

OPINION



the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

Founded in 1873

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

A flower for someone

Bob Swenson has lived on Dow Lane in Youngs River for around 45 years. He's been making people's day for nearly as long.

Swenson, 92, picked 4,150 bright yellow daffodils this year, he estimates. Who gets them? Neighbors, care facilities, senior centers, doctor's offices, churches. He brought nearly 500 to Bethany Lutheran Church in Astoria.

After a long, wet winter, the cheer the vibrant flowers bring is hard not to enjoy.

They also show the passage of time. "I think it's just a reality that life goes on and the beautiful things of nature aren't quelled by this pandemic, and that's a nice thing to know," Swenson said. "That nature continues to do its part in many wonderful ways to make us realize how important those things are, like birds and flowers and things like that."



JONATHAN WILLIAMS

The coast's climate is ideal for the flowers. They require little upkeep. "The only thing is after they do bloom ... you have to allow the leaves to die down for the photosynthesis to allow the bulbs to replenish, so you don't

do anything there," Swenson said. "And that's all you have to do with them, wait till next year, their lovely heads come out every year."

Many are familiar with the daffodil cross outside the Pioneer Presbyterian Church during Easter. Swenson noted the Clatsop Plains area near the Astoria Golf & Country Club was once the home to many fields of bulbs for daffodils. Some still sprout there each spring.

Swenson is a fan of the poet William Wordsworth's poem about daffodils, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

He said he's always wanted to memorize the poem but has never gotten around to it. Though he still remembers the poem's final lines: "And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the daffodils."

Swenson has been retired for many years, leaving open space for the flowers. He worked in the automotive industry until the mid-1970s before going to work at the Astoria Plywood Mill. His wife taught math at Clatsop Community College.

He's reluctant for publicity and sees himself as more of a private person. But he understands the joy and calming power the daffodils hold, especially now.



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian
Bob Swenson picked 4,150 bright yellow daffodils this year.



Vibrant flowers can bring cheer.

"When you get older you have to keep busy and of course sometimes you get depressed so you have to keep moving and I walk a lot and I try to do things that keep your mind off of getting old," Swenson said. "And this does help to see it's rewarding to make other people feel good, which is very helpful."

This spring, when so much feels in flux and there are no clear finish lines for the pandemic, take solace in the beauty of the daffodils, and the fragile strength they bring, signaling that time, too, marches on.

Jonathan Williams is the associate editor of *The Astorian*.

THIS SPRING, WHEN SO MUCH FEELS IN FLUX AND THERE ARE NO CLEAR FINISH LINES FOR THE PANDEMIC, TAKE SOLACE IN THE BEAUTY OF THE DAFFODILS, AND THE FRAGILE STRENGTH THEY BRING, SIGNALING THAT TIME, TOO, MARCHES ON.

'I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD'

*"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."*

—William Wordsworth

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An explanation

I must respond to the well-meaning letter from Benjamin A. Greaves, "No doubt," on March 23, regarding mask-wearing and the possibility of related brain degeneration.

By his implication, surgeons and other operating room personnel are all suffering cognitive decline, and should not be trusted. I could cite numerous large-scale studies refuting such ill effects. Simply put, there is no injurious carbon dioxide buildup in a properly worn mask.

I can't leave this subject without an explanation that medical personnel wear masks, not for their own protection, but for that of their patients. Likewise, in this pandemic, we are all required to wear masks, not for our own safety, but for the protection of those around us.

MATT HIGGINS
Hammond

Stick with us

I am a candidate for the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board, Position 3. I'm asking for reelection with this fine group of individuals: board president, Katharine Parker, Celeste Bodner, Erika Marshall-Hamer and Susan Coddington.

The board is proud of our decision as we move to the next phase of planning for the abandoned Broadway Middle School, now the Sunset Recreation Center. A request for proposals (RFP) has been released to guide our vision, which began

in 2014 with community charrettes.

The RFP is to evaluate the highest and best use, and has been issued as we enter a new period of public engagement toward three priorities: Increase desperately needed preschool, child care and after-school activities; expand indoor recreation for all citizens; and contribute to the local economy with sports tourism strategy.

