

OPINION

Hood River News

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Photo by Larry Jones

SPRING SCENES

"Wildwood wonders on a joyful hike in the Hood River Valley," Larry Jones calls this image of yellow glacier lilies. Send your Spring Scenes image to hrnews@hoodrivernews.com, 1-2 MB attachments, and add a short description, please.

Our Readers Write

Together

History will judge harshly the delayed response of the U.S. Administration to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Squandering the benefit of timely warnings, the administration failed to adequately prepare, act and communicate — all compounded by the president's aversion to learning and refusal to take responsibility. The price is already tragically high.

As broken and surreal as political realities in our country and world are, though, the human spirit is alive and well. We see it a little everywhere. As an oceanographer at a medical university, I watch from the safe distance afforded by modern communications, a range of dedicated healthcare professionals at a main hospital prepare and act to deal with a crisis of unparalleled national and global impact. Their selfless dedication — replicated across country and world by so many of their colleagues, too often in daunting conditions — is inspiring. As is inspiring the science-based knowledge that guides them, expanded daily through the around-the-clock work of biomedical researchers everywhere.

As a U.S. citizen, I watch with respect as dedicated public servants, at the Center for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, and Health Authorities across the country, struggle to prevail, with courage and subject matter competence, over the hurdles created both by the pandemic and a dysfunctional political context. Of their success depends how we survive this crisis. As a neighbor, I watch with concern and admiration owners bringing resolve and creativity to the challenge of keeping their small businesses from collapsing, amidst an upside-down reality that threatens lives and livelihoods. The same applies to staff at public utilities, support centers, and educational institutions, striving to maintain normalcy in essential services. And to employees at supermarkets and delivery services, suddenly placed at the front lines of an epidemic. Of their dedication and success, too, depends how we survive this crisis.

We are all in this together. People like you and me make everyday decisions that matter deeply. Hand hygiene, social distancing, use of resources, kindness and caring, staying healthy, and voting — are all among individual choices with enormous collective consequences. Let's choose wisely.

Antonio Baptista
Mount Hood Parkdale

Support eateries

While walking past the China Gorge restaurant this morning, I noticed the sign, "Open for Takeout." I texted my wife to suggest Chinese for dinner. I went in and picked up a take home menu and I am looking forward to dinner.

Many of you have a favorite (or more) local eateries. If they are set up for take out, delivery, or drive through, please consider eating in with their delicious offerings. I'm sure it will help them weather this economic nightmare and they will know you are thinking of them.

John Brennan
Hood River

Nuestra salud

People are doing wise, rational things to prepare for the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic: Staying home when possible, taking really good care when they need to be out or working, doing plain old Good Deeds for neighbors and others. Here are two more things we can do:

1. We all want our healthcare professionals — front line doctors, nurses and others, and everyone who works in healthcare in any role at all — to answer their call to duty, even when the going gets rough. We all want them to be there when we need them, and to be as healthy, rested and supported as possible. Do you know someone working in healthcare? Talk to them and ask/suggest how you can be supportive in the coming weeks. Make and drop off meals for them and their family? Offer some eldercare or childcare they would have to be doing otherwise, of course with the proper precautions and supplies? (Some tips: tinyurl.com/uh25xw8.) Buy and deliver groceries? Make phone calls, drop off bill payments, take over their usual volunteer stint if allowed? Walk the dog? Please think about it. Their work is critical to our whole community's health. If we can do anything in addition to saying thanks, let's help them out.

2. If you haven't made an Advance Directive (and anyone over 18 always should have!), there's no time like the present. I'm not talking exclusively about end-of-life decisions — I mean things like whether we want to go to the hospital when sick, whether we'd want a ventilator or life support, etc. Make sure to designate a healthcare representative who knows what you want when you can't speak for yourself (whether it's because of coronavirus or getting hit by a truck). Oregon has a handy

online advance directive form here: tinyurl.com/y4bcct3a. It doesn't need to be notarized. So if you've been procrastinating on doing your "advance care planning," take this opportunity as a prompt to get the job done.

A nuestra salud ("to our health").

Tina Castañares
Hood River (Odell)

Misguided

Chuck Thomsen, you did not protect me by leaving Salem and hiding out in another state. I also want you to know that I am not a member of any special interest group and I live right here in Hood River County, not Portland, and that I did sign the petition to recall you.

