

# Vaccines and the chance for progress

Trees might be leafing out by the time most of us get to decide whether to roll up a sleeve and have a needle pierce our skin and deliver a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

For some time the vaccines, the first batches of which arrived in Oregon last week, will be given, and for good reason, to health care workers, residents in long-term care facilities and others who are at higher risk for being infected with the virus.

Naturally, we want to first protect those for whom COVID-19 poses by far the most significant health risk.

For those of us who are younger than 60, that risk is exceedingly low. According to the Oregon Health Authority, of the 1,161 people whose deaths are attributed to COVID-19, just 9.2% were younger than 60 (and 3% were younger than 50).

Nonetheless, it's still vital that younger people also are inoculated against the virus as soon as possible. Although members of that younger-than-60 group account for a small percentage of Oregon's COVID-19 deaths, they make up 84% of the state's approximately 96,000 cases. That's a lot of people who could potentially infect those who are more vulnerable.

The more people who are immunized, the more effective the vaccines will be.

A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, asking Americans if they plan to "definitely or probably" take a COVID-19 vaccine, showed a promising trend. The survey results, released on Dec. 15, found that 71% of respondents will definitely or probably be inoculated. That's up from 63% in a September survey.

But it's still troubling that nearly one-third of respondents aren't eager, if not outright ecstatic, that they'll have a chance to protect themselves, and potentially their

family, friends and neighbors, from this virus.

Troubling, and not a little vexing.

The record of vaccines is so voluminous, a history of saving millions of lives and sparing many millions of others from the debilitating effects of bacterial and viral diseases that we were for so long powerless against, that it's passing strange that skepticism persists to the extent it does.

COVID-19 vaccines stand out, of course, because they were made so quickly. But that's not because safety standards were relaxed or testing protocols slighted.

Rather, the rapidity of these achievements reflects the immense abilities of brilliant scientists when they devote themselves wholeheartedly to one task and have robust support from the Trump administration.

Considering that earlier generations of experts conquered polio and measles and smallpox and other microscopic scourges, we ought not be surprised that, roused into action by COVID-19, the scientific community has pulled off another monumental victory.

Skepticism, of course, is not limited to the vaccine. There is widespread disbelief about the virus itself, and in particular about how dangerous it is.

But even those who discount the death toll can't ignore that the virus has had terrible effects on our communities, socially and economically.

The fastest and most effective way to end restrictions, to reach that light at the end of the tunnel or get back to normal, to cite just two of the annoying and cloying clichés that have infested our national conversation, is to administer these wonderful vaccines as widely and rapidly as possible.

We have been given a collective gift.

We just have to unwrap it.



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## EDUCATION CORNER

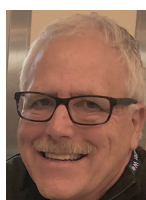
# Bring out the creativity of learning

School this year looks like something we might have seen on the cartoon show the Jenseis from the 1960s. Students of all ages are spending hours on electronics. One area many children need to have the opportunity to develop is imagination and creativity. These two areas have been found to aid young children in building the ability to problem-solve and develop solutions and conclusions along with resolving situations as they become older.

During a "normal school day," students are often given time to expand their pathways in their brains during recess, music, art or science labs. With online education happening this year due to COVID-19, many students are not having as many of those experiences. These activities provide children with the ability to problem-solve along with creating things we have possibly never thought about yet.

The great thing is that it does not take much to provide children with these activities at home. You do not need a flashy kit or tech toy or internet connection. A big box and masking tape might be all you need. The objective is to expand the creative thinking process and get them to think outside of the box.

Have you experienced spending big dollars on a dream gift only to have your child be more interested in the big box? As frustrating as this might be, your child is demonstrating their need to express their creativity and imagination. By taking a box and turning it into a spaceship, the child is expanding their



Dr. Scott Smith

cognitive understanding and ability to apply information they have gained during their lives. Giving children the freedom and chance to create and fail allows them to develop the

process of problem-solving for situations they may face in the world around them.

We adults are able to help children take these processes to a higher level by posing questions to them like, "Where are you going?" Your job then becomes going along with whatever they might respond with, reasonable or not. It is also important that you do not need to point out when there is no possible way their creative answer will happen. In time they will come to that conclusion as they better understand and apply the information they gain. Allow them to experience, discover and make adjustments.

Just a couple of things to remember as you take on this challenge: (1) Let the child lead the processes. If they smash the box flat, that's OK, just ask them to explain. Remember the project does not have to be finished for the child to learn something. (2) You are the encourager. Keep comments moving the creativity and exploration forward. (3) Asking questions is your job in order to expand their imagination and creativity with the materials. If they are silent, it does not mean they are not thinking and processing. (4) Avoid being the "backseat

driver" as the child is exploring. (5) You might consider providing some additional material for them such as string, towels, pillows or a string of battery lights and see how they might use them. (6) Lastly allow the child to tell you about their creations and explain it to you. Having them discuss and explain is where understanding and learning really take place for the child. Following with questions allows them to continue their ability to problem-solve. Remember there is a high probability that what they created is not possible in life, but let them come to that conclusion on their own because imagination and ideas are what spark new inventions.

