

OUR VIEW

## COVID-19 vaccines are just part of the solution to the pandemic

Our story recently on Andrew Morris, a local man who contracted COVID-19 even after he was vaccinated, showed a man who did everything right to prevent an infection and who ended up asking, "What did I do wrong?"

Morris, of course, didn't do anything wrong. The delta variant of the COVID-19 virus is everywhere. And, despite the fact Morris was one of the unlucky few to catch the virus even after he was inoculated, vaccinations still are the best way to avoid an infection.

Statistics from the Umatilla County Public Health Department show roughly one out of every 50 people hospitalized

with COVID-19 since January were vaccinated against COVID-19. Thus, about 49 out of 50 hospitalizations in the county this year were unvaccinated.

What that says is the protection rate from COVID-19 vaccinations remains very, very high. Are there breakthrough cases? Of course. Morris is a good example. But Morris didn't end up in a hospital. He is ill, but his life isn't in danger.

While we still believe the choice to get vaccinated should be an individual one, we also recognize that so far, the vaccines have performed as advertised.

The sad part of the entire vaccination drama is how a misconception — that

somehow vaccines would totally prevent infection from COVID-19 — took root. Nine months or so ago, the vaccines were touted as a good answer to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Not enough attention, though, was paid to the fact that while the vaccines were important and a good tool, they were not a silver bullet. What the vaccines do for most people is keep them free from the virus. For some, who contract the virus, the vaccine keeps them out of the hospital.

That's why vaccines are important. While you still may become a breakthrough case, you're most likely not going to end up in a hospital in need of in-depth

and serious medical care. And breakthrough cases remain — at least for now — rare.

So far, according to the Oregon Health Authority, more than 80% of the COVID-19 cases in the state were in people who were not vaccinated.

The old rules still apply today when it comes to the COVID-19 virus and its variants. Avoid large crowds, wear a mask and if you choose to do so, get vaccinated.

COVID-19 is going to be with us from now on. We will have to learn to live with it — much like we endure a flu season each year — and continue to use common-sense measures to avoid infection.

PETERSON'S POINTS

## Lessons learned from a 96-year-old man

How does a person live a good life? Everyone has their take: religious devotion, thoughtfulness, financial success or luck. Entire libraries have been written on the topic, and it's likely that no book is authoritative. And no single answer is complete.

It is easier to recognize a person who is living well, or who has lived well into advanced age. Then, perhaps, we can understand how the person did it, and how we may do it ourselves.

Former Hermiston educator Bill Schoonover seems to be such a person. On the occasion of his 96th birthday, he spoke to me of his life.

He came to Hermiston with his family when he was 14 years old. He lived here when it was possible to know everyone in town. The mayor, shop owners, doctors and teachers were people he knew well. The editor of the Hermiston Herald was a coach.

Schoonover made his name as an athlete. His sports included football, basketball and baseball. He was the quarterback of his high school team. Looking back at his days playing football, he said his high school team would not have won two games without him. In addition to being quarterback, he believes he was the best punter in the nation with the ability to kick a ball 60 yards.

"I was that good," he said. According to Schoonover, he was not the only person who believed this. In 1945, he was drafted into the Army, with the intention of going to Japan. The war ended with Japan's surrender before he could join the effort, though. But he did stay in the service a couple of years.

He believes the patriotism of his day is being lost. In his day, he said, community and competence were valued. Citizens would follow leaders who proved their worth.



Erick Peterson

Schoonover went to the University of Oregon and obtained a degree in physical education and health.

He taught at schools in towns including Hermiston. His subjects included accounting, business and math. He also coached sports teams. His teams did not always do well, but he did make efforts to play as many athletes as possible. He did not like to have players riding the bench.

A good teacher, he said, should have average-to-above-average intel-

Shirley Harris, who lives in Hermiston has been a good friend of Schoonover's for 75 years, said, "Bill has always been a thoughtful and kind friend. When he says he will be there, he always shows up. That's just the type of person he has always been"

Speaking with this 96-year-old man, a person walks away with a better sense of the good life, because it seems Schoonover is living it. We, too, can emulate elements of his behavior to live and age well:



Bill Schoonover/Provided Photo

Son Randy Schoonover, Bill (Irwin) Schoonover, son Dick Schoonover and daughter Sue Parham gather for a family photo. Wife Cleta Schoonover stands in front holding her grandchild.

ligence. He should also be a good listener. Attentive to his students, a good teacher should be aware that his students are actually learning the material and not simply nodding along in blind agreement.

A good coach should have been a good athlete.

He married twice, as he lost his first wife when she was in her 40s. He has children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

There are many people who think highly of Schoonover. Caren Sargent, a devoted employee, praised Schoonover as being free of "arrogance or judgement."

"He is a comrade," she said. (He is an 'all-American' athlete, honest coach, hard worker, loyal friend, extremely proud father, wears a heart of gold, and is the only man I've met, who truly appreciates everything he has ever had in his life."

