

OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

Driven by a health equity lens

The COVID-19 pandemic has been unlike anything Clatsop County Public Health Department staff has ever experienced.

The existential threat that the coronavirus imposes on our community is exacerbated by the palpable economic devastation that controlling the spread of the virus wreaks on our community.

Public health staff are fully aware of this dilemma and have family and friends who are suffering economically. Public health has been in the lead position on figuring out the safest way to reopen the economy without creating more COVID-19 illnesses.

Our phased approach to reopening the economy of Clatsop County is our best effort at striking that balance.

One of the most important objectives for the reopening of the economy is to mitigate and control the spread of the virus to the degree possible.

Public health employs two tools to accomplish this difficult objective: community testing and contact tracing of positive cases.

Testing for the virus is a fairly routine process. Public health has established a weekly drive-thru testing program at the new household hazardous waste facility. We have successfully tested over 200 people at this time.

Contact tracing is another matter entirely.



Alyssa Evans/The Astorian

Clatsop County has worked to trace people exposed to the coronavirus.

Effective contact tracing requires two things from the positive case — a good memory and honesty. Current federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines state that anyone who has been within 6 feet of a positive case for 15 minutes or longer should be contacted and monitored for symptoms.

I don't know about you, but recalling everyone I have contact with for 15

minutes over a 14-day time frame would be difficult. On top of that, being honest about the numbers of people you have had contact with and under what circumstances can also be difficult and perhaps embarrassing.

In many cases, patients report that social distancing was not followed and mass gatherings have occurred even after the patient was notified of their positive

test status. This is not just a local trend.

The Public Health Department is dedicated to improving the health of all community members and has well-established programming that specifically serves at-risk and underrepresented community members.

Our mission is to provide information and services to residents that are relevant and timely to assure the community's health. We are dedicated to protecting individuals and communities against the spread of disease, promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors, responding to pandemics and assisting communities in recovery and assuring the quality and accessibility of health services.

These values are driven by a health equity lens, meaning that we believe everyone has the opportunity and right to attain their highest level of health. Our commitment to health equity has been clearly reflected in our COVID-19 pandemic response through our housing partnership with Clatsop Community Action, our educational social media campaign and our community testing program.

In closing, Clatsop County has a health department staff that is driven by a passion to serve and to help improve the health of our entire community. We are appreciative of our community's support and I can assure you we are working very hard to help the county get through this pandemic.

Michael McNickle is the director of the Clatsop County Public Health Department.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not the cure

The letter "New Perspective" (The Astorian, May 5) — that quotes two studies from the 1980s to say that Earth can only support 2.5 billion people — needs an update.

The United Nations "World Population Monitoring 2001" is more optimistic. Yes, world population quadrupled between 1900 and 2000. But world real domestic product increased 20 to 70 times. The report also mentioned that between 1961 and 1998, the world per capita food supply increased 24%.

If people are hungry, let's examine poverty, inefficiency and political instability. Think Venezuela.

Abortion is not the cure. By 2050, we could have more people over 60 than under 14. This is not good. Maybe we should reconsider our open season on unborn babies.

JEAN M. HERMAN
Astoria

The good old days

I have experienced the full gamut of emotions regarding this pandemic, but nothing has surprised me more than how much we took for granted in those good old prepandemic days. Sure, we all had problems to deal with, but it didn't include being afraid to go outside or getting too close to people.

As I seek to find hope amid all the pain and suffering, I have come to realize that this pandemic has important lessons to offer us that our society could benefit from.

The most important is that we are truly a global village, or as they say on TV, "We are all in this together." This virus does not discriminate across borders, age, sex, race or lifestyle. We are all neighbors, whether they live next door or thousands of miles from here.

Another lesson is for us to be more compassionate and caring for the vulnerable among us, whether it's seniors who are living in group housing, those who have serious medical conditions or those who have fewer opportunities to avoid the virus, like the homeless.

Finally, because we are sheltering in place, there are very few cars on the road; the air hasn't been this clean for more than a century. Those who are able to work from home should continue to do so.

My hope is that at this pivotal time in human history we will learn these lessons from the pandemic, and it will lead to a more equitable and civil society.

CAROLYN EADY
Astoria

Recognition

Recognition is due to many private property owners in our area — Lewis & Clark Timberlands, Weyerhaeuser Co.,

Nygaard Logging and others — for allowing us to get some exercise and fresh air on their trails and logging roads during these strange times.

Also to Clatsop County for allowing us to clam, walk dogs and take a sunset drive on the beach.

To Oregon State Parks and Recreation and the cities of Gearhart, Seaside, Cannon Beach and Manzanita: Not so much.

KEN QUARLES
Cannon Beach

Accept the results

I am writing regarding the notices to appeal the Cannon Beach City Council's decision to disallow dune grading for views by both the Breakers Point and the Chapman Point homeowners associations.

Friends of the Dunes fought the grading plans of these organizations for over six long years. There was extensive community input, open meetings, scientific reports and presentations; and the final answer was that no grading for views will be allowed.

It seems these HOAs simply can't take no for an answer, even though at least the Chapman Point folks signed an individual deed restriction, and were aware of the subdivision approval condition prohibiting grading when they bought their homes. None of that is at all surprising. They have clearly only ever been concerned with

their own self-interest.

What is surprising to us at the Friends of the Dunes is that during these crazy pandemic times, when business owners are worried about losing their livelihoods, that they choose to put our town through this very expensive endeavor. Clearly these oceanfront home owners do not care about the town, or the business owners in this town, but only about their views.

In addition, the city is facing significant future financial needs, building a new city hall/police station, water system, etc. If these HOAs truly cared about our community, they would accept the results of six years of consideration and expense, and the council's decision and not put our town through a costly process, wasting precious dollars that could be better spent making the town better and safer for all.

KAREN HADLEY
Cannon Beach

Masks and filters

We are in a time that most of us have never experienced, and we have been thrust into environments that cause us to behave in ways that are not healthy; either emotionally or physically.

Understandably, we find ourselves uptight, anxious and a whole slew of other emotions that perhaps had not surfaced in a very long time, or ever, and those emotions can become quite unhealthy.

I'm talking about being home with our families, and perhaps friends, who are sheltering in place with us. Masks and filters have their place, and when it comes to the medical health and well-being of ourselves and our loved ones, they are most important.

However, when our children or spouse or other friends and family members need our unconditional love, that encompasses much of our hearts and minds, some of which we are depleted of by the time we return home from work.

I realize there are many of us who are still working, albeit from home, but nevertheless, we are still required to show up, and be accountable to our employers and yet, this is the perfect time to reinvent our home life.

Make new memories. Learn something new every day about each person you live with. Make sure they know that no matter what, they are your No. 1 priority, even above your work.

Sometimes we discover that our children, spouse, significant other and even some friends are not very lovable. However, you can still decide to love them. Remove your "masks" and work through your "filters" so that we are giving our absolute best of us to the ones who deserve it most. Time waits for no one, so let's wrap it up and gift it to those who need it most.

RITTALYNN KLOSS
Astoria

