

OPINION



the Astorian

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OUR VIEW

A cautious return

A national newsletter recently captured a nuance of the coronavirus pandemic. “While much of the nation tiptoes toward normalcy, coronavirus cases are again overloading hospitals in areas with low vaccination rates.”

That is particularly disturbing. And it is a reminder that we must not rush to return to normalcy.

Usually, having extolled the virtues of last week’s Clatsop County Fair, we would be gearing up to highlight the efforts of Astoria Regatta organizers to stage another of the brightest events of the summer calendar.

As well as music, carnivals and activities showcasing talented exhibitors, the fair is essentially a social occasion — people meet acquaintances they don’t see the rest of the year.

The curtailed activities announced for the Regatta sensibly acknowledge the unsafe times in which we live. The Regatta has a specialness because it’s a community event that reminds us of our rich maritime heritage.

Like the fair, it is central to our usual enjoyment of summer. It’s not surprising organizers have been anticipating these two events as a sign things are significantly better.

But are they?

When the global pandemic emerged from its early stage secrecy, the government restrictions started in March 2020. Since that time, much has happened.

Since we realized we had a crisis, our leaders have faltered, moved ahead with vigor, then occasionally taken steps back. Front-line health professionals’ pleaded for help. Epidemiologists and virologists spoke — often, their warnings fell on deaf ears.

There has been progress, however.

Masks became a staple of everyday life, and should continue to be in coming months. The governors of Oregon and Washington state both insist that staff and children wear them this coming school year. They recommend people continue to wear them in most indoor public circumstances, too, as a precaution to stop the spread.

One apparent success story has been the manner in which, as the nation’s virus death toll hit the hundreds of thousands, scientists raced to produce vaccines. When their story is fully told, we anticipate the barriers they overcame will make compelling reading. Federal agencies hurried to give tentative approval, promote the vaccines, and tried to put in place a plan to distribute stocks to the states.

Residents everywhere stepped forward to receive the vaccines, first the most vulnerable among our population, then others who determined it was their duty to themselves and their neighbors.

And then what happened? The situation changed. Increasingly dangerous variants of the virus threatened our world once again.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The Clatsop County Fair featured rides and attractions.

This happened exactly as the irrational phenomenon of vaccine hesitancy morphed from a rare religious scruple to a widespread political statement. Distrust of government has become associated with opposition to masks and vaccines. Western governors’ restrictions — now significantly changed from 2020 — continue to be viewed as an attack on our free-market economy itself. Similarly, mask mandates have been characterized as a restriction on civil liberties.

If the coronavirus experience has shown the world anything, it is that the dangers can quickly become a moving target. Today’s headlines about the delta variant likely will be replaced in the coming months with revelations about other currently unknown health dangers.

Experts have said that vaccinations and safe behavior around others are the two most important factors to surviving the pandemic. More is being learned about the specific vaccines. One or more may require a booster shot.

That doesn’t mean the original jab was useless, just a reminder that medical science is a process of discovery.

We commend those who are treading with care.

Precautions should continue, even as our communities open up and events like the fair and Regatta return. Masks and distancing can all lessen the chances of catching or spreading a potentially deadly virus.

So that wording we mentioned at the top of this editorial signals a strategy.

America’s biggest public health danger isn’t the virus itself. It is complacency.

The pandemic isn’t over. We must tiptoe toward normalcy.

That means:

- Get vaccinated.
- Follow mask guidelines.
- Stay safe.

We are all in this together.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Played

The article about the Oregon Golf Invitational tournament on page A3 of the Tuesday edition of The Astorian failed to state where the tournament was played.

I could be wrong, but I think it is one of the basic “who, what, when, where, why” questions that should be answered by a journalist.

ERIC OLSON
Warrenton

Asking

For over two months, I have been asking the Clatsop County commissioners to repair the beach accesses at Falcon Cove/Cove Beach as required by the Beach Bill of 1967. They have done nothing but stall and pass the buck to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

At their meeting July 28, once again the county manager gave information that did not even relate to my request. The public and first responders should have access, not words! I have two minutes twice a month to try to get some answers. County Manager Don Bohn talked

about two beach accesses that are already open at the meeting, not the ones I am concerned about.

REBA OWEN
Warrenton

Shame

On Tuesday, The Astorian ran a front-page headline stating: “Conservatives more likely to decline vaccines.”

The essence of the story was based on a survey showing a comparison of large population cities in relation to rural areas. It is a well-established fact that the state of Oregon is very progressive in its politics, as shown by most recent election results.

I view this headline as intended to anger conservatives, when considered in relation to how few details were included in the article to explain how this conclusion was reached. I view this as a way that appears to shame conservatives publicly.

I dislike any survey using percentages rather than exact counts. Meaningful surveys need to include many questions, covering all sides of an issue. I feel this story had a bias it was attempting to sell that was unfair by leaving out specifics — report



everything or nothing.

If a specific political class is mentioned, the reporter should be required to show all of the facts, such as how many people participated locally, and what political party these people claimed.

The company conducting the survey claimed it included 1,464 people. I would be very interested in the number of each

party that participated in the survey.

Many people do not trust any reporting survey results because of insufficient information included in stories. Bias narrative is a constant problem from most media, and I resent all stories with incomplete information.

SCOTT WIDDICOMBE
Warrenton