

EDITORIAL

Thanks,
Leo: now
and always

Leo Adler was not a large man but his legacy, which was substantial even during his life, has grown to massive proportions in the nearly three decades since his death.

It seems passing strange to write that.

Probably for some it seems strange to read.

But it was that long ago, on Nov. 2, 1993, that Adler died in Baker City. He was 98.

He was already the city's biggest benefactor.

His reputation as "Mr. Baker" had been burnished for decades.

But the true scope of Leo's generosity became clear with his death.

Although even that's not quite accurate.

Certainly the \$20 million Leo bequeathed to the town he loved is an amount beyond the capacity of most of us to comprehend.

But over the years since Leo's death, even that substantial figure has been surpassed, and by no small margin.

Thanks to wise investments from the foundation that bears his name, Leo's contributions are nearly double the amount he left in his will.

Leo's philanthropy to date exceeds \$36.2 million, including more than 9,200 college scholarships and grants to more than 1,400 nonprofit community projects.

In 2020 alone, the Leo Adler Foundation awarded more than \$1.21 million in scholarships and community grants — \$846,300 to 242 students for the 2020-21 school year and \$364,734 in grants to 41 nonprofit organizations.

But no amount of accounting, no tallying of figures, can truly capture the essence of what Leo Adler did for Baker County and its residents.

His generosity is in effect perpetual.

The sons and daughters of the first group of recipients of Leo Adler scholarships are themselves now benefiting from his selflessness.

And so it will continue through the generations.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to have met Leo, perhaps even have called him a friend, have our memories.

But all of us whose lives are better because of him can still honor his memory on his birthday, June 21.

A celebration is planned that day, 126 years after Leo's birth, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Adler House Museum, 2305 Main St., the historic home where he lived for much of his life.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Why kids should drop masks

By Mayssa Abuali and Amy Beck

We are living in a modern dystopia when, in the name of science, adults enjoy life unmasked while young children are masked; adults freely go to restaurants and gyms while children have attended school mainly by remote learning. The U.S. pandemic policies have firmly placed us in this position.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released updated guidance for youth camps in late May that used vague wording that could be read as recommending continued outdoor masking of children. "People who are not fully vaccinated," it said, "are encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated." Most group camp activities will require "sustained close contact."

Since the CDC has yet to specifically address masking of children in other settings, gaps in the guidance have led to confusion. Some are using the camp guidance to extrapolate to other settings. As of now, the CDC recommends that unvaccinated people should wear masks anywhere they will be around other people.

As pediatricians, the two questions we must ask are "what is the scientific evidence to support the outdoor masking recommendation for children?" and "how will the endpoint for the masking of American children be determined?"

To answer the first question, the risk of outdoor transmission to and from children must be assessed. Many studies have shown that few infections are transmitted outdoors, regardless of age. A conservative estimate published in February in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* found that the odds of indoor transmission are 18.7 times higher than outdoors.

However, according to current scientific evidence, masks are simply not necessary

in outdoor settings. As with many things COVID-related, there is no one definitive study on pediatric outdoor masking. Our opinion is based on the fact that many studies conclude that outdoor transmission is highly unlikely and that children are less likely to transmit the virus than adults.

Coupled with the low rates of community transmission, it no longer makes sense to require children to be masked outdoors, despite being unvaccinated.

Children are regarded as vectors — people who harbor infectious diseases and infect others — for some respiratory and gastrointestinal viruses. But many studies examining the ability of children to spread COVID-19 in household and daycare, school or camp settings have determined that they have not been the primary drivers of transmission. Children are not the main COVID-19 vectors. Adults are.

Children are asking "when can we stop wearing masks?," but we cannot give them a definitive answer because there is not one in sight. An endpoint based on vaccination of children 2-11 years is not acceptable. We don't know when an approved vaccine will be available for this age group. The key to ending the pandemic is the vaccination of adults. For instance, Israeli COVID-19 rates plummeted after those 16 years old and above were vaccinated.

The United States is an outlier in the international community regarding masking of children. Recent guidance from the CDC advises keeping children as young as 2 masked when they are outdoors, while the World Health Organization recommends not masking children age 5 and under. England has never recommended masking for children younger than 11 and, based on low community transmission, no longer requires secondary students to wear masks at school.

The U.S. should develop metrics that allow our children to go maskless indoors when community rates are low. Influenza can lead to severe illness and hospitalizations in children ages 2 to 11, and the mortality rates in children for influenza and COVID are similar, yet mask mandates surely won't be imposed every influenza season.