The thing you and the rest of your Republican no shows don't seem to understand is that there is a reason you are a "Super Minority" and the Democrats have a super majority in Oregon (hint, the reason is Republicans don't believe climate change is really happening).

I have no doubt that, refusing to believe climate change is happening and that we all need to do something about it, will be the ultimate undoing of the Republican Party. I also have no doubt that the longer we wait to do something about it, the more it is going to cost all of us in money and many other ways.

So Chuck, you can say you were protecting the misguided belief of the Republican Party that climate change isn't happening, but you cannot say that you were protecting me or any of the rest of us who are in the majority that you are protecting us.

Darrell Roberts
Mt. Hood-Parkdale

Trust Thomsen

"Thank you, Sen. Chuck Thomsen!" Oregon citizens deserve the opportunity to vote on important issues like the "Cap & Trade Bill" stuck in the Senate. Now some people want to recall you because you believe the Hood River voters should get their two cents into this issue.

Lately, I have learned that recalling Chuck isn't just a local Hood River County affair, but it is monetarily being furnished by Portland people who want to get a Portland Democrat into his seat. For example, "Blue Oregon" has contributed \$37,000. Retired State Senator from Portland William Shields has given \$15,000. Also, in the pot is the American Federation of Teachers.

Also, of all the State Republican's that left the state to give their constituents the right to know and vote on the cap

and trade bill, why is Chuck Thomsen the only elected state representative or senator that is being recalled?

I trust Sen. Thomsen that the Cap & Trade bill will cost us much more money.

Tom Yates
Hood River

Extreme

Sen. Chuck Thomsen's ridiculous explanation (Another Voice: "I left Salem to protect you") only strengthens the case that he doesn't belong in the state Senate. The claim that "special interests groups" are backing the recall effort against him conveniently ignores the fact that it has been special interest groups that have underwritten the Republican walkout in the legislature the last five years. According to Oregonian reporter Rob Davis, AWOL Oregon Senators have taken \$117,619 in campaign contributions from the likes of the Koch Brothers and other fossil fuel interests. As Davis reported in the Oregonian last year, Oregon leads the nation in per capita corporate contributions to the legislature. It's hard to avoid the conclusion that all that dark money has eclipsed some of Sen. Thomsen's brighter inclinations. The hidden agenda behind putting carbon-pricing to a popular vote, which Thomsen deceptively frames as a violation of voter rights, is that it allows these same fossil fuel interests to dump millions into defeating such a referendum.

In Washington state in 2018, \$31.5 million, the bulk of it from BP and the Koch brothers, went into defeating i-1631, a carbon-pricing bill. Oil money killed a similar bill in Colorado. Voters should remember that rural Oregonians were exempted from the fuel tax in the latest version of the climate bill. So why would Thomsen continue to obstruct? The "extreme agenda" for which Thomsen blames Gov. Kate Brown and the Democrats more accurately belongs to Thomsen and his Republican deserters.

A small group of minority party legislators, with funding from fossil fuel interests, chooses to hold up the business of an entire state on behalf of those interests. Now that's extreme. Voters should recognize his hostage-taking tactics for what they are, and remove him from office.

Steven Hawley
Hood River

Take action

It is important to understand why COVID-19 exists and take appropriate action if humanity is to ever get a grip on the current situation and the future situations that will most cer-

tainly occur again and perhaps be much worse.

While the current race for a vaccine is on and planet Earth is currently on lock down, we must understand the genesis of this problem much like a responsible patient would want to know the cause of their disease so they can truly erase it from their lives instead of just going on a lifetime course of medicine.

The current pandemic has all evidence pointing to illegal, abusive, exploitive wildlife markets where people buy animals for consumption. Just to be clear, even if they occur in corners of the world where it is "technically" legal it is still a crime against our planet's biodiversity. The animals in question come from all corners of the globe and are housed in cramped stress quarters, are then butchered live, in many cases, for human consumption. This circumstance is among the reasons that viral jumps occur between the nonhuman animal kingdom and homo sapiens and this is believed to be the mechanism through which Covid-19 exists today putting us all on extreme alert, causing death and illness, and shutting down society and people's livelihoods. It did not have to happen.

