



Publisher's Notebook

July 2020 Matt Winters

Covid downtime offers perfect opportunity for a re-set

Event after event has been canceled this year to slow the spread of coronavirus, leaving our streets less congested by traffic, more weekends and evenings free, and many bank accounts less congested with money. Those who have become jaded about our coast's festivals, plays, concerts and other events are getting a year to find what life — and the economy — are like without them.

It is safe to say some events — I won't opine about which — really are little but thinly veiled tourist traps few would miss. A few others that once had a solid foundation have perhaps sauntered along to the point when it's time to assess whether there genuinely is enough volunteer and participant interest to justify continuing on. Others still have such strong roots in local heritage, culture or contemporary life as to remain unquestionably valuable. The best — FisherPoets Gathering is an example in Clatsop County, Rod Run in Pacific County — exude legitimacy and generate enthusiasm.

Ongoing buy-in on the part of volunteers is at least as important as interest from the general public in sustaining annual and seasonal

events. Gradual erosion of interest in clubs, fraternal organizations, recreational sports leagues and other organized activities outside the home has been a subject of much sadness and discussion. Explanations range from loss of social cohesion as Baby Boomers pass from the scene, to stricter enforcement of impaired-driving laws, to the explosion in televised entertainment and electronic games. A person really has to feel some personal passion — or expectation of fun, money or companionship — to devote days to helping plan and carry out a typical coastal festival.

While attendees only have to invest hours, not days, to attending events, they too have many more entertainment options and demands on their time and money. We must consistently try to view local events through objective eyes: Would we ourselves be thrilled to attend? If not, we should be doing something else. This coronavirus summer — and the months beyond — will test the ability of businesses to survive. In that sense, there may be a renewed motivation to plan events that offer added value to potential visitors planning family vacations at the coast. A number of local festivals sprang up decades ago with that motive.

Depending on how the pandemic continues to unfold, medium and large events may be out of the question for another year or more. Even once conditions are technically safe again, this scary experience may have a long-term impact on attendance at indoor events of any kind and outdoor activities if they entail much close contact with strangers.

These coming months are a perfect opportunity for event organizers and their funders to seriously plan. In a few cases, they may continue on with little adjustment. Other events ought to fade away. The most important question is whether there are new local adventures we can be excited about. We should have fewer, better events more tightly focused on our area's key attractions. These are the ocean and seashore, the Columbia River estuary, Willapa Bay, our remarkably talented and diverse people, our deep historical and cultural legacies. We should boldly develop and promote local food, drink and arts. We should forge strong cross-cultural connections with local tribes.

It's time for a re-set. Let's think of things we can be in love with doing.



GET PAID TO GO SOLAR!

"If you ever wanted solar, now is the time!"
-Stan the Solar Man

PACIFIC COUNTY'S #1 FULL SERVICE SOLAR PROVIDER

CALL (360)642-4272

FREE NO OBLIGATION HOME ENERGY AUDIT

Precision Heating customers in Washington
EARNED over \$2,000 on average
for their first year.

Did you know?...

SOLAR SALE 15% OFF!

... that the federal government will give you up to \$15,000 in a dollar for dollar tax refund in your first year?

PRECISION HEATING
 & Indoor Air Quality
360-642-4272
stan.tussing@gmail.com • www.usa-heating.com