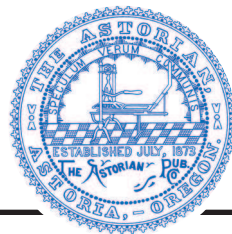


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

We dare not forget the past — get a vaccination

As a society, we have made such progress against once-common illnesses that we forget they are still around and still potentially life-threatening. The measles outbreak in Southeast Washington exemplifies what can happen if we lower our vigilance — and our vaccinations.

High rates of vaccination kept measles under control in the U.S., with about 60 cases annually from 2000 to 2010, according to the Mayo Clinic. In recent years, that average has climbed to 205 cases, most often among people who either were unvaccinated or did not know whether they were. There were 350 cases in the U.S. last year.

As of this writing, 35 confirmed cases and 11 suspected cases have occurred this month in Clark County, Washington, and one in Oregon's Multnomah County. At least 30 of the patients had not been immunized — even though getting the combined measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is safer than contracting measles.

Measles is so contagious, and potentially fatal in young children, that Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has declared a state of emergency. People who visited more than 40 locations in the Vancouver-Portland area might have been exposed.

"It's one of the most contagious viruses we have. It can have really serious complications," said Dr. Alan Melnick, the Clark County health officer. "And it's entirely preventable with an incredibly cheap and safe vaccine."

But the measles vaccination rate in Clark County was only



Influenza victims crowd into an emergency hospital in 1918 at Camp Funston, a subdivision of Fort Riley in Kansas.

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Dr. Alan Melnick | Clark County health officer

78 percent.

People forget that measles killed hundreds of people each year, and caused serious health complications for thousands more, before the disease was declared eradicated in the U.S. at the start of the 21st century.

But measles persisted elsewhere. Around the world, more than 100,000 people die from measles each year, most of them children under age 5.

The measles outbreak in the Vancouver-Portland area, combined with an increase in flu cases, has caused some Oregon hospitals to restrict visitors.

Flu is so common that people often forget about its potential consequences as well. Yet influenza and related complications killed an estimated 80,000 Americans last winter, far above a typical year because last year's vaccine was not as effective.

The influenza virus mutates, so each year's vaccine is formulated to provide immunity against the strains considered most probable to cause an outbreak. That is why getting a flu vaccine each year matters. Many Americans don't do so.

Influenza and related conditions hospitalized 1,562 people in Oregon last year and led to the deaths of three children. Although last year's vaccine was less effective, an Oregon Health Authority study found that seniors who got high-dose flu shots were less likely to be hospitalized.

"Pandemic," a popular board game, shows how easily diseases can spread. The Vancouver-Portland measles outbreak is not nearly an epidemic, let alone a pandemic. Neither is this year's flu season in Oregon.

But it is worth noting that this winter is the 100th anniversary of the worst pandemic in recorded history. As the flu mutated into a global killer, it took the lives of 50 million to 100 million people, including about 675,000 in the U.S. during the course of one year.

This grim anniversary is a reminder that we dare not forget the past, ignore what could happen in the future — or fail to get our vaccinations.

To quote a Washington Post story from last year about the pandemic, "the 1918 nightmare serves a reminder. If a virulent enough strain were to emerge again, a century of modern medicine might not save millions from dying."

There were no worthwhile flu vaccines in 1917-18. There are today, just as there is a measles vaccine.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WINGS aims to improve lives of women, children

What can we in our community do to improve the lives and prospects of our local women and children, who have so much potential to make Clatsop County a more vibrant and equitable place to live and work?

We can give them WINGS, a free conference Saturday, Feb. 9, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Columbia Hall at Clatsop Community College.

We are gearing up for the 17th year for Women INterested in Going to School (WINGS), and more than 800 women have taken advantage of this free conference. It offers sessions with college staff, who provide useful information and timelines to get started on an educational track.

Sessions include information on earning a GED, costs and financial support options, learning about Lives in Transition (LIT), conquering math anxiety and Clatsop Community College degrees and certificate programs.

This one-day conference also includes a Latina WINGS track, with real-time translation by volunteer Gudelia Contreras, to help women know that they can come to the community college to gain English skills and further their education. More importantly, they'll learn that the college welcomes them.

