

OPINION



the Astorian

editor@dailyastorian.com

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DERRICK DePLEDGE
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JOHN D. BRUIJN
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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

My vaccination diary

SEASIDE — Clatsop County has administered more than 17,350 vaccine doses against the coronavirus.

I was one of them.

“There’s been so much emphasis put on the importance of the vaccine, that the journey of getting through the process, getting through the line and finally receiving the ‘sacrament’ was almost a quasi-religious experience,” my wife, Eve, said afterward. “It had a sense of ceremony.”



R.J. MARX

It seemed like a long road. Covering COVID-19 for the newspaper is almost all-consuming. Every story has a consequence from the impacts of the virus: physical, social, personal. Families, businesses, schools, the way we live, the way we think and vote has been linked to the virus in some way.

Every death as a result of the coronavirus seems incongruously both random, yet especially close.

Being in classification 1B — over 65 with no preexisting conditions — I was eligible for the vaccine in late January.

We registered online and checked pharmacy websites. We Googled, surfed, studied, registered, filed, clicked and phoned. Did you have to be a Costco member to get one at Costco? Could you get one in Washington state if you live in Oregon? Eligibility was one thing — getting an appointment another.

Yet judging from the selfies on social media, everybody but us was getting it. What was the secret code? Were they really all eligible, or were they jumping the line? I was almost ashamed for such thoughts. Anyone who wants the vaccine should be allowed to freely get it. No guilt. No shame.

In mid-March, we still hadn’t gotten an appointment, more than six weeks after eligibility.

We had worked our thumbs down clicking refresh on pharmacy webpages.

Though it hadn’t worked in the past, Eve took a friend’s advice and called



R.J. Marx/The Astorian

ABOVE: People waited in line to receive the vaccine against the coronavirus last week in Seaside. **RIGHT:** Clatsop County is moving through the priority list for vaccination against the coronavirus.

the county Public Health Department. To her amazement, they scheduled us the next week at the old Seaside High School. It was almost too easy.

We entered the high school. Volunteers greeted us like they were hosts at Wyndham. Some of the volunteers even wore badges labeled “concierge.”

The single-file line down the high school hallway was daunting but moved so quickly that we got to the front in less than 15 minutes.

Though we would have preferred the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, we happily submitted to the Moderna, administered by an extremely competent volunteer. After taking the shot — it



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

didn’t hurt — we got our little vaccine cards. Sorry, no selfie.

After the shot, we sat in chairs socially distanced from each other in the former high school gym. No wonder lots of baby boomers say they are reminded of getting the polio vaccine in schools in the 1950s and ‘60s.

We were two of 600 jabs that day at the high school, a volunteer mentioned. More than 5,200 county residents

are fully vaccinated, a step toward the county’s goal to reach herd immunity against the virus by vaccinating 27,533 people. This week, the county’s vaccine task force plans to give 1,400 first doses and 1,170 second doses at four events.

And that seems like a good thing.

R.J. Marx is editor of the Seaside Signal and covers South County for The Astorian.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What chance do we have?

Oh, how similar is today’s international scene to that of the 1930s and 1940s. Here we have four nations, China, Russia, Iran and North Korea, joining in an axis of evil to take the place of Western Europe and the U.S. in power and influence over the rest of the world. And, as it was then, so now we also have those who refuse to believe that it could happen again.

In England, just prior to World War II, one man, Winston Churchill, rang out the clarion call of warning as to what might happen if their island nation fell, and the rest of Europe with it, but the man in charge at the time, Neville Chamberlain, thought talking was the answer.

Now what is happening before our very eyes is another attempt by the man in charge to appease and show our enemies that he is a “nice guy,” rather than stand up to them, and get ready for the showdown that is inevitably coming.

A disaster is headed our way, and leadership is sorely lacking. More than that, it is almost a joke.

Where an old man in charge who has his wits about him is an asset, especially if he is a good negotiator, a stumbling, bumbling, incoherent old man in the White House is incapable of dealing with these ruthless thugs. Heaven help us.

