



JEFF BLACKWOOD
UNDERSTANDING OUR CHANGING CLIMATE

Climate justice for the most vulnerable

COVID-19 has taught us many lessons. We have learned how vulnerable underserved communities, people of color, indigenous people, women, elder care facilities and prisons can be. They have been disproportionately affected by sickness, hospitalization, death and financial stress.

While some at the upper income levels have fared better than others, many of those at the lower end still struggle and are on the edge of health and financial crisis. There are similarities between what we have experienced with COVID and what the future may bring with a warming climate.

As documented by NASA, 2016 and 2020 are the warmest years in recorded history. More people and more nations are committed to dealing with a changing climate than ever before. The impacts of a changing climate are diverse and, unfortunately, disproportionate.

Climate justice highlights disparities in how our communities and governments serve our citizens. We have seen these disparities in our responses to COVID-19 infections, precautions, and vaccine deliveries. If we do not learn how to better address these inequities, climate change will disproportionately affect underserved populations.

Climate justice is more than a term. It is a movement to address inequities in how climate change can affect vulnerable communities.

“Climate change is happening now and to all of us. No country or community is immune,” according to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. “And, as is always the case, the poor and the vulnerable are the first to suffer and the worst hit.”

It is ironic and deeply unfair that people whose lifestyles contribute the least to climate change will suffer the most from its effects.

Longer, drier, hotter summers will be more difficult and likely less productive for those working outside. At home and in the office, hot days are an inconvenience for many, but most of us can just turn up the air conditioning, a privilege not shared by many with lower incomes. Recent research has shown that low-income neighborhoods often experience as much as 7 degree Fahrenheit increase in temperature over more affluent communities, due to increased amounts of asphalt and concrete and less shade.

Heat, respiratory illnesses, insect-borne diseases and other health challenges increase in response to elevated temperatures. To many, hotter, drier summers and more intense storms are an inconvenience. When you are living on the edge, however, these stresses can be disastrous.

As many organizations and communities develop diversity, equity and inclusion policies, there is an opportunity to turn words into actions when preparing for future impacts of a changing climate. We continue to address challenges in providing access to health care, education, housing and wages that support families.

We are more aware of distrust in government and communities relating to systemic racism. Underserved communities often struggle to influence policies and practices influencing their lives and well-being. What many of us take for granted can be barriers for others. The more we understand these barriers, the better we can embrace meaningful equity and inclusion in addressing issues, such as a warming climate.

Solutions should meet the needs of the people most impacted. To do this, we need a concerted effort to listen and understand those needs. Which combination of language, housing, access to affordable health care, education, food security and other issues do our underserved and low-income communities see as their priorities? How can trust be improved? Only by increasing our understanding of these priorities and issues can effective adaptation and mitigation strategies be developed for climate justice.

With COVID we are establishing a new normal for how we work, educate and interact within our communities. A changing climate will bring new normals as well. As we are learning with COVID, underserved communities and lower-income populations are more vulnerable than most. Those who suffer the most tend to be those with the fewest options. Our region is fortunate to have many diverse communities.

What we are experiencing with COVID can help us learn how to deal with societal inequities. We have the capacity to reduce the impacts of a changing climate on our most vulnerable citizens if we have the collective will.

Jeff Blackwood spent his career with the U.S. Forest Service and is a member of Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition, a nonprofit dedicated to sharing science-based information on climate change.

Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro



ANDREW CLARK
SLICE OF LIFE

Have you ever climbed the highest mountain on a continent? If not, there is a good one waiting for you in Tanzania.

Mount Kilimanjaro — “Kili” to those that love her — is 19,341 feet high. The name is a combination of two Swahili words — Kilima means “mountain” and njaro mean “shining” — the Shining Mountain. And with good reason. When we were Peace Corps volunteers in 1964 it was capped year around with 80-foot-high blue-ice glaciers with snow on top and it was magnificent but now, with climate change eating away at it, the mountain is naked rock. The shine is gone, and with it the beauty.

I distinctly remember my first time to see Kili.

We were traveling to northern Tanzania on a bus, idly looking out the windows at the passing terrain. The day was broken white clouds with nothing special going on. I glanced out the front and high up in the sky in a small patch of clear sky was another white thing that did not look like a cloud — and I suddenly realized that it was Kilimanjaro so very far above us. It was stunningly beautiful. I instantly I fell in love with her, and knew that I had to climb that mountain and visit her summit. During the next several years I did — five times.

