price has been paid as we’ve hidden in our homes and seen people as “germs to avoid” instead of “image bearers of God to be loved”? Well, in my work as a pastor I have watched lives begin to crumble, families begin to unravel, young people begin to have a sort of “chronic anxiety,” and families, churches, and

community groups split with anger and outrage around all things COVID and masks.

While the virus has done great damage, the damage done by the “Response of COVID” is almost incalculable. We’ve seen the isolation do equal, if not greater, damage through the last 20 months.

Let’s just optimistically say that these isolation efforts have mitigated the virus, even mitigated it effectively. Have those gains outweighed the costs?

So what have the costs been in the last 20 months? What have you seen in your circles? I can tell you what I’ve seen in my church and community: Divorce is surging, depression is spiking, mental and emotional health are plummeting, and our kids are now being raised in a world where they see other people as “threats” or “germs to be avoided” instead of a source of healing to be engaged. Even a few weeks ago, while walking in the middle of the woods, I came upon a woman walking by herself, masked up (I admit that I fail to understand the science behind a solo masking situation). As we passed on the trail, I warmly smiled and greeted her. Simultaneously, she almost dove out of the way in apparent fear. I would contend this is neither human flourishing nor anything close to the embodiment of love.

While my proposed solution is not to be reckless related to all things COVID, I do think we’re moving into a new and more diabolical pandemic with a far less optimistic survival rate. This new “invisible enemy” of isolation, hopelessness, broken lives and marriages, chronic anxiety, division, anger, and outrage comes to a people with an exhausted and broken psyche.

So this holiday season don’t wait for help. Don’t wait to reach out — reach out to Jesus, reach out to Church, reach out to family and friends. To quote Genesis 1, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Finally, let me exhort our whole community to what Jesus called the second greatest commandment; to love your neighbor well this holiday season. The corporate American psyche has perhaps never been more fragile than in the moment we live right now. This might be the year to stop watching the feel-good Hallmark movies and begin embodying that kind of love and service in real-life, meaningful, and gracious ways.

Lastly, Vast Church is engaged and prayerful about ways to serve our community during this difficult time. If you are amongst those in anguish, torment, sadness, and isolation, please reach out (hello@vastchurch.com).

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