

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Ready to ride to the rescue

There's no good place to get stranded in a mountain blizzard.

But if you're unfortunate enough to end up in such a dangerous predicament, you could do worse than to have it happen in Baker County.

Five snowmobilers from Washington likely would attest to this after their experience the day after Christmas.

The group of friends were riding in the Wallowa Mountains north of Halfway when they were overtaken by a storm that brought fog, snow and strong winds that tossed the fresh powder around so as to obscure the tracks their machines had made earlier.

As dusk fell, the riders couldn't figure out the route back to the trailhead.

One of the riders, Mike Kelly, used his cellphone to call another friend, Brandon Christensen, also of Washington, and explain the situation.

Christensen, who had just returned from a snowmobile ride in the Tollgate area north of Elgin, relayed the message to Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash.

Another member of the group, Jon Mecham, used his GPS satellite device to send a text message that arrived at the Baker County Dispatch Center at about 5:43 p.m. That message also pinpointed the riders' location, about a mile and a half west of Fish Lake.

Ash immediately phoned Duane Miles of the Panhandle Snowmobile Club in Halfway. Miles rounded up nine club members, some of whom had been riding snowmobiles in the same area that day.

The riders refueled their machines and headed back into the cold, dark mountains, an inherently dangerous situation.

Guided by the GPS data, the rescuers reached the Washington men about 9:10 p.m. and led them to the Clear Creek Sno-Park.

The Washington group, all experienced snowmobilers, not only had the foresight to bring the GPS device — which, because it uses satellites rather than cellphone signals, works almost anywhere — but they also had materials to build a fire as they waited for the rescuers.

Christensen said on Monday that he was "amazed" by how rapidly the Panhandle Snowmobile Club members responded to the call.

Although the GPS technology was vital in this case, no battery-powered device can replace the knowledge that the club members have about the terrain — experience that made it possible for them to reach the stranded riders so quickly.

It's gratifying to know that local residents are willing to put themselves in potential peril to help others. Ash said he had worked with the Panhandle Snowmobile Club on previous search and rescue operations and didn't hesitate to make the call to Miles. The club members who responded on Dec. 26 certainly justified the sheriff's confidence in their abilities.

Everyone involved in the operation deserves thanks, particularly the club members who rode to the rescue — Dusty Traw, Ray Denig, Kyle Bennett, Josh Sevier, Kyle Dennis, Chad DelCurto, Tucker Gulick, Kelly Grisham and Shane Denig.

The Baker County Sheriff's Office has a well-trained search and rescue team which never fails to respond when someone is missing, injured or otherwise in trouble.

Ash himself has rescued several people, including drivers who got stuck in snow on mountain roads.

But in Baker County even people who are members of a recreational group such as the Panhandle Snowmobile Club, and not part of an official search and rescue team, are also willing and capable of potentially saving lives.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## Your views

### On frigid nights, remember what the Golden Rule says

Open letter to Baker City:

The Golden Rule — "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" — is a teaching common to all of the world's cultures and religions. It is worded differently, but the meaning is the same.

Are we here in Baker City, Oregon, living up to this if we fail to provide shelter for the homeless in our community? Is it enough for us to say

that there is shelter up the road in La Grande, and they can get there easily? How easy is it to get there at a time like Monday morning, December 27, 2021, at 6 a.m., when the temperature had dropped to 6 degrees?

I invite each of us to step outside and try to keep warm, either at night or in the early morning, when it is cold outside. Do this for even a short a time as 15 minutes. How long would YOU wish to be outside? How would you wish to be treated if

you had no home to go to, no place to find warmth, or food, or just a little compassion?

Please think about what your spiritual teacher would advise you to do as you contemplate how we will treat our neighbors who are without shelter.

Will we shelter them?

Or will we simply say "go on down the road?"

George Wheaton  
Baker City

# Angry over omicron? It's OK

By OWEN LEE-PARK

As I walk through the entrance of our busy emergency department, I see the familiar sight of the anxious and frustrated faces of patients in the packed waiting room. We exchange quick glances at each other, and so much emotion is conveyed merely through the eyes above our masks. I sit down at my computer, get a sign-out from the outgoing colleague, and do a quick, silent prayer — please give me strength, patience, compassion, and humility as I speak to and care for my patients. I know that being here is among the worst and most anxiety-provoking times for many of my patients. For some others, it is a routine visit that we treat with a shabby, cold turkey sandwich and a couple hours of observation, because there is simply nowhere else for them to go or anyone else to speak to about their loneliness.

