

OUR VIEW

# Virus taking toll on health care workers

The picture local health care professional Danita Thamert painted in a recent front-page story was a bleak one, yet it was a necessary view, and we hope it sheds more than a little light on the struggle facing the men and women we entrust to care for our community.

It isn't an easy task. As Thamert related in the story, health care workers are burned out and often — inexplicably — find themselves in the front line of the war between anti-vaxxers and those who oppose mask mandates.

While many of us can debate the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to address it in a philosophical manner, our health care providers don't have that luxury. They're faced with one crisis after another, nearly every day.

The descriptions from Thamert of working with patients who seem to get better, only to die from the virus, were especially disheartening.

The fact is the virus is killing people and it is putting many in the hospital. It isn't a philosophical concept to our health care professionals. It is a deadly, serious infection that is still here.

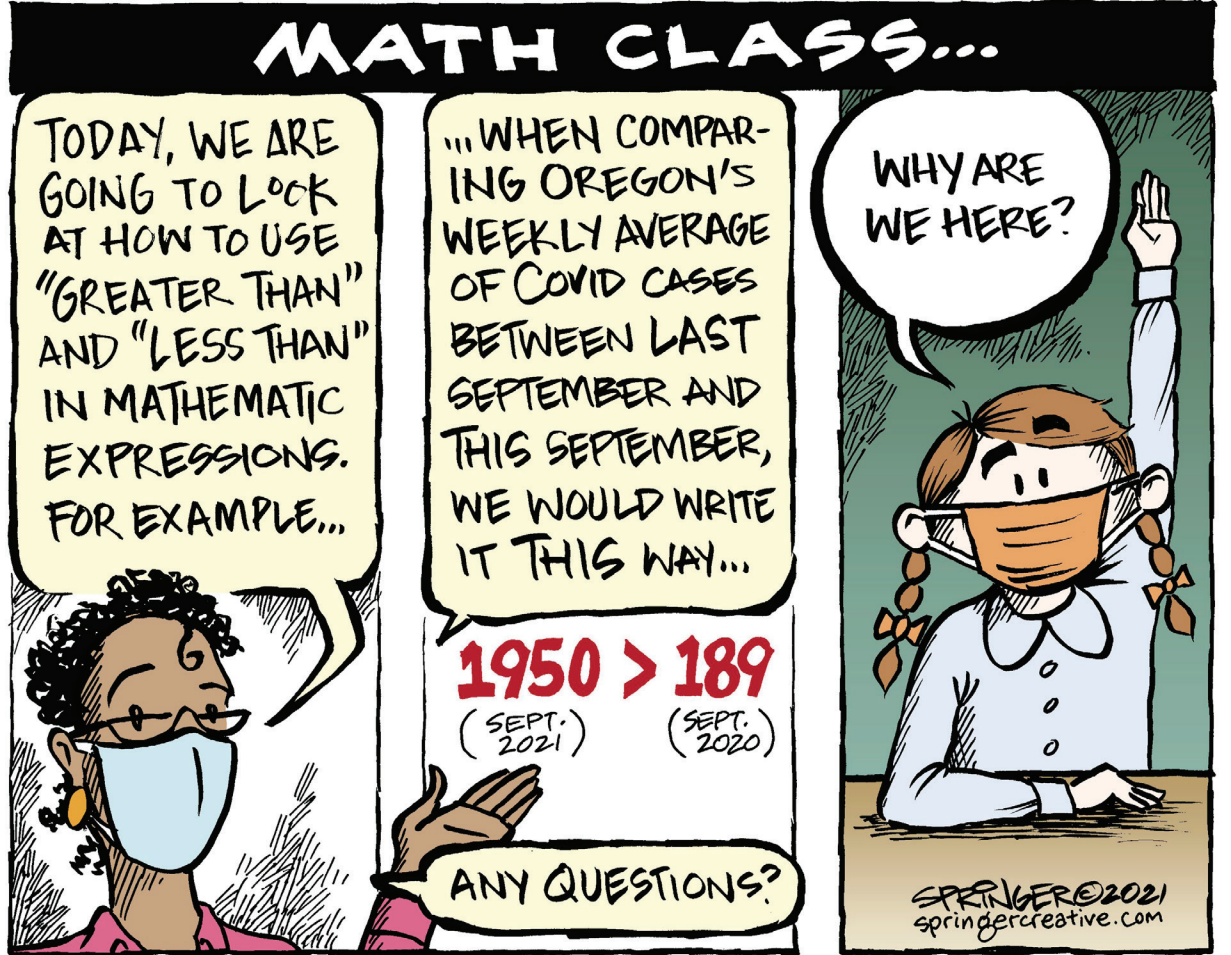
We often take our health care workers for granted. We understand on one level that they are trained and prepared to address our medical emergencies and to help us get better. But we really don't know what they go through. We don't — and really can't — understand the toll the COVID-19 virus takes. Many are worn out, suffer from PTSD and are probably discouraged.

We can't allow those who we depend on the most to fall off the map in terms of recognition. Their job is impossibly difficult, especially now as they struggle to meet the needs of a community that is awash in the virus.

Good debate about political issues is good for democracy. There has been plenty of debate over the virus and the mandates handed down by Oregon Gov. Kate Brown. There have been protests too. Those are all actions allowed under our form of government.

