



Publisher's Notebook

March 2021 Matt Winters

Happy days may soon be here again

As always, this edition of *Coast River Business Journal* includes an inspirational variety of stories about Clatsop and Pacific county entrepreneurs bravely venturing into new businesses and expanding the scope of existing enterprises. It's impressive to see people with the guts and gumption to put their precious time and hard-to-come-by savings on the line in daring attempts to achieve the American Dream.

It can seem even more courageous than usual to take these steps just now as we are hopefully coming out of the worst public health disaster of modern times. The emphasis is still on "hope." There remains considerable uncertainty about what the novel coronavirus will do next, whether we will be cautious enough to remain careful until the risk has really abated, and just what damage has been done to the local, regional and national economies.

In neither Oregon nor Washington do tax receipts appear to have taken a catastrophic hit. Tourism held up pretty well here in our beach towns this winter, home construction is busy, wood and fiber products

are in demand. On the other hand, crabbing took a serious hit from a long delay. Unemployment and under-employment remain too high. Schooling at all levels has been disrupted. For many, it will be a long road back to self-confidence.

For others, including those spotlighted in this issue, confidence of every kind remains robust. Looking to the months and years ahead, they see a place with a growing reputation for high-quality lifestyles, fascinating people and burgeoning potential. Our climate presents occasional challenges, but we are truly blessed with what I've long called the "miracle of water falling from the sky." It's no exaggeration to say that our moderate temperatures and ample fresh water will increase to be treasured assets. In the pandemic's aftermath, people far and wide have learned they can perform many forms of work wherever they choose. Many are choosing here — a choice that will become ever-easier with the approaching deployment of astoundingly fast satellite-based broadband internet.

There is a real chance that a year of pent-up consumer demand,

coupled with a massive federal COVID-19 stimulus package — and maybe federal infrastructure spending — will jump start the economy in an amazing fashion. Such spending certainly brings risk of eventual inflation, but polling suggests most of us are ready for a time of robust growth. The 1920s followed the previous horrible pandemic and were called "roaring" for a reason — it was a period of celebratory expansion. The trick is to avoid the awful hangover that followed in the 1930s.

In our happy corner of America, a taste of the coming good times may be directly ahead. Families longing for comparatively safe, close and affordable spring breaks can be expected to descend on our towns and beaches soon: Oregon's week is March 22-26 and Washington's primarily April 5-9, though Seattle schools will wait for April 11-15. It will be vital for local hospitality workers and visitors to maintain COVID-safe practices. Providing we do so, these coming weeks may be just a taste of the profitable and fun months ahead as vaccinations make us safe and restrictions are lifted.



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