Kili has two major peaks — the big one that we all know is called Kibo, and the smaller one — at only 16,893 feet — is Mawenzi. The peaks are very different in that Kibo has all the glaciers and is basically an ash cone, and Mawenzi is solid rock. Kibo is an easy walkup and Mawenzi is a tough climb.

The first time I went up Kili was the traditional tourist climb. It takes six days for the 38-mile round trip and there are three cabins along the way for sleeping. Porters carry the loads and meals are prepared for the tourist, so it is quite easy just following along the trail and enjoying the walk. The highest cabin on the third day is at 15,430 feet at the base of the scree slopes. The guide awakens you early in the

the guide I would like to go down into the crater. He was skeptical.

“Do you think you can do this?” he asked.

Yes, I can.

“Only one in about 1,000 people who climb this mountain are able to do that,” he said.

OK. I’m that one.

“You’re sure?” he wondered.

Yes, I’m sure. So down we went. Kili is not a dead volcano — she’s dormant. Down in the crater there are fumaroles blowing out sulfur-laden steam, and surrounding them are solid blocks of pure sulfur that have precipitated out of the steam. For the local Chagga tribe of people who live around the mountain that sulfur

is an important and expensive medicine, so the guide was delighted to fill his knapsack with blocks of sulfur and make some good money.

The second climb was a wild-hare idea to do on a weekend. I did the whole thing solo in three days. The third

was an attempt at Mawenzi that aborted due to lack of technical gear, the fourth I was a guide for some visitors, and the fifth a successful conquest of the Mawenzi summit.

Great adventure, and I’m still in love with Kili.

If you decide to climb Kilimanjaro, google Kilimanjaro Climbing for a wealth of information. You’re on your way, and happy summiting to you.

Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.

Questions are the pathway to comprehension



SCOTT SMITH
THE EDUCATION CORNER

Understanding the world around us is the goal we want all our children to achieve. We want them to understand and explain what they see, hear and read. It should be really simple. You see it, you talk about it, and you can write about it when you’re older. For some reason, it just doesn’t work that way for everyone. Problem solving is a natural ability humans can accomplish. Yet, many people need a little nurturing to become a master at the skill of understanding (comprehending) and problem-solving (vocal, written or demonstration).

One method for developing problem-solving skills in children is through using questioning. Questioning activates the part of the brain used for problem solving. It doesn’t matter what age, whether the child is 2 or 22, using questioning strategies aids in fostering everyone’s ability to problem solve when having to face a situation they need to resolve on their own. Example: Which do you eat faster with, a fork or spoon? This type of questioning asks the brain to use existing information to respond to a new problem.

Sounds simple, but it’s harder than you think! Living in a fast-moving world, it sometimes feels like we have to get things done quickly. Therefore, we often tell or give the child resolutions to issues

so we are able to move on. We do the problem solving for the child, therefore, they quickly learn that in order to get the information they need, they simply ask. Frustration hits when a child has not had practice, is asked a question and expected to respond orally or in writing, and is at a loss for what to do. Hurried adults become frustrated and often give a response something like, “Just figure it out!”

Have you provided the opportunities for your child to know how to figure things out, or have you assumed they should know? The child is showing they have not developed their problem-solving ability and, without prior practice, everyone becomes frustrated. The teaching moment is now. Use questions to help them draw their own conclusions, right or wrong, and learn from the experience.

Starting with giving the child a simple choice is best. Remember, it is okay if they choose something different than what you think is best. Many times they will, but this is where learning takes place. So if they have a choice of pop or ice cream and they choose pop, but others have ice cream, they may change their mind after everyone gets their treat. You just have to remind them that it was their choice for the pop, and next time they might be able to choose ice cream. I can almost guarantee there may be a tantrum — but remember, don’t solve it for them. Don’t offer to trade. Now, if they ask you to trade, they are starting to use their own problem solving, and it becomes your choice whether to trade or not. This method works no matter the child’s age.