Top public health officials must establish an approach to masking based on the science and pair it with strong messaging that clearly relays children can safely attend school, summer camps and recreational programs — and neither parents nor youngsters need to worry about whether they should be wearing a mask outdoors.

The prolonged school closures of the last year have led to loss of learning milestones, along with a rise in obesity and declining mental health for children and parents. In order to make informed decisions, parents, teachers and pediatricians need evidence-based risk assessments that do not inflate risk of infection, transmission or severity of COVID in children.

It is the responsibility of the CDC to counter fear about COVID with a data-driven approach. Making children wear masks outdoors during physical activity is uncomfortable and may keep them from being physically active, particularly during hot summer months. It is also unnecessary.

Dr. Mayssa Abuali is a pediatric infectious diseases specialist at Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. Dr. Amy Beck is an associate professor of pediatrics at UC San Francisco. Also contributing to this article are Dr. Neeti Doshi, assistant professor of pediatrics at UCSF; Dr. Roshni Matheu, clinical associate professor of pediatric infectious disease at Stanford University; and Dr. Shawn Ralston, editor in chief of Hospital Pediatrics.

The simple joy of throwing a stick for a dog

The boy and his dog, that classic pair of pals, made for the sort of scene that I suspect would have pleased Norman Rockwell's eye and perhaps prompted him to daub at his palette.

I saw them while I was walking along the Leo Adler Memorial Parkway.

It was the first day of June, but the air had the sullen, oppressive weight of August. We have nothing like the humidity of the South, of course, but when the temperature nears 90, even the driest air feels to my limbs a trifle thicker, as though it's actively trying to impede my progress.

The Powder River was running a bit murky from snowmelt and I'm sure the water was chilly, but I could smell the river and already it bore the slightly dank and swampy scent of water in high summer.

Only the distant Wallows, still predominantly white, betrayed the season.

I saw the dog first.

I couldn't name the breed — I



JAYSON JACOBY

am not now, nor have I ever been, a member of the American Kennel Club — but it was a big and sturdy dog. I had a sense of a retriever, anyway, the kind of dog that plunges into ice-fringed ponds to bring back a mallard or a goose.

Its fur was either dark brown or black — I don't know for certain because the dog was paddling in the river and the water, as it does, had turned the dog's coat into a uniform and sodden shade.

The dog seemed to be enjoying its swim in the way peculiar to dogs seem, although of course certain dogs seem to enjoy pretty much every activity. Which is a fine way for anything to be, regardless of species.

A few seconds later I noticed the boy standing on the river bank,

near where the dog was swimming.

I didn't pause — I always assume that people don't appreciate being stared at by strangers — but I suspect the boy was tossing a stick and the dog was retrieving it.

This is the greatest of games, elegant in its simplicity, requiring no expensive accoutrements.

Nothing else, it seems to me, better captures the essence of the relationship between child and dog, the eternal desire that all good dogs have to please people.

The one other detail I gleaned from my glance marred the nostalgia, but it was the slightest smudge, indeed more interesting than disappointing.

The boy was clutching an object that you won't find in any Rockwell painting.

A smartphone.

This is hardly surprising, of course.

Phones are ubiquitous among pretty much every age group save toddlers and newborns.

As I continued my walk, leav-

ing the river and plodding toward the westering sun, I pondered the scene.

And it struck me that what I had seen was merely the modern incarnation of a situation familiar over the span of many generations. The only difference was the sophistication of the technology involved.

If I had come across a boy and his dog beside the Powder a century ago all might have been the same except the boy would have a Kodak Brownie to preserve the occasion — a camera that, with its film requiring developing, demands a level of patience that has all but disappeared in our era of instantaneous views on a color, high-definition screen.

(I omit here such obvious changes as clothing. Boys didn't wear sneakers in 1921. At least not sneakers which are festooned with eye-watering garish colors and were assembled in a factory several thousand miles away.)

Had I made my walk during the 1970s the boy might have carried a

Polaroid — rudimentary by smartphone standards, certainly, but capable of delivering nearly instant gratification.

He might have run home to hand his parents a couple of glossy prints rather than scroll through a series of digital images, but the essence is the same.

I find this rather comforting.

It is easy — indeed, it can seem unavoidable — to be overwhelmed by the pace of events nowadays, to feel a trifle queasy, as though you had just finished a carnival ride that was a bit more boisterous than you, and your stomach, expected.

I enjoy coming across a situation that defies this notion.

It is good to remember that a boy can still be content to hang around with his dog, to throw a stick and to know that it will be returned, slippery with slobber but as real as rivers and other things which are not made of pixels.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.