

EDITOR'S DESK

What our children have lost during the pandemic

As I interviewed Hermiston School District's band and choir teachers last week about the challenges of teaching such an interactive subject virtually, I asked what it had been like to have such an abrupt ending to the school year almost a year earlier.

They described canceled concerts, choir festivals and field trips that students had worked hard for and looked forward to. Band recruitment activities never took place, and the high school's spring musical, "Grease," never finished production.

It struck a chord with me as I thought of how devastated I would have felt as a high school senior if our spring musical production of "Cinderella" had been canceled halfway through. Some of my best high school memories came from rehearsals and performances of that show.

Recently, I saw an article about what experiences teenagers have missed because of the pandemic, and there were comments underneath about how students needed to stop whining when having virtual classes was nothing compared to previous generations who had been shipped off to war when they turned 18.

It is true, there are teens who have had it worse. However, we would all be better off if people stopped giving



Jade McDowell
NEWS EDITOR



Sandstone Middle School band students play a concert from their homes via YouTube video in November 2020.

Hermiston School District/Screen Capture

in to the instinct to pop up and shout "But something worse happened to someone else!" every time another human being says they're having a hard time. Pain is pain, no matter where it falls on the scale of Every Bad Thing That Ever Happened.

Many of the experiences youth are missing out on right now, taken in singular, aren't essential to their growth and development. I didn't bother to go to half my high school's dances and yet I turned out fine; I doubt missing prom will leave today's high schoolers with some essential missing ingredient to their character either.

This is about more than a missed milestone, though. I can't point to a singular event in my senior year of high school that shaped my life,

but the year in general certainly did.

I was testing the limits of the newfound level of independence that came with a driver's license, getting over my first taste of heartbreak and navigating social dilemmas and complicated friendships that seemed to come with higher stakes than the playground dramas of years past.

Long after memories of the formula for the Pythagorean theorem have slipped away, I still treasure the memories I made in the choir room, on stage and in the stands. I remember funny moments in the classroom, and spirited conversations about religion and politics over lunch as we slowly shaped our worldview. It is cruel that a generation of students had those memories, and others had them ripped away suddenly

last spring, even if it was what was needed at the time to save lives.

The question is how this past year will shape them. Older generations have accused my generation — the Millennials — of being soft and entitled because we got too many trophies (I don't know why they're so mad at us when they were the ones handing them out, but that's a discussion for another day). So what will a year without trophies bring?

Perhaps the generation that grew up with active shooter drills will be extra resilient. Perhaps the generation that spent a year of high school online will be particularly adaptable and self-motivated. Perhaps those that came of age during a racial justice reckoning will be more enlightened. I hope so.

It seems likely that for some students, however, the toll may be darker. As the pandemic slowly recedes, the adults need to make sure that there are resources available to help students whose anxiety, depression, loneliness, low self-esteem, eating disorder, addiction or other struggles were exacerbated by what a year of the pandemic wrought.

What will come of Generation Z, only time will tell. Their teachers have helped them the best they can through this difficult time, but as they leave school over the next few years, it seems likely the effects of the pandemic will linger.

COLUMN

Biko brings excitement to Malgesini pack

Four new paws have been padding around our house recently. Biko, an almost 6-month-old German shepherd/Siberian husky mix, made the Malgesini pack whole again this past weekend.

For the better part of nearly three decades, John and I have had a two-dog household. After we lost Lucifer, my husband's German shepherd, early last month, it wasn't a matter of if we would get another dog, but when.

While John and I were immediately taken in by the little guy's piercing eyes and happy yelps, the General, my 8-year-old German shepherd, seemed annoyed by what he viewed as an interloper. Biko, who immediately wanted to meet his brother, has been mostly oblivious to the General's boorish behavior.

Although he appeared to miss Lucifer, the General was basking in the perks of being an only dog. While we tried to warn him that this was merely a temporary situation, the General only seemed to understand that he was getting undivided attention and going for a lot more rides.

Whenever John or I left the house, the General happily jumped in the rig and immediately stuck his head out the window. In fact, he hadn't even been left alone at home since we lost Lucifer — until this past Saturday when we went to the adoption event.

Initially, John wasn't sure what breed of dog he wanted. Over the years, we bought three canine kids from Geyer German Shepherds. However, since Becky Geyer retired several years after we got



Tammy Malgesini



Tammy Malgesini/Contributed Photo
Biko, a 6-month-old German shepherd/Siberian husky mix, settles into John's lap after joining the Malgesini pack this past weekend.

the General, I contacted another breeder.

After being provided some initial information and encouraged to reach out with any additional questions, I was ghosted. I feel it was reasonable to inquire about the waitlist, especially since the deposit was nonrefundable.

John then happened upon Petfinder, which included dogs from Mikey's Chance Canine Rescue. We discussed the pros and cons of adopting a dog that had a history. Gastineau, our second German shepherd, was a rescue — and while he became a part of our pack, he came with

some baggage.

I filled out the Mikey's Chance application — providing everything from a history of our past pooches and breed preference to philosophies about training and commitment to dog ownership, as well as references and photos of our house and yard. While it was a time-consuming process, I appreciated its thoroughness. I also felt confident that the agency would agree that we were the best match.

We got to the meet and greet event at Paw's Natural Pet Emporium in Kennewick before our new canine kid had arrived. When he got there, it became obvious that he was a little social butterfly — wagging his tail and nuzzling up to both humans and other dogs.

During the backyard introduction at home, the General wasn't too keen on Biko's exuberance in meeting him. Once we moved the getting acquainted efforts inside the house, the General would vacillate between barking at Biko or physically turning his head away in dismissal — as if to think, "If I can't see him, then he's not there."

By day three with guided socialization, positive reinforcement and playing the Pupcorn game (an exercise that includes catching a favored treat) together, the General's barking is being replaced by sniffing. And if things get a little too intense for Biko, he looks to his Papa for protection. All is well with the Malgesini pack again.

Tammy Malgesini, the former Hermiston Herald community editor, enjoys spending time with her husband and dogs, as well as entertaining herself with random musings.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

School taxes still necessary for online education

I was disturbed by a recent letter to the editor suggesting we should be refunded our tax dollars designated for education. I do not currently have school-aged children, but am providing "Nana School" (online school) in my home for 2-5 grandchildren while their parents work.

First, let me say that I agree this is not ideal — it is difficult, awkward, and sometimes downright frustrating. Obviously, for most children/young adults, in-person learning is best. But suggesting we are being cheated out of our education tax dollars is shortsighted. Are we asking teachers to teach for no pay? Or suggesting we just not provide any kind of learning at all this year? Asking custodial staff to stay home and not maintain the buildings/campuses in which we have invested millions of dollars? The nicest word I can think of to describe such action is "silly."

I have listened in on my Littles' online learning sessions, and must say I am impressed. Can you imagine trying to hold the attention of 20-30 school-age youngsters via video? Let alone trying to maintain any kind of discipline when kids are in homes with siblings, parents, pets, televisions, etc.? I say, "Good job, and Thank you!" to these teachers and staff who are having to work in a whole new way. Let's be a little more supportive and appreciative and a little less critical, shall we?

Ginger Linkel
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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.

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