

OPINION



the Astorian

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Founded in 1873

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GUEST COLUMN

We must each do our part

Astorians have always been tough, resilient and compassionate. They demonstrated this by quickly rebuilding after a 1922 fire obliterated 32 blocks of businesses, workplaces and homes, and by coming together as a community after the devastating windstorms of 2007.



BRUCE JONES

Now, Astorians are about to be tested, possibly as never before. We've had weeks to prepare for the pandemic to reach our community, and to grasp COVID-19's seriousness.

Local medical, public health, emergency management and other

professionals are laser-focused on preparedness for the worst. Despite their around-the-clock efforts, there is a limit to the number of severe patients local hospitals will be able to treat at any one time during a surge in cases.

The worst-case scenario is that the virus spreads so rapidly that local health care providers are overwhelmed, and forced to choose which critically ill patients to not treat, as has happened overseas.

At this crucial time we must each do our part to protect the most vulnerable members of our community, and to help our health care providers save lives, by taking action to slow the spread of the virus.

The emergency rules closing our places of work, learning and socializing are devastating. They may become even more restrictive. As painful as they are, they are absolutely necessary.

Individually, we must each contribute to slowing the virus's spread through rigorous social distancing: avoiding gatherings and staying home except for essential tasks, as well as frequent hand-washing. These steps will save lives.

Our tight-knit community is suffering as so many of our friends are enduring



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Astoria has declared an emergency over the coronavirus.

AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME WE MUST EACH DO OUR PART TO PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY, AND TO HELP OUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS SAVE LIVES, BY TAKING ACTION TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS.

layoffs and loss of income and revenue. Our federal and state elected representatives are rapidly legislating aid packages for the suddenly unemployed, food insecure and struggling businesses for whom a month without revenue can mean bankruptcy. These efforts can't come soon

enough.

Our educators at the K-12 and community college level are learning how to transition traditional classes to remote learning so that our students can continue their educations in the coming months of school closures.

The city, Clatsop County and Astoria School District are planning to ensure child care is available for medical workers and first responders who will need to be working virtually around the clock during a surge in COVID-19 cases.

And throughout the county, neighbors are helping neighbors find the assistance they need.

If we succeed in "flattening the curve," there will be fewer deaths, but the crisis may last longer. We all must adjust to a new normal for an unknown time. And then we will each help our neighbors rebuild their lives and businesses. I have no doubt that Astorians will rise to the occasion, as they have before, with toughness, resilience and compassion.

Bruce Jones is the mayor of Astoria.

GUEST COLUMN

We will get through this

Unlike tsunami preparedness, we don't have a go-bag for this coronavirus.

So what are we supposed to do? Toilet paper and hand sanitizers have grown wings and flown out of stores. Why can't we wake up from this bad dream? Fear is understandable with all that is happening and how it is affecting our jobs, our businesses, our schools and our lives.



KATHLEEN SULLIVAN

But let's take a moment to look at what is going well. First of all, the people of Clatsop County have a long history of courage and endurance. 'Sisu,' the Finnish concept for grit, bravery and resilience, is part of the culture of the coast.

Second of all, spring is here, with its flowers and warmer weather, this will help our moods.

How are our community leaders helping? On March 16, the Board of Commissioners voted to declare a state of emergency, making us eligible for more funding and to authorize other needed options, and as chairwoman, I was ready to sign it. We have excellent cooperation between our governments, our businesses and our local agencies. This is a good thing. We all need to be rowing together and we are. We need to concentrate on reaching shore, not being distracted by noisy birds overhead.

With my years of experience with the county, I can say with certainty we have a professional staff that is the envy of many. During this time, the county Public Health Department, the emergency management team, the county government, the sheriff's office and the information technology department, as well as other staff members, are all working long hours to get the job done. We have an excellent team in Clatsop County.

Each week, we have a cooperator's call which connects our county team with our community partners to share information. Please indulge me as I list the many entities included: county commissioners; city officials; 911 centers; law enforcement and fire chiefs; Medix; health care partners; school districts; Red Cross; military; special districts; Port of Astoria; chambers of commerce; and state and federal agencies. Breakfasts and lunches are now being



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The North Coast emerged stronger after the Great Coastal Gale of 2007.

delivered by familiar yellow school buses to children in the Astoria School District. In Knappa, community volunteers are providing meals at specific locations to all students. Seaside schools have designated areas for meal pickups. All across the county, volunteers are continuing to deliver meals to seniors. If you have any questions, call NorthWest Senior and Disability Services, located in Warrenton, or your senior community meal locations.

We all benefit from these collaborations. Think of the multitude of meetings and phone conferences required. The combined knowledge, skills and experience is immense. And remember, aside from titles and roles at work, all of these folks are also our neighbors, our family members and our friends. Together we are implementing plans and marshaling resources to meet the

challenges ahead and to reduce the very real suffering.

Remember the Great Coastal Gale of 2007? As a region, we reroofed our homes and learned how to be licensed ham radio operators. Remember the earthquake in Japan and the New Yorker article on the threat of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake? We set up communication systems, escape routes and prepared go-bags. We also walked next door to introduce ourselves to the neighbors. Resulting benefits remain, because as communities, we imagined possible disasters and planned options to endure and to prevail. In other words, we added to the collective memory of resilience, which will serve us well now.

Winston Churchill, always a source for excellent quotes, said, "Fear is reaction. Courage is a decision." While fear is tem-

porary, the power of love and compassion is eternal. With courage we recognize this is not a dream, and with our eyes open we decide what to do.

First, we must believe that our actions matter. Please follow the necessary public health guidelines. We can slow the spread of the virus through social distancing, while also supporting each other with encouraging phone calls and emails. We need to practice compassion for ourselves and others as we go through these days of anxiety. I will be here as part of the experienced team of community leaders working to keep you safe and to develop pathways for recovery when this is over.

We will get through this.

Kathleen Sullivan is the chairwoman of the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.