

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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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)

Give generously, stay connected while social distancing

(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'm engaged to a wonderful man named Will. He is a photojournalist and teaches at Pennsylvania State University.

This isn't how I planned to tell anyone that news. I had started by telling my family and dear ex-husband. I wanted to tell my second family next — the wonderful people I work with at the Siuslaw Public Library District.

I wanted to tell the library board and then my wider circle of friends and all the people I care about here in this community. I was excited to share my joy.

I am engaged to a man named Will, and my life has been changed by COVID-19. So now I am sharing my news like this.

Will was here visiting last week. It was my birthday. Lots was happening. Things also started to change. Events started to be canceled. I made the very difficult decision to close the library to patrons. Will got ready to begin teaching all his classes online when Penn State canceled all on-campus courses.

Will and I also had a tough decision of our own to make: He has two children — a college-aged son who was studying in the UK, and a high-school-aged daughter who was visiting that son over her spring break.

It became clear they would both need to return to the United States.

Will could stay here or travel home and be near his children. We decided he should go. We did it as safely as we could. He is back in Pennsylvania and both he and his children are self-quarantining separately.

But then the real change happened. Today, Will's son tested positive for COVID-19.

He is only 21. He is the first case in that Pennsylvania county. So far, he is only miserable and sick at home. But, if he needs to go to the hospital, he will get the best care; they have supplies and aren't yet overwhelmed by patients.

Here's why I want to tell you I am en-

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Meg Spencer Siuslaw Library District Director

gaged.

We need to try and start making choices that will keep us safe and well. Not just those of us who are high-risk, but *everyone* and *all at once*.

Please *stay home* if you can, whenever you can. Consider asking one member of your family to do all the shopping to limit travel and exposure. It doesn't matter what age you are or how healthy you are. This is the best advice from the local, state and federal health experts. It is how we will stop the spread of the virus and make sure we are here on the other side of the curve.

If you go out, do it safely. Maintain a distance. Wash your hands.

Wash them a lot.

We can come together right now, and we should. We can come together at a distance. Support local businesses by shopping with them online — buy gift cards, purchase from local artists and galleries, Christmas and holiday and birthday shop for everyone you love.

Message your favorite local personal trainer and ask them to design the perfect home exercise routine.

Proceed thoughtfully.

Take your time.

Don't ask anyone to put themselves at risk, and don't accept risks yourself. We are still catching up to this new world. Everyone wants to do good things, but we also need to make sure that those things are not adding to the risk of our larger community.

The faster we stop this, the sooner we can all be together again. The faster and more completely we transition, the better we will serve our local economy and business community.

Give generously to the local organizations that are struggling in the thick of the transition to follow new health guidelines while delivering services that are needed by our most vulnerable populations. Money will help them transition better and faster. It might also let them hire people who need work.

Call the people you love.

Call the people you kinda know.

Stay in touch.

If you aren't sure how to protect your health and those of people you love, use trusted resources to find answers. Lane County Health has a phone center you can call with non-emergency questions daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 541-682-1380.

Call 211 for automated information. Visit websites for Lane County Public Health, the Oregon Health Authority or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

You can also check out the library's website at www.siuslawlibrary.info/covid19.

My name is Meg Spencer. I am engaged to Will. My plan is to get married soon.

This is my invitation; I want all of you to be there.

So stay healthy.

LETTERS

VIRUS ECONOMICS

Having been in the restaurant business in Florence, I am aware of how slim are the margins that keep these small businesses in business.

If a restaurant in Florence is clearing 10 percent at the bottom line, they are doing very well; many realize less, even in the busier seasons. If, as is very likely, the current restrictions remain in effect through April, there will most likely be failures.

Should the problem continue through May, failures will become a near certainty. This impacts more than just the individual businesses. Our restaurants represent a significant factor in the draw of tourist and visitor traffic into Florence, particularly to the Old Town district.

If, after the crisis abates, these establishments are gone, it will surely impact the local economy for some time to come.

Beyond honoring the recommendations to limit personal contacts,

there is little we can do as individuals to fight the virus. What we *can* do is try and help our local merchants.

Once or twice a week, patronize restaurants that are offering take-out meals — even if you would not normally eat out quite that often.

It might just provide the edge that allows for recovery.

—Jimmie Zinn
Florence

PLACE THE BLAME WHERE IT BELONGS

To all the people who have been calling recent visitors to Florence selfish and stupid, I'd like to say we should give them a break.

Fox-TV is the most watched network in America and less than a week ago they — and the president — were telling people that this pandemic was nothing, even suggesting it was a plot by Democrats to bring down the president.

Now that Fox and the president have done an about face, supporters are struggling to keep up after going from mocking those who were taking the virus seriously to being expected to take it seriously themselves.

So let's go easy on those folks and place the blame squarely where it belongs: on the politicians and media who have been disseminating false information and conspiracy theories.

We can all avoid sources of false information and conspiracy theories by doing some research and picking one or two media sources that lean slightly left and one or two that lean slightly right.

Avoid the "hair-on-fire" media on either side of the political spectrum; they are not interested in informing us — they want to make us angry and afraid.

Let's not let them do that to us.

—Donna Mlinek
Florence

Why can't we 'level the playing field' with hope?

(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.)

One hundred years ago, the Spanish Flu killed 675,000 Americans — and between 30 and 50 million people around the world. At this time, we are all told to stay home to curb this from happening again. I believe we need to reflect on our desires and faith.

With the sudden halt to the life we were accustomed to, it puts us all into a new way of looking at what has been happening in our lives. This includes the influences from news media, movies, television, sports, advertising and everything else the media exposes us to.

If you love Major League Baseball, sadly the recent "cheating" accusations stemming from modern electronic devices has uncovered yet another disappointing attempt to boost a team's advantage in our "Great American Pastime."

In the late 1990s, players tarnished the sport with the use of steroids.

In reality now, fans are demanding a level playing field.

What is the definition of "level playing field?" Isn't there a fine line be-

tween good sportsmanship and cheating? Fans of basketball bring items to distract players attempting foul shots; football fans do all they can to distract opposing teams, proudly calling themselves "The 12th Man."

Where is the level playing field in that? Does cheating with drugs, devices and unsportsmanlike interference real-

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Carol Slauch Florence resident

ly needed in order to be proud of your team and enjoy the game?

This is what our children are learning from us.

Looking at what is going in today's political world. Do the elected officials in our country operate on a "level playing field"?

In America, our process of choosing a president is the majority vote of the people. Whether you like them or not, they are the elected one.

The news media routinely refers to President Trump as "Mister Trump." This is totally disrespectful to the true American way. There are those that say President Trump is an "egotistical bully" but the people voted for him be-

cause of his personality.

If there was a level playing field, America could get honest reports of the positive advances this team of leaders has made. Our children are constantly exposed to negative social revisions and disrespect in the way we live today; children are not given a "level playing field."

Recently at a news conference, President Trump tried to give a little hope to the people that there may be a useful drug available that could possibly treat COVID-19. A reporter immediately challenged this with a doctor's report that it needed to be tested before it could be used.

This pandemic is very serious and listening to the news is more than depressing. Why can't people realize that hope is needed right now?

The president also stated that he was going to ask the manufacturers to immediately begin building ventilators for the demand expected to save lives. Again, reporters asked if he had any conversations with any of the companies — a question meant to challenge his plans for additional hope.

When will the American people see a "level playing field?" I hope the ones that survive this virus will be willing to live in a more positive and productive life with helping and loving each other.

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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:
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