Lately, though, it's been getting harder to ignore the voice inside of me that says, "I'm exhausted. I feel burned out."

Last week, several of my colleagues tested positive for COVID. They were "triple vaccinated," with two injections of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, as well as a booster shot that is now officially recommended by the CDC. Many U.S. states are also recording the highest single day count of new COVID-19 cases since the onset of the pandemic, while holiday parties and plane tickets are also being canceled left and right.

This, just as it began to feel as if things were beginning to go back to normalcy.

As for me, I had plans to visit my family for the holiday and lunch dates with my friends, but now with the new surge of cases, I will be joining others in responding to the call of duty at work for our colleagues who've fallen ill despite having done everything they were supposed to. Truly, the past two years of uncertainty and anxiety, with intermittent periods of hope, have been exhausting for all of us, including us health care workers.

There have been numerous peer reviewed studies that show the pandemic's more subtle and insidious effects on our mental health. But I also palpate so much of this angst personally as I speak to my patients, who come to the ER for a multitude of reasons. As I listen to their stories in the cold emergency department room, it becomes so evident to me that we are all very, very tired and anxious. Of course, how could we not be? Another surge? Another round of cancellations? Not again! Will it ever end?

Although we still do not know much about the nature of the omicron variant (and likely other future variants), research done by some of the brightest minds of humanity has shown us that vaccination and getting boosters can reduce the risk of ourselves and our loved ones getting serious illnesses from COVID (i.e. death) by over tenfold. And the scien-

tific and medical community is already developing treatments that could prevent serious cases of COVID-19, with some already showing promising results. If science can bring forth effective vaccination and treatment, it is possible that in the near future, we may finally achieve the elusive state of herd immunity, much like we do for annual influenza cases.

But as we patiently wait for the scientific breakthroughs, I believe it is so important for us to give ourselves the permission to be sad, frustrated and angry. We should acknowledge that this absolutely sucks, that we are all very tired, overwhelmed and sometimes hopeless — and that all of this is OK. Surely, this acceptance will not solve our problems, particularly for those who were already struggling to make ends meet or keep up with their numerous responsibilities for their loved ones. But in these divisive, vitriolic and isolating times, I hope this acknowledgment of our feelings could at least help us see the thread that connects all of us — that we are all trying to do our best and that, after two years, we are all exhausted.

I may not be your doctor, but I know your pain. And I love you, and I will pray for you. I hope you will do the same for us.

Owen Lee-Park is an emergency medicine resident doctor at George Washington Hospital in Washington,

## OTHER VIEWS

# Tyrants can't expunge their crimes

Editorial from The New York Daily News:

Tyrants like Xi Jinping of China strive to control people's actions and thoughts and by trying to control the truth, which is why Hong Kong monuments to the peaceful protest of Tiananmen Square turned into a bloody massacre are being torn down and carted away under cover of darkness.

The joyful spring 1989 explosion of free expression and hope for liberty in the center of Beijing, with the impromptu erection of a Goddess of Democracy statue not too dissimilar to our own Statue of Liberty, ended

with the death of hundreds or thousands killed by the People's Liberation Army attacking the people seeking liberation.

But none of this exists in Red China; nothing happened in Tiananmen Square that May and June. Tank Man never stood down a column of T-54 tanks. The students of China never sought freedom and found death under the boot of their oppressors in the Communist Party. Now, Hong Kong, a once-free bastion, is coming under that same boot.

First to vanish last week was the Pillar of Shame sculpture at the University

of Hong Kong commemorating Tiananmen Square. Dedicated for the eight year anniversary of the massacre on June 4, 1997, Hong Kong was still under British rule, which ended weeks later on July 1, with a solemn promise that Beijing would respect the former colony's independent economic, legal and judicial systems for 50 years.

Less than halfway through that half century, the freedoms which produced the dynamic city are being stripped away. Formerly free elections are rigged or canceled if they can't be sufficiently rigged.

The truth-telling Apple Daily newspaper was shuttered by decree, with the final edition published in June.

And now come down the Tiananmen monuments, using as an excuse an old British-era sedition law, as though the ruling thugs actually care about some dusty colonial statute. After the University of Hong Kong, several other universities in the city have removed their own Tiananmen commemorations. One day, freedom will come to China and Hong Kong and those markers will be restored.