

EDITOR'S DESK

Let's make this pandemic easier for everyone

As I have written dozens of stories about COVID-19 over the past two months, I've heard a wide variety of opinions on the pandemic during my interviews.



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR

One conclusion I've drawn is that there are not two "sides" to this issue, but rather a continuum of opinions that posts being passed around social media have lumped into caricatures — the people who want to take away everyone's rights because they're scared of getting a cough, versus the people who would rather see their grandparents dead than go another week without a haircut.

Let's acknowledge that there is more common ground here than people want to admit. Someone in a high risk category for COVID-19 complications may be more focused on the threat to their health, while someone who is about to lose their business might be more focused on the economic devastation, but the truth is most people are worried about both to some degree. I don't know of a single person who hasn't been negatively affected by this pandemic in some way.

So this week, I'm challenging everyone to do less arguing and more coming together for what we can agree on.

The first point that would be hard to dispute is that far more families and individuals in the greater Hermiston area have fallen into the category of "in need" in the past three months.

If you're one of the lucky



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

A sign along Highway 395 in Hermiston advises drivers to remain hopeful amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic.

ones who hasn't lost any income, consider what you can do to help. If this time of year would normally see you participating in fundraiser dinners, auctions and raffles, seek out those organizations and find out how to donate online or mail a check. A few ideas include Agape House, CAPECO, Desert Rose Ministries, United Way and American Red Cross.

You could work on a smaller level too, such as sharing some of your extra supplies with a neighbor, making masks for those who can't afford them or paying for a stranger's meal in the drive-thru line.

Second, I think we can all

agree that most businesses are struggling right now, particularly small "mom and pop" establishments.

There are lots of ways to help, such as buying gift cards from those that offer them in order to provide them the cash flow they need now to continue paying their rent or other expenses. Some businesses are also offering ways to order their wares online or over the phone, then pick them up or have them delivered.

If you're not in a financial position to make many purchases right now, you can still help by sharing your favorite businesses' social media posts,

and talking them up online and by word of mouth. You might even have skills you could donate, such as website design, photography, banner-making or helping install sneeze guards and other upgrades needed to reopen.

Third, we're all concerned about the negative mental and physical health impacts of social distancing.

The first thing you can do there is take care of your own health. It can be hard right now to push yourself to exercise, cook healthy meals or tear yourself away from the endless stream of bad news on cable television, but it's important.

If those tasks seem daunting, think of baby steps you can take instead, like spending a few minutes breathing the fresh air on your porch if you don't have the energy to go for a walk.

If you're feeling in a good place, consider what you can do to help others. See how many things you can check off on this list:

- Post a positive quote, happy news or something else uplifting on social media.
- Mail a card or letter to someone who might be feeling lonely.
- Reach out to a friend you haven't talked to since the pandemic started and ask how they're doing.
- Make your home a brighter spot for passersby using sidewalk chalk, window paint, drawings hung in windows, flowers or some other method.
- Organize a game night over video chat
- Offer to read someone's children a story over video chat
- Call your grandparents, or if you are a grandparent, call your grandchildren.
- Give someone a compliment.
- Share your talents in some way, such as posting a video of you playing an instrument or mailing someone a drawing you made.
- Email me about something good that happened to you recently, at editor@hermistonherald.com, and I'll compile the submissions into a story to share with everyone.

COLUMN

Senior citizens miss socializing

Who are senior citizens? There is no clearly defined age when an American becomes a "senior."

Senior citizen generally refers to someone who is at least 60 or 65 years of age. Sometimes you realize you are a senior citizen when you go from being called a "miss" to a "ma'am" ... it happens to all of us. Some are switching to using the term "older people." Now days a "senior citizen" conjures images of nursing homes, walkers and dentures.



Judy Fordice

Once we moved to our new building in September 2018, the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center, curiosity brought people in to look around. Yes, we have a beautiful building that is for seniors only. The use of our facility is restricted to senior citizens ages 60 years and older as required by the Community Development Block Grant funding.

The center had been serving meals in-house five days a week and delivering Meals On Wheels twice a week. It also offered exercise classes four days

a week, pinochle, tea time, cooking classes, four different study groups, arts and crafts, game day, coffee, conversation groups and meetings. The center was a great source of meeting old and new friends, and socializing.

However, because of the virus, every activity has been canceled. Meals are restricted to take-outs only on Tuesdays and Thursdays by calling before 11 a.m. Meals on Wheels are available by calling before 10 a.m.

The number of hot meals being delivered has tripled since March 13. The take-out orders increase daily.

The kitchen staff has expanded the menu to include the food donations received from local businesses. The office staff is available three days a week; taking orders for meals, calling our clients to chat with them and make contact.

One of our clients said she has always lived in the best isolation area possible: her home. Another called, crying and in a panic because she heard the center was closed; she relies on the Meals on Wheels. One of our office staff has a schedule of calling our clients on a rotating basis just to visit with them a

few minutes, send cards and acknowledge birthdays.

Many of our clients are homebound and some do not drive. Some do not have computers and are not connected to social media. In many instances, our Meals on Wheels volunteers are the only contact seniors have every week. Our drivers are very aware of anything that looks "out of the ordinary," and have been credited with saving a life.

The lack of not being able to come together, share a meal and a cup of coffee is devastating to our seniors. Socializing is essential for their mental and emotional health, to have an overall feeling of connecting to society and companionship with others. Our staff will continue to prepare meals and stay in contact with our clients in the hope that they are safe and avoid the virus.

The Hermiston Senior Center is located in the Harkenrider Senior Activity Center at 255 NE Second St., Hermiston. Contact us by phone at 541-567-3582 or e-mail at hsc@hermiston.or.us and like us on Facebook!

Judy Fordice is the secretary of the Hermiston Senior Center.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Everyone needs to take coronavirus seriously

To the editor:

How is attending a drinking party, getting drunk and ending up killing someone in an accident different from going to a COVID-19 party, getting the disease and exposing someone who subsequently dies?

The death rate for the COVID-19 patient is certainly higher than the death rate caused by drunken drivers. The simple math procedure to determine the death rate of the COVID-19 patients can be found daily by dividing the number of deaths by the number of people who have had the disease. This number has been running a consistent 5.9% for several weeks. Unfortunately, there seem to be no statistics available for people who drive drunk and cause the 30 deaths per day in auto crashes.

For those who think this 5.9% rate is not serious, let's examine some events we have considered serious. The Veterans Administration lists the wartime mortality rates for all our military conflicts. The rate for military personal who were deployed in World War II was 2.5%. For the Vietnam War it was 1.7%, and for the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict it is running 0.3%. Another comparison would be the common seasonal flu, which has a death rate of 0.1%.

Don't listen to those who are telling you it is not serious. And for those of you who say it only kills old people, I am appalled. You too may someday become old.

Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston

CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call (541) 564-4533 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at hermistonherald.com/obituaryform, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com, by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, x221.