

# Public Square

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## The unintended consequences

By SHANEY STARR

Our leaders and experts are doing the best they can to navigate this health crisis and to flatten the curve and keep COVID-19 from taking more lives. But in the simplest of terms, our world has been turned upside down by this pandemic. People are suffering from prolonged isolation, financial instability and food insecurity to name just a few challenges.

Our children have been robbed of key milestones of their youth. Our homes have become our workspaces and our parents are now expected to be both teacher and employee at the same time. For most of us, our entire world has now become our computer screen—everything is now virtual.

For those of us who serve at-risk and vulnerable children, the past eight months—and who knows how much longer—have watched our worst nightmare unfold right before our very eyes and we feel completely helpless. The data tells us that our mandatory reports of concern for child abuse and neglect have decreased by 40% since the pandemic and subsequent shut-downs started because child care providers and our schools were our frontline reporters regarding child abuse and neglect.

Research tells us there is a direct correlation to child abuse and neglect when there is housing insecurity, food insecurity and financial stress amongst the top toxic stressors. All of those issues existed before the pandemic, but now have been exacerbated with the ramifications of dealing with COVID. We now have isolation added into the mix. Our kids are living in what can only be described as a pressure cooker of toxic stress. The perfect storm is coming—when our schools and communities begin to fully reopen, we expect the number of children coming into foster care to surge.

But until then, the unthinkable is happening—abuse and neglect is going unreported because we don't have in person #EyesOnKids.

I was recently asked what gets me up in the morning and what keeps me going—it's our 150 plus CASAs that are quite frankly taking personal

risks to make sure our kids are safe. When this pandemic started and we went through our first shut down—CASA didn't close, we didn't stop. Our office became a distribution and collection site for basic essentials for our foster families—diapers, clothes, wipes, baby food, we even had the elusive toilet paper and sanitizer. When schools closed and life went virtual, we didn't. We knew someone needed to be having eyes on our kids. And our volunteers stepped up in a big way. They donned their masks and gloves, and came up with creative ways to see our most vulnerable children in person, to make sure they were safe and thriving. And sometimes we have had to fight to ensure our CASAs had access to having eyes on kid—but that's what we do—we work tirelessly to ensure our children are safe and thriving.

My ask of you, our communities, is simple. Have the brainstorming conversations in your circle of influence about how to get #EyesOnKids and think outside of the box. Be vigilant. Volunteer with organizations that have ways to see kids in person (socially distanced and masked of course). The options are endless: volunteering to be a CASA, volunteering to meet tangible needs for our children in care and supporting our foster families through our Every Child initiative, volunteering to sit with children after they have been removed from home and while they wait for placement. Call me and I will personally help connect you with the best way to help our kids.

Most importantly, if you have concerns about abuse and neglect of a child, please call the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline at 1-855-503-SAFE. Thank you and have a safe and blessed Holiday season.

*(The mission of CASA is to provide every child in need with trained, volunteer advocates to ensure they are safe, have a permanent home and the opportunity to thrive. For more information on how to get involved in keeping our children safe, please call Shaney Starr at 503-967-6420.)*

Shaney Starr, MS, CFRM, is the executive director of CASA of Marion County.

guest  
column

## Defiance is not leadership

By JOHN MORGAN

Keizer's mayor, Cathy Clark, expressed at the Nov. 16 city council meeting that she is "extremely concerned" and "deeply disturbed" (her words, not mine). She believes that there are children out there living in fear that instead of grandma and grandpa showing up for Thanksgiving dinner, it will be the police coming to arrest mom and dad.

I suppose it is possible that some of these fearful children envision a SWAT team breaking down the front door, with guns drawn, coming to cite, and even possibly to arrest those violating Governor Kate Brown's most recent orders which are designed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Oregon. Orders that Mayor Clark sees as "borderline harassment." The city manager's assurance that this would not be happening seems to not have helped alleviate her state of being deeply disturbed.

Anyone who has ever raised children surely knows that they are incredible observers of the world around them. It is very possible that some have heard about the governor's new restrictions, and if they are old enough to count higher than six,

could see that mom and dad with their big holiday celebration are violating those orders. I wonder if the fear of those children may be experiencing comes from being worried about getting a potentially deadly disease or that grandma and grandpa or mom and dad might become sick with COVID and die, just as so many already have.

It would not make for a Merry Christmas. In less than one year over a quarter of a million Americans have died from the coronavirus. With infection rates, hospitalizations and deaths from COVID exploding across the country, deaths from COVID will exceed by five times the number of US soldiers killed in the Vietnam War. I certainly hope that Mayor Clark is equally concerned about the first responders, the nurses and doctors, working to the point of physical and mental exhaustion, from not just trying to save the lives of those dying from COVID, but sadly also from trying to console those who cannot visit loved ones in the ICU who are slowly suffocating to death.

At that same council meeting, state Rep. Bill Post felt the need to encourage people to ignore Gov-

ernor Brown's latest order and celebrate in "freedom." What type of freedom is there when one is in the ICU hooked up to a ventilator? What about the freedom of those working in a COVID ward at the hospital, living in constant fear of either ending up in a bed next to one of the patients they are desperately trying to save, or of infecting a family member when they return home from work?

It is extremely dangerous to discourage people from following Governor Brown's new COVID-19 restrictions, restrictions that have been proven worldwide to help. Anyone, and especially an elected official with a public platform, who does so, in some confused conviction about constitutional rights, is directly responsible for the continued spread of this deadly virus. Instead of helping us to all pull together in this final stretch, with a vaccine on the horizon, which is what any good leader would instinctively do, they further spread division among us, and guarantee that many more Americans will unnecessarily contract COVID, become severely ill and possibly die.