Yet, we cannot forget those of us in our community who are on the front lines of this battle. They don't deserve to be attacked for wearing a mask or to be dismissed. Their job is far more important.

So, if you know a health care worker, tell them that you appreciate what they are doing. You might not agree with the politics of COVID-19, but our health care workers are not part of that equation.



LETTERS

Nothing good so far from Biden administration

After nine months of Biden and his administration, it's difficult to find an accomplishment that benefits our country.

He has further helped split our country along political and racial lines, caused unchecked inflation leading to higher fuel prices, thus higher prices for everything moved by trucks, most everything from food and clothes.

Our continued open borders allows hundreds of thousands of unknown migrants from many countries to come to the United States during a time of COVID restrictions for U.S. citizens, perhaps bringing other health problems as well. Many are not apprehended, thus more drugs are entering, causing unknown deaths as a result.

These illegals are being sent all over our country with no vetting to help protect citizens from harm. We do know as a result that the cartels are making millions of dollars on human suffering. There is a huge amount of violence in large cities and small as well, leaving families wondering where to turn for protection.

More recently we have the sad Biden fiasco of leaving Afghanistan without a plan or purpose. He has left behind unknown numbers of American citizens (as well as 13 U.S. soldiers dead) at the mercy of a violent Taliban regime who are now well armed thanks to Biden's lack of planning and purpose.

We have always been the leader of the free world, but now even our allies have found us to be untrustworthy. They are having second thoughts as to whether they can rely on the U.S.

Biden has managed in a short time to let the American people down and also the rest of the free world.

Ed Ater  
La Grande

Community safety should trump individual rights

Our county commissioners and sheriff all reject efforts to push vaccination rates up by requiring proof of vaccination for employment and event attendance. They claim that's in our community's best interest. Yet the unvaccinated are responsible for the resurgence of COVID cases resulting in spiraling infection rates, sickness and deaths.

Economic and social costs of this insanity is evidenced by the can-

cellation or diminution of beloved annual events. Many vaccinated people are choosing not to shop, eat out or return to work because of lax COVID requirements and enforcement. Hospital beds are in short supply for procedures unrelated to COVID, and unvaccinated staff make the hospital itself a dangerous environment.

What's this about? Individual freedom? Politics? Selfishness? Whatever the reason, our leaders are prioritizing individual rights over community safety.

Meanwhile many individual rights folks opposing vaccination and mask mandates also oppose abortion rights. Refusing to vaccinate, denying an abortion.

Mary McCracken  
Island City

Let us support one another's medical freedom of choice

I am a concerned health care worker. I am alarmed by the recent vaccine mandate to all health care workers in Oregon by Gov. Kate Brown. This mandate is unconstitutional.

We live in America, the greatest country in the world where we still have God-given freedoms. We should have the freedom to choose whether or not we receive a vaccine. I am a free-thinking American, I can look at all the science, consider my options and conduct my own risk benefit analysis and make an informed decision.

We now know that vaccinated individuals can be infected, spread and die from COVID-19 just like the unvaccinated. Their risk of severe infection may be less but that doesn't exempt them from playing vaccine Russian roulette of possible side effects of clots, neurological problems, myocarditis and even death.

How is it legal to force a treatment on someone that could cause their demise? Vaccine companies don't care. They make millions and bear no liability for injuries or death. According to the CDC, I have a 99.97% survival rate in my age group and that's without the vaccine.

I believe in freedom, and as a free American I should be able to make my own decision, one that was not forced upon me by fear and coercion of elected leaders. Freedom is what America was founded on and is what so many people died for. Let's honor their sacrifice and keep America free.

Hospitals across the country are experiencing staff shortages and

fatigue. Is this really the time to put a vaccine mandate on all health care workers that could potentially result in worse shortages and a deterioration in patient care and safety? I encourage the citizens of Union County to stand behind their local health care workers, who work tirelessly every day to care for the sick in our community.

I have seen the pandemic bring the worst out in many of us. People are angry and people are fearful. Let's not find one more reason to divide us. Let us instead love one another and support one another's medical freedom of choice.

Lilly Roe  
Island City

EOU and new field house a bright spot

What an exciting time for Eastern Oregon University, for students and our local communities. I enjoyed reading the recent article about the progress of the new fieldhouse being built on campus.

On behalf of the board of trustees, we have been a part of the project as it developed over the past several years. We are excited to see this new building, the first in many years, expand capacity and access for all our students, including our Health and Human Performance department and the EOU Outdoor Adventure Program as well as Mountaineer athletics.

We were very appreciative that the funding for the fieldhouse comes from state lottery bonds, adding to the state's investment in EOU and the region. In a time when many universities are struggling in various ways, it is so uplifting to be a part of an institution that is able to renovate current academic buildings like Loso Hall and build much-needed new facilities, while not raising tuition for on-campus undergraduate students.

The possibilities and potential for this new structure are endless for our university while also reaching well beyond the geographic region of Eastern Oregon. The fieldhouse will serve as a recruiting tool, an opportunity for hosting myriad sporting events, and allow for space that will provide outreach programs to touch many different lives.

EOU is a bright spot during these challenging times.

Cheryl Martin  
North Powder  
EOU alumnus  
EOU Board of Trustees  
vice chair

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