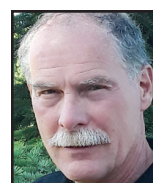
Asking questions such as, “Do you think that’s the best choice?” “Which do you think would go faster?” or “What would you do with all that money?” forces them to trigger the thinking process and go into problem solving. The struggle comes in guiding them with questions in order to draw their conclusions. The world all of a sudden moves into slow motion, and the child is faced with questions. The No. 1 thing the child is fearing is making the incorrect decision. Thus, we move into the child’s world of decision making using questions, helping them make their decision or draw their own conclusions. When given more and more opportunities to allow them to nurture the skill of problem solving, they will get quicker.

If you have a child you notice is struggling with problem solving, choose a time to work with them. Trying to have a teaching moment when the whole family is waiting might be difficult for everyone. Seek out a time you are able to spend time with them and guide them in developing their problem-solving skills. You might consider starting with one situation each day, allowing them to make their own decision.

Start asking questions, and you’ll see your child’s ability to problem solve, discuss, and even write about situations make remarkable growth and their ability to answer school questions as well.

Dr. Scott Smith has more than 40 years as a Umatilla County educator and serves on the Decoding Dyslexia-OR board as their parent/teacher liaison.

Controlling allergies the key to a healthier life



JOHN WINTERS
HEALTH CARE ESSENTIALS

We are all sailing in a sea of microbes. Allergies to pollen, dust, fumes and foods can sink us. Spring is especially rough for allergy sufferers. Millions of different viruses exist, a couple hundred of which cause illness.

Our skin is covered with microbes, mostly friendly. Our gut is populated with trillions of bacteria, most of which are beneficial. Healthy soil teems with all sorts of microbes. The daunting and crucial task for your body is to keep out the bad guys while leaving the good guys alone.

This task is made more difficult by the addition of new triggers in our world. There are more than 85,000 chemicals registered with the EPA. Ironically, over-sanitization and overuse of prescription antibiotics weakens our immune systems. Toddlers have a habit of putting everything in their mouths, which may seem disgusting, but this actually trains and strengthens the immune system.

Early exposure to microbes reduces problems later.

Allergies have increased in recent decades; thirty percent of adults and 40% of children currently suffer from allergies.

Spring’s pollen adds to the load, causing red eyes and sneezing. Allergies occur when the body overreacts to a harmless substance. Coughing, sneezing, and watering eyes are the body’s attempts to remove the irritant. Intense reactions are unnecessary and can even be unhealthy.

So why do some people’s immune systems make such a big deal out of minor irritants? There are many reasons someone may have allergies. They may be eating foods that trigger a reaction, breathing dust or pollen, or coming in contact with molds or chemicals. Triggers can assault us from any direction. The other variable here is your general state of health — how full is your boat? Science understands the many allergens that exist, how they affect us, and how our bodies react.

Healthy skin, sinuses, liver, immune system and even the gut all contribute to smooth sailing.

When treating allergies you can take a couple different tactics. You can identify and eliminate the irritant, or improve the body’s response with mitigation. I suggest you look at both and do what is easiest first! Various allergy tests exist, but the results aren’t always helpful.

I found a particular “Food Intolerance Test” most useful. It’s always smart to improve your general health, since your skin, sinuses, liver, gut and immune system interact in so many ways. Other easy steps include putting a HEPA air cleaner in your bedroom and cleaning up your home envi-

ronment. Rugs, curtains, stuffed toys and bedding all harbor pollen and dust mites.

Consider removing the rugs and curtains and cover the pillows and mattress with mite-proof cases. Buy a water filter for access to plenty of cheap chlorine-free water.

A clean diet is an important factor in allergies, but is harder to attain. Modern diets are often filled with processed foods, which are in turn filled with artificial ingredients new to the human diet. The most common food allergies are dairy, soy, corn, wheat and eggs. You could use a “Rotation Diet” and perhaps find the problem food.

Keep in mind additives like artificial colors, flavors and preservatives can also cause problems, which is why minimally processed, preferably organic foods are healthiest. You can use an App called “Content Checked” to scan the package barcode for product details.

Allergies are a symptom of an overloaded boat. All “cargo” onboard determines its seaworthiness. Springtime pollens add to the load of all your other challenges, be they foods, poor sleep, stress or an inactive life. Allergies can further load a system, leading to more significant, deeper problems. Any irritant you throw overboard will help you float better.

John Winters is a naturopathic physician, who recently retired after operating a practice in La Grande since 1992.