The immediate need is clear. Entering into the COVID-19 era, emergency child care programs were established to expand and consolidate stressed KinderCare and preschool gatherings into smaller cohorts, ensuring safety for the children and staff.

All of the challengers for the district board falsely claim many things. Staff has spent many weeks now cleaning and mitigating identifiable issues. Both gyms are being rented and utilized by the COVID-19-emerging Pacific Basketball League. The school district is planning to use our locker rooms.

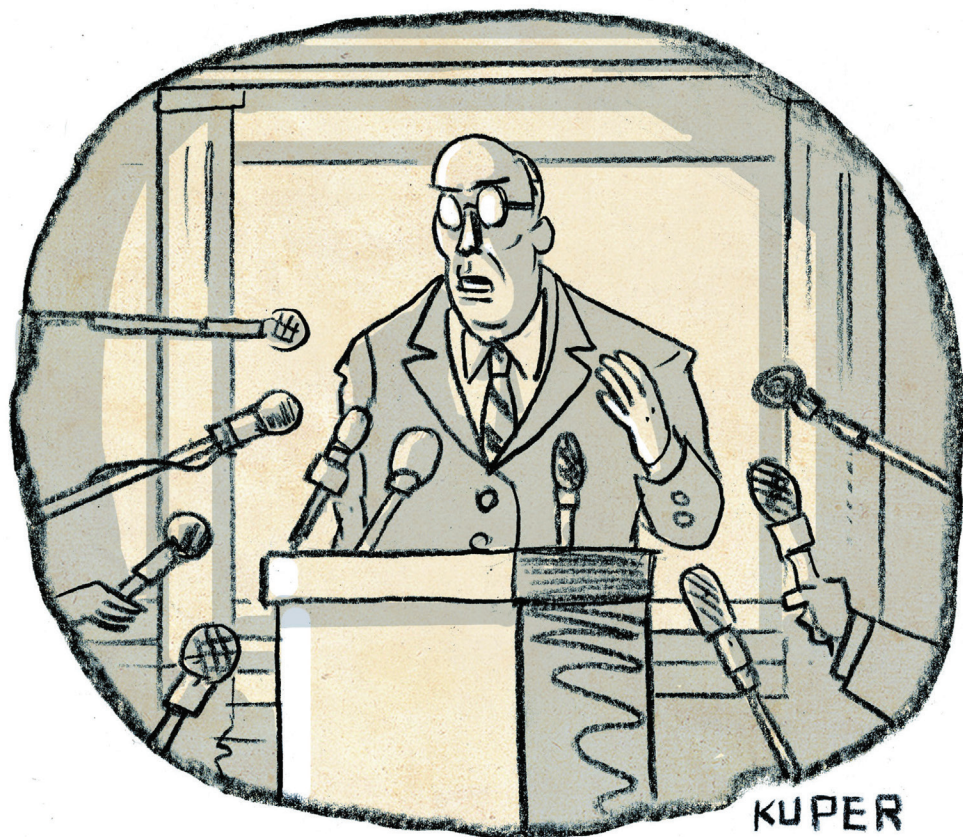
Please stick with us. Reject the irresponsible challengers who seek to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

MICHAEL HINTON
Seaside

Disturbing perspective

There was a very interesting and disturbing perspective on why we should not wear masks from "No Doubt" of Seaside in the March 23 letters to the editor. He says it will cause brain damage from lack of oxygen.

Hospital workers, especially surgeons, wear personal protection equipment, scrub



"Of course, no reasonable person would accept the series of lies I've peddled for months as truth."

up, wear gloves and, yes, wear masks, but I have not heard of any medical studies that conclude that this practice is a major cause of brain damage among medical professionals.

If there are enough voices out there spreading rumors about the damage caused by wearing masks and getting vaccinated, we will probably be spending many more

months than necessary trying to get control of this pandemic.

I'm not worried about a mask causing brain damage, but, I am worried about the continued spread of COVID-19 facilitated by the continued spread of conjecture based on little or no scientific evidence.

LARRY ALLEN
Astoria