Part of the global response to COVID-19 must include the abolishing of such "wet" markets for the purpose of protecting the biodiversity and nonhuman sentience on our planet. It is far overdue for humans to protect what is left of our biodiverse planet and all the innocent sentient inhabitants that live within it.

Nathan Smith
Hood River

Example

I think we all have to stay aware that the problems we will find with the behavior of others will also be our own, some more so even. So, I don't want to think I am ahead of anyone else on this. We're all operating blind, largely, and are prey to base impulses.

But I am wondering why Hood River couldn't become the town that sets an example for other towns and for ourselves in the future. Someone said to me once, "Oh, Hood River. That's where all the traffic stops when somebody crosses the street."

"Yeah, that's the place!"

Well, how else might we do the very right thing in spite of warring tendencies?

If we remembered that our first survival instinct is to be selfish and we have to fight that ... For instance, anyone keeping a more than needed supply of what someone else might suffer without might find a way to get some to those people. Maybe the hospital needs

medical supplies like masks.

Other suggestions?

And I'm thinking of the check the government will be sending to me and to my business. I think I should find a use for it besides spending it on myself, assuming I have what I need. And insofar as I have any savings from my business that has been accumulated because of my employees, and really, most of it has been made that way, I think laying off people for lack of current business, while I still have such savings, is questionable.

Wouldn't it be cool to have Hood River, you and I, as an example of a town that went the extra mile to set a standard others might consider? Maybe we'll be the place where people who usually stop to help someone in trouble still fights back the fear, takes precautions (and teaches them in doing that), and interrupts our hurrying to wherever we feel it is so important to get to. And let's encourage our governments to spend what it takes and tax who has extra to keep our people safe, healthy, whole.

Bob Williams
Hood River

Misinformation

Sen. Chuck Thomsen's March 18 opinion piece arguing against his recall was riddled with misinformation. He first stated that "special interest groups" are backing the recall election. In fact, it is the "common interest" of his constituents to have a senator who will show up to do his job that is driving this recall effort. He said he left Salem to "protect your right to vote on the cap-and-trade bill," when actually it is the will of the majority of Oregon voters that led them to elect representatives and senators who would pass meaningful climate legislation that was well-crafted, evidence-based, and years in the planning — not a "reckless bill," as he put it. Thomsen claimed that these are "downtown Portland groups" that are seeking to oust him, when in fact it is people from rural areas, small towns, and cities throughout his district that are fed up with his failure to show up and vote on bills important to us all. I'm a small woodland owner from a rural area of Corbett, not a "downtown Portlander." Nor are we "special interest groups who stand to profit" if cap-and-trade passes. We are citizens who believe we all need to step up and share the burden of moving to a carbon-free economy.

Thomsen stated that "average Oregonians don't want and can't afford" the cap-and-trade bill. Clearly he is out of step with average Oregonians

See LETTERS, page A9

ANOTHER VOICE

Friends ask public to 'give the trails a break'

By **KEVIN GORMAN**
Friends of the Gorge

In recent days, reports of crowded trailheads in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area have been reported by numerous news outlets with accompanying concerns expressed by community leaders and Gorge officials.

On a beautiful day, my first

instinct is to drive to the Gorge for a hike. But I'm not doing that.

We all have a role to play as responsible stewards for the Columbia Gorge. And those of us who live in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area owe it to our fellow citizens who live in Gorge communities to give Gorge trails a break in the coming days.

We must all support federal, state, and local health officials by following current social distancing guidance. We also must support the efforts by Gorge officials and public land managers to keep both Gorge trails and their communities safe.

This weekend, according to numerous reports received from Gorge residents and com-

munity leaders, a number of trailheads and other recreation sites around the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area were filled with crowds and long bathroom lines. Crowded trailheads just increase the burden for local land managers responsible for cleaning and maintaining public lands throughout the Gorge. And accidents or

falls from visitors on the trails could put Gorge search and rescue groups at greater risk and increase strains on local hospitals.

By all means, get out and enjoy the sunshine today. But please consider doing so within the vicinity of your home. Your community will thank you and the Gorge will thank you.

Kevin Gorman is executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge, a conservation organization with over 7,000 members dedicated to protecting, preserving, and stewarding the Gorge for future generations.

Learn more at gorgefriends.org.