



## Of a certain AGE

Sue Stafford  
Columnist

### COVID fatigue takes a toll

Over the past two years, during this time of forced seclusion due to the pandemic, I have felt deep in my soul the need for face-to-face human connection: smiles, handshakes, hugs and kisses, and meaningful conversation. This has been an empty, unsatisfying time, and my psyche has reacted in surprising ways. If I had to describe my feelings, I would say I have been languishing.

I promised the editor I would write an "Of a Certain Age" column about COVID fatigue, but have been putting it off all week, mainly due to COVID fatigue, which has zapped my creativity and energy!

When COVID first hit and everything went into lockdown, I remember hearing warnings about impending depression and questioning why that might happen — it certainly wouldn't bother me. Two-plus years into this shrunken world phenomenon, I can attest that depression related to the restrictions and length of the pandemic is very real, indeed. I have felt disconnected from my purpose, asking myself, "Why am I here?"

I have gained weight due to eating to break up boredom. In the depth of my depression, I looked in the mirror and saw dark

circles and a draining tiredness that was bone deep. I've bothered to put on makeup maybe five times over the past two years. My everyday shower became a thing of the past. Jeans and sweatshirts have been my uniform. For quite a while I could see only traces of my former self. Fortunately, the beautiful sunshine and warm temperatures of the last couple of weeks have definitely lifted my spirits.

I have never minded being by myself because I could choose when to be alone and when to engage. I realize as an American my freedom to choose was natural, taken for granted, a given for the past 75 years. With the pandemic restrictions, nothing seems certain. Something as simple as making plans to go out for lunch can go awry when I arrive to find the restaurant closed for COVID-19 exposure, lack of staff, or any number of reasons. Long wait times on the phone, long lines at Bi-Mart, months-long waits for service repairs or home goods deliveries. Supply chain delays. Lack of sufficient personnel. Yes Rodeo, no Rodeo, yes Folk Festival, no Folk Festival. Plans for trips or special events having to be cancelled at the last minute. Certainty and reliability have been out the window.

All the way through this artificial environment, I have played by the rules. I'm two-times vaxxed, one-time boosted. I have masks stowed everywhere and

don't go into public indoor places without wearing one covering my mouth and nose.

Reduced normal in-person interaction with friends and family, and even strangers, has shrunk my world to watching television, reading, walking the dog, meeting by Zoom, and writing, which just doesn't compare to in-person contact. The impetus to do anything more just hasn't been there.

With people wearing masks (and I thank you for it), what I miss is seeing people's individual expressions and smiles. The community seems populated by featureless humanoids who talk in a muffled voice. I so look forward to free and open expressions and experiencing whole humans.

So many have lost so much and experienced great heartache. I am fortunate. I haven't lost a loved one to COVID-19, and I have managed to stay well (knock on wood). But I do think our world has been changed so that there is no "going back," rather just going forward to a "new present." I hope for Sisters that we resurface as that caring community with the can-do attitude, respecting one another and our beautiful natural surroundings that hold us all.

I would love to hear from anyone who would like to share what COVID seclusion has been like for you. You can leave me a comment under this column on [www.NuggetNews.com](http://www.NuggetNews.com).

## Bird box project engages local youth

By Robin Galloway  
Correspondent

Are you looking for a free educational outdoor experience to engage a child in appreciating birds and developing observational skills? Families are invited to participate in a Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area (FANs) project to monitor nest boxes for native cavity-nesting birds.

The youth will select a few nest boxes already placed on trees in the Terrebonne area and agree to visit them during the nesting season. The youth will learn about the birds that occupy them and observe such things as: how many eggs are laid, how

many chicks hatch, and how many chicks fledge. If the baby birds are banded by a wildlife specialist the youth can be present to help with that procedure also, including holding the chicks. Once the nest is empty it needs to be cleaned out. Basic record keeping is part of the project.

There is no charge, and whole families may be involved with each child "adopting" a box. The project coordinator is Robin Galloway, a FANs member who was formerly a 4-H educator. COVID safety rules will be applied to all aspects of the project. For information or to sign up contact Robin by emailing [rgalgarden@gmail.com](mailto:rgalgarden@gmail.com) by March 15.



PHOTO PROVIDED

A bird box program offers youth engagement opportunity.



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