CARL T. YATES
Warrenton

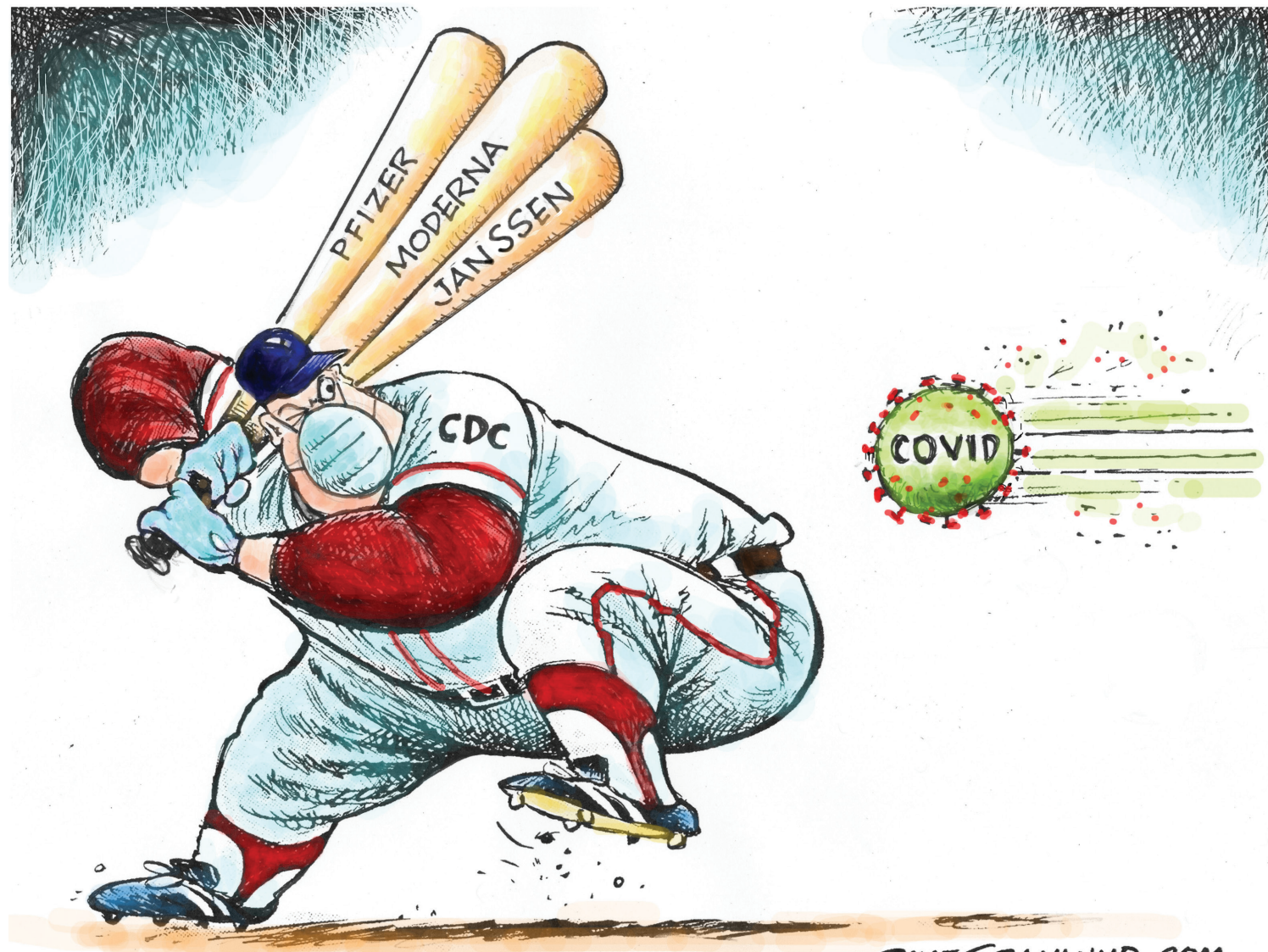
Show up

When I was 14, I got my first part-time job. I didn’t know a lot, but I knew I’d better show up for work, or I’d be fired.

Some Oregon lawmakers don’t seem to understand this basic principle. When they took their oath of office, they swore to uphold the constitution on our behalf. Their first duty is to show up for work.

I’m not the only one who feels this way. Polling shows the vast majority of Republicans, Democrats and Independent Oregonians want consequences for lawmakers who fail to show up to work.

I’m glad there are common-sense bills on the table to address this problem. If lawmakers don’t show up to work, they shouldn’t get paid. They should be fined, and if they have 10 unexcused absences in a legislative session, they should not be



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able to run for reelection.

If a 14-year-old can understand this, our lawmakers should, too. Oregonians want a functioning representative democracy. There is already too much extremism in our country. Let’s get back to basics. Lawmakers need to show up, do their job and work with the other side.

DEBRA FERENCY
Warrenton

Prepare for wildfires

Is your home defensible from fire? Would your roof withstand a shower of burning embers? Does the landscaping in your yard resist fire? Could emergency vehicles get close to your residence? Do you have an escape route?

Wildfires are as much a part of the

landscape in the West as blizzards and tornadoes are in the Midwest. Wildfire seasons are increasing in length and intensity. Increasing population growth continues to push into the interface between natural areas and residential and commercial areas.

Creating defensible space around residences, businesses and community assets will save lives, structures and also assist our courageous firefighters. In megafires, resources may be stretched beyond capacity.

It is not possible to be everywhere at once, despite the amazing working network of state and federal agencies, local fire districts, local businesses and volunteers who fight fires.

Our land use laws, written 50 years ago, need to be updated, as do our building codes. Defensible space should be

added to the list of needs of our regional infrastructure.

Communities must continue working with their fire professionals and emergency management departments to hold trainings and practices in fire prevention and preparation. All of this requires dedication of funding in governmental budgets.

In terms of creating defensible space, there are great resources already online. Start with these websites: Oregon State Extension Service, the National Fire Protection Association and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

Talk with your family, your neighbors, your community leaders. Let’s be proactive to improve outcomes of the next fire season.

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN
Astoria