That type of political leadership is not something to be thankful of, but rather should be stopped.

(John Morgan lives in Keizer.)

other  
voices

## My testimony before city council

[Delivered at Nov. 16 Keizer City Council meeting]

Madam Mayor, councilors and Keizer city staff;

First of all I want to address the ongoing issue of the "statement of value." I believe the statement of values for our great city should be very clear, very concise and very simple.

"All people shall be treated with dignity and respect." Period.

All means all. If we must resort to listing specific people or groups, then "all" loses its meaning and strength. I believe Keizer is the most "welcoming to all" city in Oregon and I'm proud to be a Keizer resident.

This then leads me to the topic that is the most important tonight that we as citizens of Keizer and the state of Oregon should be discussing: The governor's latest orders.

No government leader in the history of the United States has ever said "we'll come to your house, your private home, cite and/or arrest you" for having a family dinner. Just think about that for

a moment. There are people present here tonight who represent families that have six or eight, or even 10 or 12 or more. To ask them to not get together for the grand celebration that is Thanksgiving, is something I can't believe I'm even hearing. It's not only unconstitutional, and unheard of but in my estimation, it represents inequality and inequity at its most heinous and isn't that what the statement of values that's been discussed here in council chambers is supposed to be all about?

Add to that the plight of the workers. That hundreds, if not thousands, of hard working, lower wage people, perhaps as early as this Wednesday will lose their jobs is so heartless and callous, I can hardly believe it. What also stuns me, as a representative in the Oregon Legislature, is

the Executive branch has "weaponized" a state agency, Oregon Health Authority (OHA,) without input, or frankly anything from the Legislative



from the  
capitol

By BILL POST

## Fan enjoys Top 20 Volcanoes articles

To the Editor:

Over the past few weeks I've been reading Matt Rawlings' fine column *The Top 20 Volcanoes of All Time*. My family and I have enjoyed watching Volcanoes baseball every year since 1997. Many fine ballplayers have passed through here.

It's a shame that Major League Baseball is planning to do away with many minor league teams, including the Volcanoes. I hope that we can bring another team to Keizer for our summertime entertainment—perhaps one of the summer-league clubs made up of college players, on the order of the Portland Pickles and Corvallis Knights. What a way to get back in the "swing" of things.

Ken Palke  
Keizer

## Guide missed key non-profit organization

To the Editor:

On pages 7 and 8 of the *Keizertimes*' Holiday Guide was a list of organizations that may reflect your values—where you might want to donate your dollars. The *Keizertimes* did not list an important local Keizer foundation that is seeking help right now: the Keizer Community Foundation.

letters

When the Salem-Keizer school buildings closed, the Keizer Kloset (a project of the foundation) closed with them. That closure did not eliminate the need for Keizer children, and

we continued to answer the call by providing donations to our local Keizer Community Food Bank and monies directly to the schools, and then we waited.

We waited for our school leaders and teachers to determine how to move forward in the school year and what and how the Keizer Community Foundation could do to support their efforts.

We have now heard from some of our schools; they need our help.

Some local schools have requested food drop-offs. We can do that. We are currently coordinating with school counselors to have food and other personal items available for them to deliver to students via home visits.

We are providing new clothing, blankets, gloves, hats, jackets, and other articles of necessity, for distribution to families in need (as determined by school counselors).

The Keizer Community Foundation was proud to contribute to the second story pole carving in front of the Keizer Civic Center. This project had great community support and honored our long-time agricultural history.

We have just been informed that

Keizer is able to add an additional sculpture to our collection along River Road. The sculpture is an eagle that will be installed on the northeast corner of the Chemawa/River Road intersection in early 2021. The Keizer Community Foundation will contribute to this project by supplying the artist's stipend.

This crisis hasn't stopped and neither have we. If you value your community, its children and its culture, please consider helping us.

Please visit our website, [keizercommunityfoundation.com](http://keizercommunityfoundation.com). Or, visit our Facebook page at [facebook.com/keizercommunityfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/keizercommunityfoundation).

Audrey Butler  
Keizer

*(Audrey Butler is president of the Keizer Community Foundation).*

## Council meeting left reader disappointed

To the Editor:

I am absolutely appalled and disappointed at what I witnessed at the November 16, 2020 City Council meeting.

Our elected officials openly defying the governor's request to "freeze" some activities for two weeks to try and get our soaring COVID numbers back down, done at the urging of the hospitals and medical community.

Representative Bill Post and Mayor Cathy Clark (she has a masters degree in science and should know better) are playing politics with their constituents health.

Once again we witness party over people. How very sad.

Carol Doerfler  
Keizer

## Editorials struck the right points

To the Editor:

Kudos to Lyndon Zaitz for two editorial articles he wrote for the

already high anxiety in the Keizer community by implying the state freeze puts families gathering for Thanksgiving at risk of arrest. I must have more faith in the judgment of the Keizer police than the mayor. Our Keizer police also have families and they have a good sense for what is important and how to enforce our laws.

This holiday season will be different, but it can be special. With the challenges our world faces, generosity to families, organizations and small businesses in need are a meaningful way to reach out and show your care. Together, let us unite in positive actions in Keizer.

Cathy Philbrick  
Keizer

## Share your opinion

Submit a letter to the editor, or a guest column by noon

Tuesday.

Email to:

[publisher@keizertimes.com](mailto:publisher@keizertimes.com)

## sudoku

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Enter digits from 1-9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

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