

OUR VIEW

Making informed vaccine decisions

There never seems to be much good news regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, but the information that new data shows the infection continues a gradual decline in the county should be encouraging.

State health officials reported cases locally have dropped for six consecutive weeks until the week ending June 13. After that a slight boost in cases was reported, but nowhere near the numbers we reached earlier this year.

That's all good news, but more people need to get vaccinated. Vaccination remains the only reliable method to combat the virus.

Of course, no one — not the state or the federal government — can force anyone to get a vaccine if they don't want one.

There remains plenty of people who remain skeptical about COVID-19 vaccines and no doubt are reluctant to get inoculated.

We believe everyone should be able to make their own choice regarding whether to get the vaccine. We also believe, though, that critical decisions such as a choice to get inoculated should rest on information, good information.

There are a host of conspiracy theories out about the vaccine and lots of misinformation. The key item for residents here — and anywhere else — should be to be able to make the best decisions possible with the information at hand.

There are a host of places — such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and your own health care provider — where a resident can go to acquire accurate information.

The sources are out there, and they contain the most up-to-date information available regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

Once a person does the research and contemplates the information, they are then armed appropriately to make a decision on getting a vaccine.

Misinformation, of one type or another, proliferates across the nation and has for many years. The advent of social media doesn't make trying to get accurate information out any easier. Rumors spread on social media and then become "facts" all before a single piece of information can be double checked for accuracy.

That happened in the last two elections and is happening now with the vaccines.

Every person in the United States should be able to make a decision on their town about acquiring a vaccine. Yet, they should do so from a position of knowledge, not rumor and social media hype.

Doing the research is hard work sometimes and time consuming. But it is essential in this day and age when information often is touted as "facts" but in reality is just more nonsense.



Nurturing hope out of heartbreak



REGINA BRAKER
ANOTHER MILE

Eastern Oregon is a place where connections with other people abound across the expanse of several counties. Early on as I was getting to know Wynelle, we were talking about where we had come from and worked. She named her sister-in-law and asked if I knew her. As so often is the case, having worked at our rural university in La Grande, I did know her, and was surprised at this random connection to my fellow soprano in the choir we sang in.

Making new friends in a community often starts with shared interest groups, and gradually lead to discovery of other things in common. That has not been so easy this year for newcomers to Pendleton, as they post queries on social media about how to gain a foothold here. Wynelle was welcoming to me as someone who herself had moved to Pendleton years ago and appreciated those who helped her gain insights into this community.

A nurturer by inclination, she reaches out to those around her, recognizing something valuable in those whom she supports and hopes to see flourish. And I am still thankful to her for the housewarming gift of primroses she left on our front porch along with an invitation to meet for lunch.

Wynelle and her husband have made a deeper commitment beyond what many of us see in our daily responsibilities at home with family, in our occupations and in the community. Her story is remarkable for the lives she and her husband have touched, as they adopted several children over the years, both independently and through the state. Just over the last four years they've welcomed 40 children into their home as foster parents. In that role they provide a reliable, calm and stable environment for children who too frequently have experienced chaos, neglect and trauma. Wynelle's expertise in medical care is essential, as is her belief in the power of love to heal damage and build resilience.

An adult lifetime in Pendleton with a brief stint in Central Oregon came about as the result of a commitment to help out with a local church struggling to build its congregation. With professional credentials allowing Wynelle and her husband a sense of wide-open possibilities for their livelihood, they came to Oregon from the Gulf Coast without personal connections and built their lives here. And as the years progressed their family grew out of a response to the immediacy of emergencies that placed infants and older children in their care — the first, a newborn baby, in response to a call by their pastor. Their children came to them at a week old and then ranging from 3 to 12 years. Wynelle told me, "God kept bringing them to us."

No stranger to adoption, Wynelle grew up in a sibling group of six children, two of whom were adopted. And even though her father struggled as a functional alco-

holic, his strong work ethic and support of his children's education beyond high school, with three graduating college, convinced her of the power of his legacy: Support children's strengths for them to thrive. And so, even where there may be seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Wynelle's children have had opportunity to address what challenges them, while nurturing their passions and talents.

Where there was loss and a late start, that journey is not easy, but the hope and promise that come from the investment of compassion and love is powerful. Her own children thrive and struggle and live their adult lives, sometimes still needing structure and encouragement where it can be found.

The road Wynelle and her family travels reminds us all of struggles we've known in our own circumstances. During this last year, COVID made the journey more difficult, and Wynelle and her husband survived infection. They've decided to transition toward respite care and emergency response for foster children going forward. Wynelle's doctor suggested she could retire, but parents and grandparents don't retire from their roles. Where there still is the possibility of being available where there is need, of giving someone parental support who is missing it, stepping away completely is not yet an option, and I am grateful to her for it.

Regina Braker, a retired educator with journeys through many places and experiences, enjoys getting to know people along the way.

YOUR VIEWS

Veterans supporting Trump doesn't make sense

On television news I saw some veterans sporting a Veterans for Trump cap or T-shirt. This brings up a few interesting points about former President Donald Trump, veterans and the military.

First of all, I wonder if these Trump supporters are aware that he literally bought his way out of military service. When the Vietnam War was at its height, Trump shopped around for a doctor who, for the right price, wrote a letter to the local draft board claiming Trump had "painful" bone spurs in his feet and should get a medical deferment from service. The scheme worked, and Trump successfully evaded military service.

In my opinion, in consideration of his draft evasion, it was blatant hypocrisy that then President Trump, also commander-in-chief, gave the commencement address to the 2020 graduating class at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. As commander-in-chief, he probably just bullied his way into having this honor.

Also, as president, Trump hijacked hundreds of millions of dollars that Congress already approved for much-needed maintenance and improvements on housing for military families, both here and abroad. Trump then applied these funds to his pet project — his racist and shameful wall on our southern border. However, the Biden admin-

istration has recently stopped any more construction on Trump's wall, thankfully.

Trump also famously said that we veterans who served and fought in the Vietnam War were "suckers and losers." By clear inference, Trump also is holding that the 58,000-plus Americans who died in Vietnam are the biggest suckers and losers.

At any rate, it is beyond me to comprehend the obvious support that many veterans, and millions of non-veterans, have for Trump, whose numerous legal problems are just beginning.

Bob Shippentower
Pendleton

American capitalism at work

The American capitalistic system is based on the theory of supply and demand. When there is not enough product to supply the number of people who want and can afford it, the prices increase. When there is more product than people want or can afford, prices go down.

Supposedly, this creates a balance that benefits both consumers and producers. According to the theory, there is no need for the government to be involved in this system.

Because of a global pandemic, production has been low. Workers were furloughed, laid off or unable to work

because of disease. The economy tanked and not enough goods were produced to keep businesses going.

The government, in order to prevent a serious economic depression, provided subsidies for furloughed, laid off or disabled workers to keep the people from doing without their basic needs. While receiving assistance to meet their needs, families survived and the economy began to show the possibility of improving.

To the surprise of many capitalists, unemployed workers are not eager to return to work for the low-wage salaries they were barely surviving on before the pandemic. Apparently, the potential employees are reluctant to go back to the low-paying jobs. They are unwilling to accept jobs producing goods they cannot afford to buy.

Now our American capitalists conclude that government must become involved. Because they are not getting their workers back, employers are demanding the government stop paying subsidies to help families survive. CEOs and business owners want the government to force workers back to work for less than sustaining wages.

So my question is, if capitalism works for pricing goods, why is it not useful for paying workers to produce the goods? Could not the economic theory of supply and demand apply here?

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

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