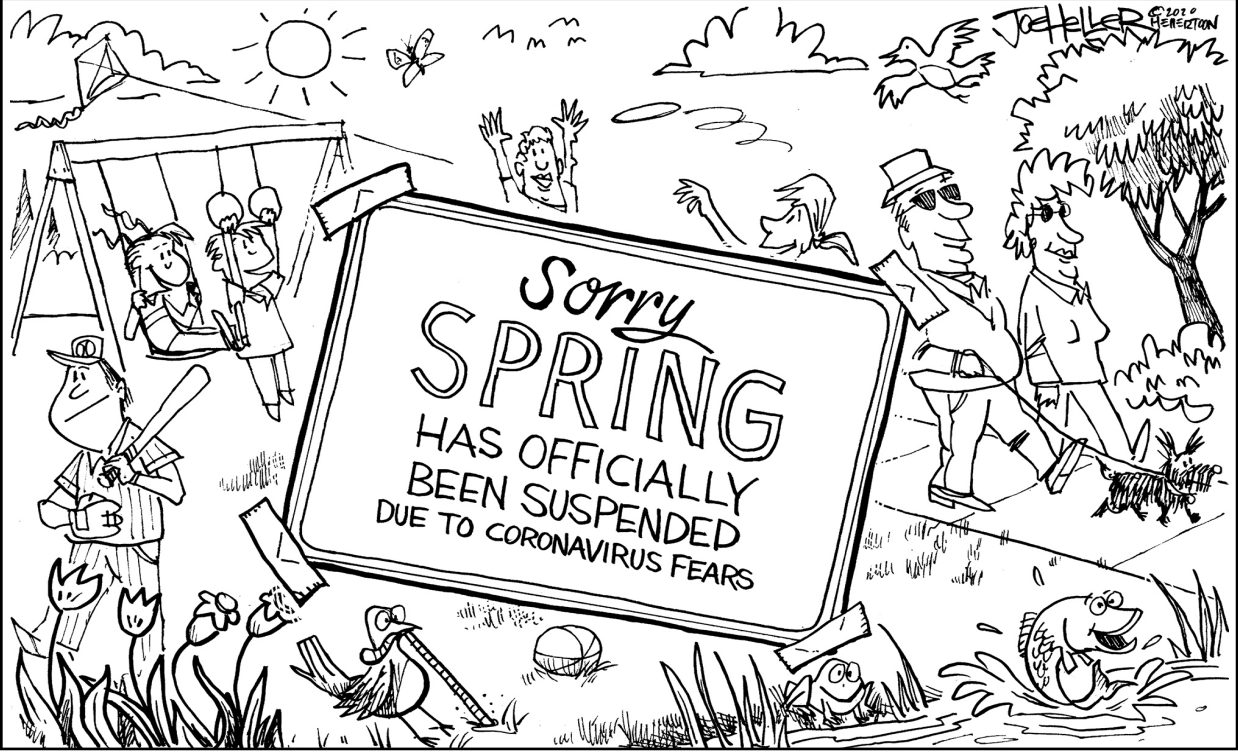


Cottage Grove Sentinel
 116 N. Sixth St.
 Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

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)



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Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel 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anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel 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.

Send letters to:
 nhickson@cg sentinel.com

Trying to find the silver lining as a CGHS senior

(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.)

When it all first happened, before school was even canceled, it was so unreal and a feeling I never expected to have. Never did I think that March 12 would most likely be my last day of high school.

I remember thinking, “Wow, this is really happening,” then almost immediately seeing probably a hundred students posting online that school is closed. Right away, I didn't think it'd ever be this serious. I thought by the end of March we'd be back in school and it would just be forgotten about.

Although, technically, school is scheduled to reopen in late April, I have a strong feeling that I won't be going back to class this school year — my senior year. At first, I thought, “Hey, a couple of plans might get canceled, but we will be back to normal in no time.”

But that changed. Knowing things are coming up

but not knowing if they'll happen — such as graduation — is the hardest part for me. All I'm doing is passing time, one day at a time, until it eventually gets better. The worst part is that I was getting so close to figuring out where I'd be going to college and how I'd be spending the next step of

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Shane Ruam Cottage Grove High School senior

my life, either attending Southern Oregon University or maybe Lane Community College to play soccer.

Now I just continue to wait, hoping everything will fall into place.

In all honesty though, I'm enjoying an extended break. I can still work and go outside; it's not like when we lost power during the “Snowmageddon” in 2019.

Still, going without seeing friends everyday has been hard but doable. I wish more people would abide by the rules, though. We're told to practice social distancing for a reason. Yet many people are still neglecting

to do that. Just the other day, I saw a post on social media about an event that read, “Party at my place [tonight], [hit me up] for details.”

Why are you throwing a party when people are dying? However, many other people are doing what they need to and precautions are being made — so I hope they pay off.

Trying to find a silver lining, I think the most beneficial part of all this is that it's not a certain group of people that's going through this. Everyone in the entire world is experiencing the same thing. You can talk to anyone for help or advice and I would be surprised if they said “no” because, in times like these, people ultimately come together.

Once it's all done, I'll look back on it and think, “No, there's still no way that happened.” I mean, we're literally living through a huge piece of human history, something I've thought about a lot during these past few weeks.

I just hope that soon we will start to get better instead of worse — and in 20 years tell the tale of the notorious COVID-19 to our kids.



Autism Awareness in a time of COVID-19

est-growing, autism is also the least funded and, therefore, least understood disorder. The spectrum of autism is wide ranging, from those who do not speak (40 percent) to others who

While our son, now 20, is well beyond that thanks to the support of teachers, students, family and programs that have given him the tools to understand his Asperger's, getting there

providing emotional support for parents and caregivers of autistic children is especially important.

Through the triumphs and disappointments over the last 14 years, we have always reinforced the message to our son that being autistic isn't any different than being short or tall: Each provide challenges as well as advantages in life. Being willing to accept yourself for who you are is the key to recognizing the difference.

Through my 21 years in journalism in small communities like Cottage Grove, Florence and Mapleton, I've had the privilege of meeting many parents of children with autism, as well as adults living with autism.

As I mentioned, I didn't know much about autism when my son and I met in 2006. Since then, we've learned a lot from each other through the journey we've shared — including what it means for a father and son to share a firm handshake.

I hope you'll join me in recognizing National Autism Awareness Month now through April 30, as well as the unique concerns families with autism are facing in the wake of a world dealing with COVID-19.

From the Editor's Desk Ned Hickson

not only speak but whose talents have impacted the world: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, James Joyce, Albert Einstein, Emily Dickinson, Thomas Jefferson and Dan Aykroyd are just a few.

Each summer, our family participates in the four-day KindTree Autism Camp south of Florence. The mission of the Autism Rocks camp is a simple one: For four days, let those with autism and their families be who they are, free from stares, apology or judgment.

That's because oftentimes the symptoms of autism aren't as apparent as other developmental disorders. As a result, children with autism having a difficult time in social settings — or in extreme cases having a full meltdown — are quickly labeled as being “bratty,” “undisciplined” or simply the result of bad parenting.

wasn't easy — particularly in those public moments under the raised-brow stare of strangers.

In this time of COVID-19, social distancing and sheltering in place, the world has been turned upside down for many with autism who rely on a system of routine and order to avoid anxiety. Children and families in communities here and around the world have been significantly impacted as parents and caregivers find themselves scrambling to keep up with life without a normal routine.

In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has caused significant disruption to children's therapy routines vital to their development. The result is heightened anxiety and behavioral issues.

As we continue through this time, as well as enter Autism Awareness Month,

Cottage Grove Sentinel

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