

Other View

The pandemic has only been mostly bad

I thought trying to write about silver linings during the COVID-19 pandemic might be akin to searching for gold in McKay Creek, but if you turn over a couple rocks you can find them.

For the past several summers our family has been extremely involved in baseball, and when I say involved, I mean down to picking the stitching on the uniforms involved. From April to August, our weekends

were filled with travel to exciting Northwest destinations like Moses Lake, Medford and the Palm Springs of Washington, Yakima. The simultaneously good and bad thing about my son's baseball team is they are pretty darn good.

In Little League, we could plan on going to the state tournament each year. For his Black Sox travel ball team, it was very likely we would be playing in the championship game on Sunday nights, which meant a long trip home in the dark.

This year has been a little different. We haven't traveled anywhere to play baseball. When Umatilla County went to Phase 2, we were able to have some Babe Ruth league games, but the final week was canceled when Hermiston sent us back to baseline.

I won't get into the decision to move us to baseline; while I'm a board-certified Facebook amateur epidemiologist, I just don't have access to all the data they have at the state level.

No traveling for baseball this summer meant our family could go on a real vacation, or as much as the virus allows. Thankfully, we have an RV, so my wife and I fired up the Google machine and planned the Great America Road Trip to Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.

We took a week and explored both parks with our bathroom and kitchen tucked safely in behind us. Yellowstone was the most unique landscape I've ever witnessed. Around every corner was something amazing to see. Our first hike was to the Grand Prismatic Springs Overlook. Armed with bear spray, water, trail mix and several cameras, we made it to the top. I had seen many photos, but to see the springs in person was a real treat. It was probably my favorite area of the park.

Grand Teton was even more beautiful than Yellowstone. While I always thought mountain ranges were formed when God was rolling our planet into a ball and the mud kind of oozed up between his fingers, it turns out that may not have been how the Tetons were actually formed. Over millions of years, tectonic plates, the North American and Pacific, crashed into each other, pushing the Pacific Plate over the North American Plate, and wow, the Pacific Plate practically jumped straight up out of the valley. The Tetons are remarkably steep and gorgeous. I would dare say they're among the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world.

However, it was a bear that made Grand Teton for me. Completely by accident, we were able to witness Bear 399 walk out of the trees. She is the most famous member of Ursus horribilis (which sounds way more cool than grizzly bear). It wasn't only her. We were also able to see her four, yes four, cubs. This bear is 22 years old and has raised 16 cubs. We were very lucky to see her, as our neighbors at the RV park told us they were not so lucky. It seems she lived up to that horribilis name and killed an elk just before they arrived at her little stretch of the Snake River. The rangers said she would be napping for the next couple days after dining on her elk.

Pro tip — a pandemic dramatically reduces the crowds at our national parks. When the shroud of "baseline" lifts, do all you can to experience the beauty our forefathers sought to protect for future generations, safely. Wear your mask, wash your hands and stay 6 feet from people (and a few more than that from bears). Our cinematography skills don't do either park justice, but we posted a few videos showcasing the parks on our Neistadt Family YouTube channel, and we have a few more planned.

As I see it, the pandemic has only been mostly bad. I didn't even get to K-dramas, home improvement projects or fishing. Needless to say, our little family is closer than ever.

