

Opinion



Nurses: the superheroes of our time

There are many people across the nation in many fields fighting against COVID-19. Grocery store employees continue to stock products and check out customers. Teachers hold virtual classes. Scientists are working around the clock in laboratories around the world searching for a vaccine for the disease that has now taken the lives of more than 80,000 Americans.

Heroes can be found all around us but special commendation needs to be given to the frontline medical personnel, especially America's nurses.

Whether they serve in special wards or emergency departments of

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hospitals, nurses take their lives into their own hands as they treat patients with the coronavirus or suffering from COVID-19 itself. Some nurses have worked arduous hours, at times without all the tools necessary such as ventilators, N95 masks and personal protective equipment. That is the very definition of a

hero: one who enters the battlefield without regards for their personal safety.

Nurses are the heartbeat of healthcare. In normal circumstances, a nurse performs just about every task for patients. They help usher babies into the world. They lovingly

escort people out of the world.

Nurses are humane, they are kind and caring, many are comedians, injecting lightness in what is often a person's worst day. They shoulder burdens that test mere mortals.

During this pandemic nurses are going above and beyond their normal duties. When the history of COVID-19 is written, the world's nurses will share equal importance with the doctors and researchers. As frontline personnel, it is nurses that people come in contact with first and it sets the tone for their medical journey.

Nurses are heroes in normal times, they are superheroes during this health crisis.

— LAZ

Showing the nation how to vote

Oregon has conducted its elections by mail since voters approved Measure 60 in 1998. Since then voter turnout in Oregon has been among the highest in the nation and there has been little—if any—serious incidents of fraud.

More states are considering conducting their elections with mailed ballots in the wake of COVID-19, amid the need for social distancing. Images of people standing in line to vote at a polling site is unsettling. Wisconsin held a primary election earlier this year with polling sites that forced voters to line-up and

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wait their turn.

COVID-19 will change American life in many ways and if one of the changes is that every election will be conducted via mail, all the better. Some don't want to see elections-by-mail expanded because it increases turnout by voters favorable to the opposition.

Suppressing turnout in states that hold elections in the traditional way, with voting booths and neighborhood precincts is too easy. The people should demand that their political and government leaders publicly avow their support for vote-by-mail and oppose in the strongest terms

possible any move to make it hard for any citizen to vote.

Oregon has held dozens of elections by mail on the federal, state and local levels. Vote-by-mail is now baked into our system. A ballot comes into the home several weeks before they are due, giving a voter time to carefully go over their choices. One may feel rushed at a precinct. Democracy calls for consideration.

Washington State also has vote-by-mail. The two states in the northwest corner of the country can lead the other states into a future of increased turnout in all their elections. That can only be a good thing.

— LAZ

Everyone should get moving during COVID

What's been noticed already with the coronavirus pandemic is a big change with positive ramifications. That change has to do with the greatly increased number of people who've decided to turn off the TV to take walk, jog, shooting of baskets, the hitting of golf balls, the taking of a hike, or whatever inspires the embrace of physical exercise by personal choice. Thereby, increasing blood circulation, building muscle, filling lungs with fresh air, and a hundred-fold other benefits that can, with enough repetition and improved fitness, reduce excess fat and benefit the whole body to a more healthy BMI (Body Mass Index) or healthy amount of body fat.

History shows that many schools started the day with virtually everyone, including teachers, with a calisthenics routine. These exercises were seen as valuable to awaken students in preparation for the academics of each day. Why this form of stimulation ceased cannot

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be ascertained by this writer but strikes him as an effective means of preparing anyone, young and old, for meeting the moment of a new day and providing a level of readiness for whatever follows. Calisthenics can include stretching movements, running in place, yoga maneuvers, and anything else that limbers, loosens and livens the human body for all the physical and mental challenges of each day.

One condition of modern America for most of us, and these days even for all ages of youth, but mainly for those who've reached middle school age and thereafter, is that physical exercise for the most part is concentrated in those young men and women who, in school or by private means, join a team sport. These young people usually get a lot of exercise in preparation for team play. Those youth who are not out for a school sport or in a private club sports program do not get the physical activity they need.

Even those opportunities have largely ceased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hence, with the pandemic a limiting factor in all of our lives and much of formal learning taking place by electronic connections, it would seem timely and appropriate that the human resources of our schools K-12, especially, now invested in distance education endeavors, could be organized into open area activities in the many empty sports fields around Salem and Keizer that would allow for calisthenics of large numbers while honoring the six-foot distance rule. Then we could assemble a lot of kids for physical activities and serve the social interaction needs of so many of these youth.

The Chromebook is a huge help but does not nearly serve the comprehensive, wide-ranging needs of our youth, regardless of age. It would seem high time to get more involved in their lives, now exclusively left to computer screens.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer. He shares his opinion frequently in the *Keizertimes*.)

COVID recession shows need for changes

By PAUL EVANS

My father, and his father before him, were small business owners. And though my time in the private sector was brief, I remember well the emotional impact of pouring one's heart into a business only to see it vanish because of a seismic shift in economic realities.

All small businesses matter. Our national security depends upon a robust small business ecosystem—it is the backbone of our economy. Tens of thousands of Oregonians depend upon a locally owned enterprise for a job.

The COVID recession demonstrates that our legacy thinking for wealth generation is no longer aligned with 21st century realities. Global supply chains leave us ill-prepared for emergencies. Many tourism related service industry jobs vanish when people must shelter at home. And durable goods manufacturing demands significantly decline in times of global uncertainty.

The critical factor for survival in times like this is capital. Access to affordable capital is the difference be-

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tween businesses that endure—and those that cannot. This crisis has illustrated how big business continues to maintain ready access to capital—as small businesses struggle just to keep the lights on, and the lease paid. Absent an immediate rescue, Oregon will permanently lose thousands of home-grown small enterprises.

It is time for a new playbook. Accordingly, I urge three new policies: 1. Establishment of sector-specific assistance to businesses with an Oregon workforce; 2. Zero-interest grants for all businesses willing to maintain current employees; and, 3. Establishment of an Oregon State Bank (through amending the Oregon Constitution).

Oregon must act now. Congress passed an enormous assistance package that was misaligned with the realities of "small business" and "working families." There is a promise of more assistance to come, but we have lost too much time already.

We must reward companies that put employees first. We must reward partnerships through providing additional assistance to the businesses

that support their employees. Loans are insufficient. Many small businesses will not take out a loan because of the uncertainty of this crisis; they are justifiably wary of adding debt without a guarantee of future sales.

It is time that we accept "For-Profit" banks are an inappropriate instrument for disbursing large-scale public financial assistance. This was demonstrated during the last "Great Recession" and again this year. Banks are built to minimize risk: it is counter-intuitive for banks to push dollars "out the door" as envisioned. The failure today, again, of timely disbursement of public assistance to small businesses is not the fault of the banks but of Congress.

Ultimately, the challenge we face today is less about the COVID-19 contagion than a decades-in-the-making breakdown of our strategic investments and underfunded societal safety nets. COVID-19 did not create our problems, it illuminated them. Luckily, we have a chance to save our small businesses if we demand structural changes.

(Paul Evans represents District 20 in the Oregon House of Representatives.)

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