It does not have to be a cardboard box. Grab some blankets and let the tent construction begin. Pose the question to them, "How could we make a tent?" Let the learning begin, and your only job is to ask questions and allow them to discover and problem-solve.

Let the discovering begin! Set out some boxes and blankets and let their imagination go wild. Enjoy your holiday season. Who knows, you may have the next design for a hover car happening in your living room.

*Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia — OR board as their Parent/Teacher Liaison.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A Christian defense of President Trump

To the Editor:

A recent letter to the editor criticized the pastor of a vibrant church here in Mt. Vernon for recognizing election fraud in some of the battle ground states, and for supporting a man like President Trump. The writer believed that evangelical Christians should not support a "liar" like President Trump.

Wayne Grudem, Ph.D., professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary, summarizes our evangelical position as follows: "If in a second term Donald Trump acts in the way he has acted in his first term, this will bring a continued strong economy, a strengthened military, better trade terms with other nations, a secure border, more originalist judges, stronger protections for unborn children, strong employment and wage growth, greater energy independence, greater school

choice ... protection of religious freedoms."

He, further (as reported in World Magazine), has studied "20 or 30" lies listed on a website that supposedly keeps track of every lie of President Trump. He could not find a legitimate lie in those 20 supposed lies.

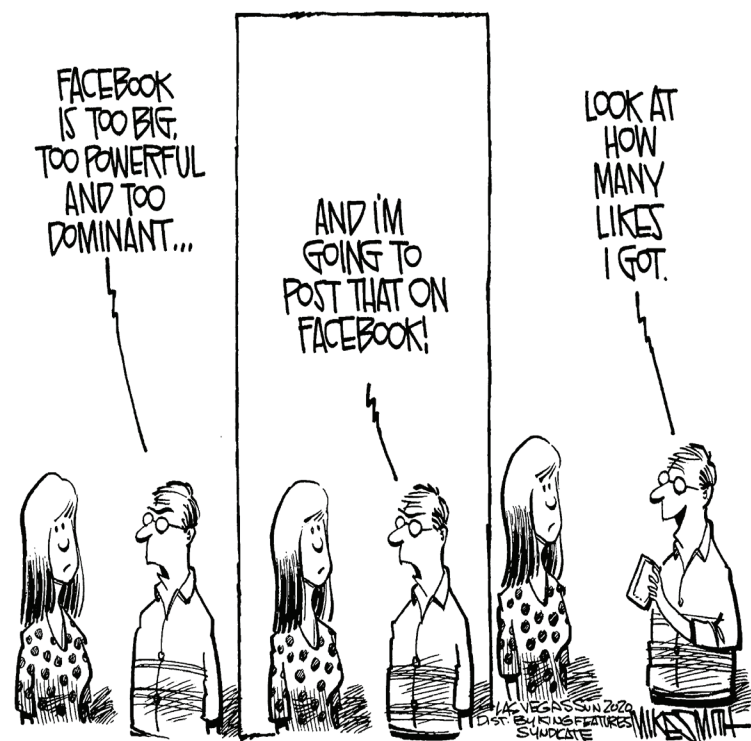
President Trump has surrounded himself with evangelicals on his cabinet: Secretary of HUD, Dr. Ben Carson; Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo; and Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany — who was preceded by Sarah Huckabee Sanders — solid evangelical Christians all. So far as I can tell, Joe Biden has not chosen one evangelical Christian to his cabinet; they are all secular progressives.

We have gotten used to politically incorrect statements, coupled with beneficial policies. What we are going to get is politically correct statements, coupled with ruinous policies.

Reg LeQuieu  
Mt. Vernon

*Editor's note: Attorney General Bill Barr, appointed by President Donald Trump, said Monday there was no basis for seizing voting machines and that he stands by his previous statement there was no widespread voter fraud that could have affected the outcome of the presidential election. In an interview with World Magazine, Grudem said, "...I looked at The Washington Post's list of what it calls 16,000-some 'lies' Trump has spoken and examined 20 or 30 of them. They're what I'd call conclusions drawn by a hostile interpreter of words that a sympathetic listener would understand in a positive way. President Trump is often not careful in some of the things he says. He is given to exaggeration. Sometimes he's made a statement after being given inaccurate information. I'm not sure he's ever intentionally affirmed something he knows to be false, which is how I define a lie ..."*

**LETTERS POLICY:** Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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