What is great about WINGS is that women will begin the day with trepidation about their perceived barriers to learning, and leave with relief and enthusiasm as they figure out they can and should get on with their education, be it seeking a degree, a GED or workforce job training.

The conference is packed with how to plan and begin, what support and programs are available, and who can assist them. Register at clatsopcc.edu or call 503-717-1852.

ANE McINTYRE
Gearhart

Pack it in, pack it out

Iscur the river beach at Fort Stevens for trash on almost a daily basis. It's a beautiful stretch of beach, and deserves to be treated with respect.

I have a particular beef with the bonfire crowd. Almost every bonfire site has

trash left behind in and around the charred driftwood. Recently I picked up a broken vodka bottle and a broken beer bottle that were thrown on the fire. The glass was sharp and dangerous.

Why did the bonfire people throw the bottles in the fire? Did they really think the fire would consume it? Do they think the tide will just take it away? I know it's a younger crowd but they should know better.

I am thinking that we should post signs at the entrance to the river beach that states "Pack it in. Pack it out." There are no trash bins or facilities at this entrance, which is between Area C and Area D. Other options are no driving on the beach, or no bonfires.

I know that there are a lot of people who would consider such things to be heresy here in Clatsop County. However, if people can't behave responsibly, the choices are to either shut it down, or police it.

Every day when we have benign weather, I find bonfire sites with new mounds of garbage. We really need to treat our beaches with greater care and respect.

HOLT MOORE
Astoria

President Trump's border crisis is a myth

Republican Congressman Will Hurd, 41-year-old old former CIA undercover officer, who represents one of the largest congressional districts in Texas with 820 miles bordering Mexico, told Rolling Stone that President Donald Trump's border crisis is a "myth," and that Trump is trying to use a "third century solution to solve a 21st Century problem."

If it is a crisis, why weren't the border workers getting paid during the government shutdown? During the the government shutdown, the Department of Homeland Security was furloughed, unpaid. Is this security sense?

Rep. Hurd said when you talk of crisis, people are afraid to leave their homes, right? He says there is no crisis situation or violence in his district; his cities are some of the safest in the U.S. If anything, they talk of needing workers. To get property by eminent domain for a wall would hurt about 1,000 property owners in his state.



Hurd proposes smart, effective 21st century solutions: Light Detection And Ranging (LIDAR), cameras, infrared, Automatic Identification System (AIS), drones and helicopters, depending on the non-homogeneous nature of the vast landscape. The Smart Wall Act was included in the Homeland bill last year. It's not rocket science.

"That's why we'll continue to talk about how we solve this problem, operate within the Secure Fence Act, double down on our ports of entry, where most of the illegal drugs come in, where the most people are surrendering," Hurd said. "We'll use technology and address root causes in Mexico with a Marshall Plan for Central America," and much-needed ambassadors.

MONICA TAYLOR
Astoria

Shutdown was abject failure of leadership

I agree fully with the editorial "Time to End the gamesmanship on border wall" (The Daily Astorian, Jan. 23).

The shutdown showed an abject failure of governing and leadership on the part of President Donald Trump. As The Daily Astorian and many others have stated, Mr. Trump held American workers and the American public hostage with his immature attempt at negotiation. He caused real harm to real people, both right

here in Clatsop County and all across the nation.

Senate President Mitch McConnell and Republican senators waited far too long to join the Democrat-led House and pass a bill to reopen the government. Now they have to sit down and hammer out a plan to reform our immigration policy. All Americans agree we need smart, up-to-date and cost-effective border protection and immigration reform. A "wall" is not any of those things.

I want to say to all federal workers, either furloughed or who worked without pay, that we owe them a debt of gratitude, and I have empathy with their plight. They deserve better. We all deserve better. The purpose of government is to serve the people, not cause harm to the people.

ERIC HALPERIN
Gearhart

Don't give free advertising to KKK

I'm sure the person who posted those KKK flyers around Astoria ("KKK flyers pop up in downtown Astoria," The Daily Astorian, Jan. 22) must want to thank you for providing a photo that included their contact information, but personally I don't feel the free advertising was such a great idea.

SHERRIE HAMMOND
Hammond