1. Humor. Schoonover does not seem to take himself too seriously, despite his success.

2. Humility. Though he calls himself "good," he views his own greatest success as his ability to help others. When he was able to help other people achieve, he was the happiest.

3. Humanity. Schoonover loves his family and friends. He has actively tried to remember them. He also expresses empathy toward people less fortunate than he is. And when he votes, he chooses candidates who appear similarly kind.

There are other lessons that can be learned from his life, but this may be enough to meditate on for now. And if you remember Schoonover, seek him out. He would probably love to reminisce.

Erick Peterson is the editor and senior reporter of the Hermiston Herald.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Despite downfalls, many Oregonians are thankful for the River Democracy Act

Sen. Ron Wyden deserves thanks for creating the River Democracy Act. As drought and fire make so clear, protecting watersheds is fundamental to countering the effects of climate change and preserving and enhancing the capacity of our landscapes to absorb, hold and release water and resist fire.

Several streams I (and others) nominated are included in the act. I had hoped even more watersheds would be protected, but from tiny acorns mighty oaks grow, hey? As drought and fire persist, the indispensability of even small waterways becomes ever more evident and protections ever more prevalent, hopefully more private landowners will see the advantages to themselves and neighbors.

The act however leaves much scope for irresponsibility by accommodating commercial sales under the aegis of fire prevention. Too often the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management reveal their bias toward commercial harvest over ecological recovery by cutting large trees and fire-resistant stands that have more environmental than commercial value. Long-term ecological values are subordinated to short-term local economic gain. This needs to change.

The same applies to grazing livestock in riparian zones. Many small and medium-sized streams are severely degraded by 125 years of cattle grazing. That's why more and more streams are enclosed by barbed wire, to keep cows out. It would help if the Act recognized this fact and made some practical gesture to address the issue.

Despite the criticisms above, I, like so many Oregonians, are thankful to Wyden for The River Democracy Act.

Wally Sykes  
Joseph

### Keep vaccine opinions to yourself

Umatilla County residents should follow the old axiom of keeping our mouths shut and just letting people think we're ignorant and not opening our mouths and removing all doubt.

It's embarrassing enough to have a multitude of people living here foolish enough to support a Trump presidency despite his reputation for grift, endless lies and scandalous and inappropriate interactions with women. Now we have the resistance to vaccinations. People splitting themselves to prove a point — not recalling that they themselves have been vaccinated already just so they could attend public schools.

All of a sudden they want to treat their bodies like a temple that shouldn't be subjected to a vaccine that might contain ingredients they're unaware of; all between bites of a gas station corn dog, an energy drink and a drag on a vaping device or a cigarette.

I've seen the temples in this town. I'm not impressed.

Also, businesses have to take a neutral position when it comes to taking a public political stand. Cease with the assump-

tion that everyone agrees with your political preferences. There are businesses that I don't agree with that I will still patronize as long as they keep their opinions to themselves. Go on Facebook, or other social media sites, and whine about not getting your way and you've lost my business for good.

Dave Gracia  
Hermiston

### CityFest thankful to be a part of Eastern Oregon

The Greater Hermiston CityFest was an amazing event. The event had three objectives: bring regional churches together, 63 churches and organizations participated; learn how local churches can better serve their communities; and provide a message of hope.

Nearly 5,000 people attended the event at Butte Park in Hermiston to enjoy the events, which included activities for kids, a BMX demonstration, amazing motorcycle jumping with aerobatics, national known entertainment and a message of hope from Andrew Palau.

Events leading up to and including festival week involved another 1,500 people.

An event of this caliber would not have happened without the tremendous support from many. We thank the cities of Hermiston and Umatilla. They were so supportive of the event, in so many ways. Of course, without the close and professional collaboration of the Luis Palau Association, and their dedicated and capable staff, the event just would not have happened. Andrew and Wendy Palau were amazing.

In addition, we appreciated the support of Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston and his officers for helping to keep the event safe. Umatilla Electric Cooperative and Good Shepherd Health Care System provided needed parking. The Hermiston Parks and Recreation staff were very helpful. Plus, over 300 volunteers served in many positions to help the events of the week run smoothly. Actually, there are so many to thank, for their contributions of time, their skills, or equipment, we would fill up a page acknowledging them. Thank you.

Lastly, an event free to the public, with nationally known artists and entertainers, and all the technical personnel that goes along with an event of this magnitude, requires significant funding. We want to thank all those who financially contributed to make the event happen. They apparently understood the opportunities and benefits that an event like this brought would bring to region.

We hope that this is just a start of greater community involvement by our churches. We already have the "I Love My City" activity in Hermiston. Hopefully that movement will expand, not only in Hermiston, but into other local cities across the region. We also know that hundreds heard and responded to the message of hope that our world so desperately needs.

We are humbled and grateful to belong to such a caring and generous region who values hope for everyone.

Mary Corp and Phil Hamm  
CityFest co-chairs  
Hermiston

CORRECTIONS

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Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call (541) 278-2673 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

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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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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.

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