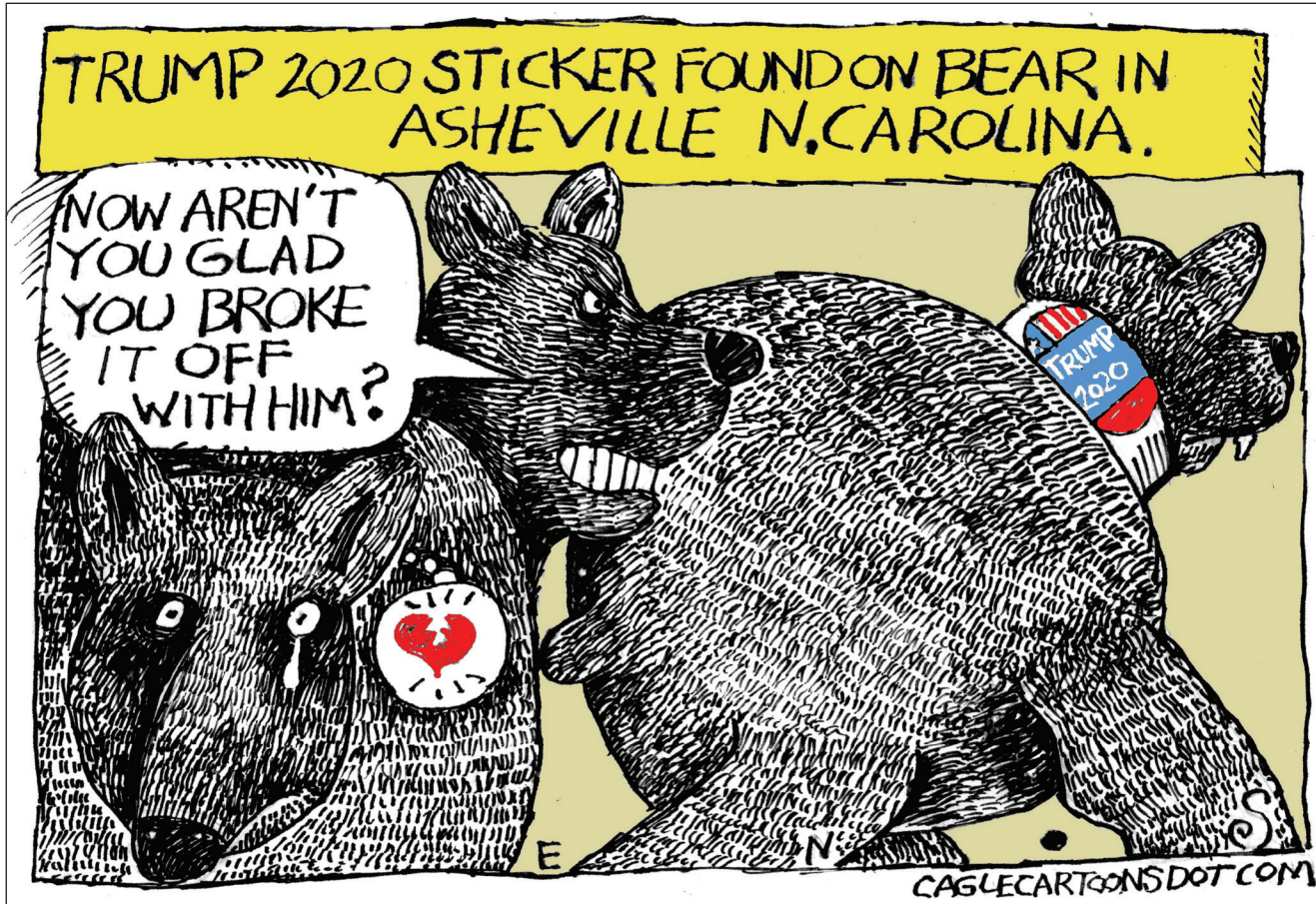
About the Author

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COREY NEISTADT
PENDLETON CPA

to picking the stitching on the uniforms involved. From April to August, our weekends



Letters

Grateful for Imbler community's genuine kindness

Last weekend my family was traveling from Baker City to Enterprise for a junior rodeo that our girls were entered in. Just as we were rounding the last corner in Imbler, my husband, who was pulling an overhead camper along with our horse trailer, lost the entire back wheel off the truck. The girls and I were following behind in a separate vehicle and a boat — our own personal parade.

It was almost 8 p.m. and we were at a loss as to what to do. We were not there for more than a couple minutes before the first person stopped to offer help. Then they just kept coming. One after the other, what felt like the whole community of Imbler came by to offer their help. It was such a heart-warming experience to see that much genuine kindness.

J.D. Cant loaded up our horses and took them to his house. Shortly after Bryan and Mary Ellen Russell came and loaded up our camper onto their truck and moved it out to the Cant house as well. By the end of the night, our whole parade was at the Cant house, staying the night.

We were certain the girls were

Write to us

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going to miss at least the first day of the rodeo, until J.D. reached out to family members Chase and Kristi Williamson, who were also going to the rodeo. Chase drove from Elgin the next morning to pick up our horses and take them to Enterprise for us.

The whole Dalton family wants to shout out our gratitude to the town of Imbler, and especially to the Cants, Williamsons and Russells. You are good people, and we hope to pay your kindness forward.

Doug, Jessica, Taylor and Ashlyn Dalton
Baker City

Community's efforts can make in-school education possible

I appreciate The Observer's thorough article about what it will take to get schools open and our children back into classrooms. If there is any issue that should get a community to come together to achieve a goal, get-

ting our kids back into school ought to be that goal.

I applaud administrators and teachers for the valiant work they are doing to try to provide an education through virtual learning. By any assessment, it is not working very well in terms of student engagement or achievement, even for kids in supportive families with good internet access. I'm not suggesting we give that up if it is all we have. But I am pessimistic about throwing more effort at trying to make virtual learning effective, especially for our youngest students.

Our effort as a community needs to be in doing whatever it takes to keep our COVID-19 rates low enough that schools can open their doors. Members of this community: It is up to you. Wear masks, keep your distance from others, wash your hands! Our kids need to be in school, and it is up to us to make it possible.

Carol Lauritzen
La Grande

Contact your public officials

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State Rep. Greg Barreto (58th District/Cove): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-384, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1458. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/barreto. Email: rep.gregbarreto@oregonlegislature.gov.

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City of Cove: Mayor Del Little, 503-508-6727, 504 Alder St., P.O. Box 8, Cove, OR 97824; City Recorder Donna Lewis, 541 568-4566.

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