

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



Best defense against COVID-19? Common sense and information



Last week, the first case of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) was reported in Multnomah County, making it the seventh county in Oregon to record a presumptive case of the virus — and the 15th presumptive positive case in the state (“presumptive” meaning confirmed by state testing but not yet confirmed by the CDC.

As of this writing (March 13), there have been no confirmed cases of the virus in Lane County, presumptive or otherwise.

But as PeaceHealth Oregon Network Vice President of Medical Affairs Jim McGovern, MD, explained in today’s article (page A1), “We cannot say that COVID-19 is *not* present in the Florence community — in fact, it likely is.”

Over the course of the past week, the *Siuslaw News* has been posting daily updates on our Facebook page with information provided by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Lane County Public Health (LCPH) as a way to keep our community members informed with official word from state and local health organiza-

tions.

Regardless of whether you believe that the media is blowing the severity of the virus out of proportion, as a community news source we have an obligation to keep our readers appraised of the facts so that each of us can make informed decisions rather than decisions based on speculation or rumor.

We have kept — and will continue to keep —

leases from local, county and state agencies.

Our objective is to provide the community with a platform to find the latest information from health agencies as well as from local government, groups and organizations.

If you would like information posted there, email nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

A few folks on social

with children.

However, for reasons epidemiologists don’t yet understand yet, those age 60 and older are particularly susceptible to the virus, and especially anyone with underlying respiratory or other health issues — regardless of age.

That means, for the majority of people, this virus won’t have a major impact on their health as long as they practice self-care the same way they would with the flu.

As a community, the bigger responsibility we have is to those who are most at risk. They are the ones that health authorities are focusing their efforts on protecting — and so should the rest of us who aren’t in that high-risk category.

While it’s true that last year’s flu season claimed more lives than COVID-19 has so far, the difference is this is a new virus and therefore an unknown. No one is immune because it has not been encountered before.

And unlike the common strain of flu, there is no vaccine yet and testing for it has required creating new tests that aren’t yet widely available.

Between staying informed and exercising common sense for our own sake and the sake of others, together we can help reduce the impact of this new virus within our community and those who are most susceptible to it.

From the Editor's Desk
Ned Hickson

our reporting specific to the communities we cover and Lane County. To help facilitate official information from county and state health organizations, as well as provide updates on closures and cancellations, we have created a special coronavirus webpage that we are updating throughout the day, every day.

It is accessible to everyone in the communities we serve, whether they are a subscriber or not. The link will take you to that main page, where there are additional pages for:

- 1) Facts and frequently asked questions with information from Lane County Public Health and the Oregon Health Authority
- 2) An ongoing and updated list of event, meeting and activity cancellations in our area
- 3) The latest press re-

media have accused us of fear mongering. I don’t agree with that accusation but can understand their point of view.

However, I believe that real fear is the result of a lack of information — not the presence of it.

Last Monday, members of the OHA explained during an afternoon press conference that their focus has begun to shift: Instead of trying to prevent the spread, they are focusing primarily on ways to protect those who are most vulnerable.

The truth is that healthy individuals between ages of 5 and 59 who become infected with COVID-19 generally suffer only mild symptoms similar to the common cold or flu; the virus seems to have a minimal effect on children and young adults, which is good news for those of us

Siuslaw Public Library temporary closure

(Editor’s Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

I am writing to inform the community that both locations of the Siuslaw Public Library District will be temporarily closed to the public.

This closure is effective immediately and will remain in effect at least through 6 p.m. on Friday, March 20.

This decision was made in consultation with Siuslaw Public Library board members, and in light of new guidelines regarding containment of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

One of the things I love most about this library is that we get to serve everyone in the community — the very young and the very old; travelers from around the world and life-long residents of Lane County.

That wonderful strength is also driving the decision to temporarily close. In consideration of the health of the hundreds of people on a daily basis who visit, volunteer, meet in or work at this library district, we are

GUEST VIEWPOINT
By Meg Spencer
Siuslaw Public Library District Director

a place where the COVID-19 virus could spread.

We want to do our best to support the recommendations of local, state and national health authorities around social distancing and containing the COVID-19 virus.

In the coming days, I will be looking for additional guidance from local, state and national health authorities and will reassess our current closure as is appropriate.

Staff members will also consider additional ways to deliver our ser-

vices. The Siuslaw Public Library is also offering the use of its Maple Street parking lot as a distribution point for students to receive free bagged lunches.

Our library doesn’t charge late fees, so please keep your materials for now. You can also take advantage of our many online resources, including free downloadable books and audiobooks.

Visit www.siuslawlibrary.info/covid19 for links to trusted information about the virus and current community closures and cancellations.

Finally, I want to thank the best library patrons in the world — all of you in this community. I have spent much of this morning and early afternoon greeting you at the door.

You have been nothing but supportive and understanding of staff and the library.

Thank you.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) Explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn’t follow the above criteria.

Email letters to:
nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

WHERE TO WRITE

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