



## Publisher's Notebook

February 2021 Matt Winters

# Return to some kind of 'normal' depends on vaccinations

More of us in coming months will succeed in getting immunized against COVID-19. This will restore a greater sense of safety for Columbia-Pacific families. But will it get us back to "business as usual"?

Nearly a year into what we all hope is only a once-a-century pandemic, it becomes difficult to fully recall what "normal" was. Imagine what it will be like to wander around wherever we want, fly wherever we please, run around without safety masks, embrace friends and greet strangers without fear of contagion. Specific to our area, think about what it will mean — and what it will take — to resume the Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival, the Hood to Coast Relay and dozens of other events that depend on enthusiastic participants and dedicated volunteers.

As of this writing, Oregon's vaccine rollout was running slightly better than the national average of 8.3% having received one dose and 2% being fully immunized. Washington state also was in the middle of the pack. Both were well behind West Virginia, which had percentages of 11 and 4.1. Thanks to a greater sense of urgency in the federal gov-

ernment, there's a decent chance that vaccinations will start to rapidly accelerate in coming weeks and months.

With an increasing number of worrisome viral mutations that may partly elude currently licensed vaccines, there's no time to be lost. Only by reaching a vaccination rate in the vicinity of 85% can we reasonably hope to choke off the novel coronavirus' paths of escape. To whatever extent we fail to do so, chances exist for the virus to mutate enough that the whole process of vaccine production and implementation must start from scratch. And even if the U.S. steps up to the challenge of achieving "herd immunity," this new virus will find new opportunities to exploit in regions like Africa where vaccination campaigns will take much longer.

What's all this mean for the businesses covered in CRBJ?

- Getting ourselves and our employees vaccinated is a top priority. Nothing wrecks consumer confidence faster than news or rumors of a COVID outbreak.

- There isn't likely to be a "Victory Over the Virus Day." Bother-

some virus hygiene measures could be with us for much longer than anybody wants. We need to get better at it, not sloppier about it. Buy and use N95 masks. Speak up about risky behavior. Reward employees who find ways to shine without their smiles being visible.

- Thanks to our beaches and parks, visitor numbers have been strong throughout most of the pandemic. Considering how difficult it will be to recruit volunteers and attract guests for traditional mass events, we must continue rethinking regional marketing and focus on the genuine traits and attributes that attract visitors. Safe. Scenic. Friendly. Fascinating. Affordable. It's themes like these that will ensure a return to a robust and enduring coastal economy.

- It's more important than ever to support one another. Let's look after and speak for all the traditional industries that underpin our economy. Forestry, fishing of all types, hospitality, maritime, real estate, healthcare, education, agriculture and others are all vital when it comes to jobs, taxes and a well-balanced society. Let's keep our dollars as close to home as we can, and always support local folks.



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