

EDITOR'S DESK

Fighting fear with preparation

If there is one thing 2020 has taught us, it is that you never know when disaster will strike. I don't think any of us in January thought Umatilla County would be underwater in February and locked down by a pandemic in March, but here we are.

Even if we don't know when disasters will strike, however, we do know they will. No one is shocked when wild-fires happen in the summer, even if they couldn't predict exact locations and dates. The same goes for hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. Even a pandemic is not unprecedented.

The good thing about this is that, while we cannot control the timing, we can control our own preparation for emergencies. September is National Emergency Preparedness Month, which means it is a perfect time to brush up.

Think back to March, when stay-at-home orders and school closures caused the Great Toilet Paper Shortage of 2020. As people started panic buying and you heard tales of empty grocery store shelves, what were you most worried about running out of if the stores shut down or you were placed in quarantine?

That should give you a pretty good road map for increasing your preparation. People living paycheck to paycheck may have no choice but to buy only a few days' worth of grocer-



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR



Harley Hauck, a property manager at Riverview Mobile Home Estates in Pendleton, loads sandbags into a truck at the mobile home park on Feb. 6, 2020, in preparation for flooding that took place throughout Umatilla County later that night.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

ies at a time. But there are also plenty of people who can afford to stash a couple of extra packages of toilet paper or bags of rice in their garage next time they're on sale.

Even for people who can't afford to buy extra food or survival gear, there are other ways to be prepared. You can learn first aid skills, make a family plan for where you would meet up if an earthquake struck while you were apart, practice making a fire with no matches or study up on ways to purify water.

In 2016, I wrote a series of article for the *East Oregonian* about the massive Cascadia Earthquake that

scientists believe may hit the Pacific Northwest, and how Umatilla County will almost certainly lose access to electricity, cellphone service, internet, gasoline and other essentials for weeks if that happens.

That kind of thing is scary to talk about, but the real worry we should have is not being prepared for things that will or will not happen, regardless of whether we stuck our heads in the sand.

In "Feel the Fear ... and Do It Anyway," by Susan Jeffers, the author describes three levels to our fears. At the first level, we may say, "I'm afraid to ask someone on a date" or

"I'm afraid to give a public speech." But what we are really afraid of is that things will turn out badly — the person we asked out will reject us or we will embarrass ourselves in front of people we respect. And behind that level of fear comes our real, core fear: We won't be able to cope with the bad outcome we are imagining.

Controlling our fears, she teaches, means tackling that third level of fear by doing what we need to in order to feel confident we can handle those worst-case scenarios that keep us up at night.

While that concept has plenty of personal applications, it also applies to more physical emergencies. I'm not exactly a "prepper" with six months of freeze-dried meals waiting in an underground bunker, but because I was raised to always keep an extra supply of food and other essentials on hand, when the panic-buying hit this spring I wasn't worried by the idea that the stores might be out of stock for a while or I might get quarantined for two weeks.

It feels like there are a lot of things to be scared of these days. Whatever scares you, decide on a concrete step you can take now to feel better prepared to cope. Make a plan. Learn a new skill. Buy a new item. Read up on available resources. Ask for help or advice.

You have handled everything life has thrown at you so far, and you can handle whatever is coming too. But it doesn't hurt to make it a little easier on your future self.

COLUMN

Encouraging employees to return to work

One of the biggest challenges many employers are facing is getting their workforce back on the job during the continuing COVID-19 environment. There are many obstacles, including the fact those collecting unemployment benefits received an additional \$600 per week, which in many cases amounted to more than their salaries. This benefit expired July 31 and workers are beginning to return to their jobs. There are discussions about a lesser weekly benefit being introduced, but so far that has not been implemented.

A major issue is the fact schools in Oregon may not be open for much of the school year and parents have found themselves as teachers.

Others are sincerely frightened about the prospect of returning to work, questioning the safety precautions employers may or may not have put in place. This is especially true in cases where social distancing may be difficult in such workplaces as manufacturing or food processing plants.

Some people may have children or elderly relatives living with them with severely compromised health due to underlying conditions.

All of these are legitimate

issues and concerns. So, what can employers do as they endeavor to resume operations?

- Some parents are finding individuals willing to supervise online learning while parents work, helping to ensure their children are on task and that a regular school schedule is established and maintained.

- Employers should provide detailed information about all the precautions being implemented, including exactly what the employee's responsibilities are. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website, www.cdc.gov, outlines safety precautions and recommendations.

- Offering additional training and professional development opportunities is something attractive to employees and some employers are offering monetary incentives.

- On a recent webinar, an economic development specialist noted many employers are networking and finding qualified, enthusiastic employees from companies that are having to downsize.

- Some companies are expanding the option for working remotely, which is very appealing to many as they balance family and work. Clear communication and expectations must be given along with deadlines for projects to be completed. Establishing video platforms so employees do not feel iso-

lated is proving to be beneficial for those transitioning to this model.

- Businesses may simply have to find ways to attract new employees. Join other employers in hosting a virtual job fair. There are many individuals whose former employers have closed their business. They may not have all the skills needed for a particular position, but with the right attitude and ample training, may be the perfect fit for the job.

Finding enough qualified employees wanting to work is something businesses will have to find creative and unique ways to address. Post your jobs to a variety of platforms and utilize the Oregon Employment Department's database of job seekers. Employers may post a job themselves by clicking the employer tab "hiring an employee" at www.workinginoregon.org and by the old-fashioned way — by word of mouth.

In closing, use those entities that serve businesses, including your local chamber of commerce, downtown and other business associations, economic development professionals, small business development centers, and the Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center.

Greg Smith is the executive director of the Umatilla Electric Cooperative Business Resource Center.



Greg Smith

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rep. Smith provides constant, competent leadership

As the Hermiston School District superintendent, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to balance the needs of our educators, students, parents and community. Especially in the environment COVID-19 has created with seemingly ever-changing rules and guidelines, finding responsive state leadership is more important than ever.

But there has been a constant we have been able to count on — Rep. Greg Smith.

In an age of political grandstanding, the easiest thing to do is to sit back and blame others for the problems we experience, and it seems many politicians do that. Rep. Smith chooses the harder, less politically expedient road. He focuses on finding common ground and developing pragmatic solutions to problems. He isn't afraid to work across the aisle, across agencies, across the state and more if it means delivering for his school districts, ports, counties, communities or individuals.

Rep. Smith's beliefs and values allow him to represent us well. At the same time, his experience and professionalism have allowed him to become an effective and powerful statesman for us in Salem. Many issues our region has faced have been quietly and effectively solved

through his advocacy.

I cannot be more honored to have Rep. Smith as our voice in Salem. Thank you, Greg, for your service, your example, and your leadership.

Dr. Tricia Mooney,
superintendent
Hermiston School District

Too many choppers

I live close to Good Shepherd Hospital and once COVID-19 took an upturn in Umatilla County, I've noticed an upturn in the number of helicopters I hear. I can't but help think they are headed for Good Shepherd.

As of Aug. 25, Umatilla County has lost 35 folks to COVID. Why is it so high? Because some people still refuse to acknowledge this a serious event, they blow it off and in doing so they risk both their and others' health and possibly lives.

Is wearing a mask fun? No! And by the way, by wearing a mask I mean having it over your nose, as if you have your mask below your nose you might as well not be wearing one at all. You are only lying to yourself and possibly endangering anyone you come into contact with, so get that mask over your nose!

Is it easy breathing in a mask? Again, no! But I tell you what, it sure beats not breathing at all. Which would you rather do? I know my choice. Viva masks!

Mark Severson
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.