

## OUR VIEW

## Masks remain the simple solution

News that Sunnyside, Inter-Faith and other senior care centers are struggling with Covid-19 outbreaks makes us question not their procedures, but this: Why are so many people unwilling to take the most basic step and wear masks in public? We wish they would.

It's community spread that's bringing Covid into the homes of the most vulnerable.

Most people seem to have gotten on board with social distancing recommendations and we are grateful most of our neighbors are taking this pandemic seriously and are wearing masks. We know that health experts have told us that the virus is spread airborne, which means that infected people breathing around uninfected people increases the chance of spreading the disease. Masks help minimize that infection risk. Please wear one in public.

This virus can spread in other ways, too, so we encourage people to wash their hands frequently and take other basic precautions.

Still, we are seriously confused about people who refuse to wear a mask or to take the pandemic seriously. We know that health experts wear masks to reduce the chances of passing along infections all the time. From operating rooms to routine doctor visits, professionals wear masks because they know they work.

We simply can't understand the political statement some think they are making. We are all in this together. It's a virus that we are only beginning to get under control, and wearing masks reduces the spread. It attacks bodies with no regard to what political affiliations that body's brain may have.

Nor can we understand how some people claim the death rate is so low that we shouldn't be worried about this virus. Ask anyone who has contracted the disease. It can be intense, very unpleasant and scary. Herpes doesn't kill anyone but we don't know anyone who is willing to get exposed to it just because it doesn't kill you. Covid-19 is a dangerous and unpleasant disease that we all need to take seriously to prevent it spreading.

One person dying from it is too many, and there have been far too many local deaths from Covid -19.

We are appalled at people who state, publicly, that it's just old people who were going to die anyway. Such callousness is incomprehensible.

An uncovered cough or sneeze (or even just breathing) by an infected person in Walmart could eventually be carried to a patient in a nursing home in Carlton. Please wear your masks.

Let's protect everyone in our midst.

Write it.  
Send it.  
We'll print it.

news@PineKnotNews.com

Write a letter to the editor.



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## Protesting is the American way; depending on how it's done

In a way, I actually enjoy seeing people's continued protests over the 2020 elections. Such a demonstration of civic pride and patriotism is central to the American way.

Now, I certainly think they are wrong, and I don't agree with the conspiracy theories and accusations made without evidence, as those types of statements are damaging to our society. But if they want to get together and let each other know how they feel, I'm fine with it.

Have you ever been to the White House? There's was a protester who camped in Lafayette Park at 1601 Pennsylvania Avenue from 1981 to 2016. That's 35 years of continuous protesting. She was protesting nuclear proliferation, and some say her success was apparent: many of her stated goals were realized during her 35 years of protest. Others think her living in a tent camped on the sidewalk was silly and had no real effect. Who knows? She's free to use her time as she likes. It's America.

There's some certain need for humans to socialize. It's why this Christmas season is so sad for many of us, because the coronavirus has made family gatherings difficult. It's why people drink in bars and eat in restaurants. Fireworks are more enjoyable with a crowd around you, oohing and aahing. It's more fun to watch a hockey game in person, with a crowd of fans, than it is to watch it on TV. Socializing is in our nature.

I recall the Minnesota Twins World Series victory in 1991. Just after the game went into extra innings, I could almost feel downtown Minneapolis calling to

me. I hopped on a bus and went to the Metrodome, which by then was crowded with fans, most of whom hadn't attended the game but simply came down to be part of the action. Like me. A few hours later I had a brief conversation with Jack Morris at the Loon Café. I felt a part of it all. You would have thought I was the one who had just pitched 10 shutout innings. Gathering with other fans, otherwise complete strangers to me, felt good.

So I understand why some people feel called to openly protest and gather after a major event in their lives they feel strongly about. You take it personally when police kill a black man in south Minneapolis. You feel cheated when your candidate, the one politician who finally seems to understand what you believe in, loses a big election. How could any of this have possibly happened?

So, we take to the streets. Washington, D.C. has almost continual protests in the streets. Capital police are very experienced in crowd control because they spend a lot of their time managing protests of all sizes from a few carrying signs outside the White House to tens of thousands gathering on the Mall in January for Roe v. Wade protests. Disruption is normal, and not too severe. Essentially, if you plan to see the sights in our nation's Capital, you should expect to deal with some type of demonstration, because that's what happens in D.C. It's normal.

But it's not normal for protesters in Minneapolis, for example, to spill out onto the freeways, disrupting traffic. It's not acceptable

for armed protesters showing up at state capitals, threatening violence. It's criminal to burn buildings, vandalize church property, loot businesses; it's even wrong to litter. If hundreds plan to show up and protest, they should clean up after themselves. Litter isn't making a positive statement. Neither is violence and disrespect.

Last weekend, a truck parade rode through our neighborhood. It was about 9 p.m. when we heard loud, booming music coming down our dead-end street. Several pickups, windows open, music blaring, lit up with lights and political signs woke up my sleeping 6-year-old and scared the rest of my family. It was late; it's a quiet street; we had no idea they were coming. Later, we saw on a Facebook post that they claimed, innocently, that they were simply showing their kids Christmas lights around town, but that's baloney. Driving around loudly in neighborhoods with political messages is a protest. The fact they weakly denied it was evidence, to me, that they knew what they were doing was disruptive.

They made their point. They changed no one's minds in our household. I wish next time they'd keep their parades out of the neighborhoods and maybe hold them in daylight hours when kids aren't sleeping. But I respect their willingness to demonstrate, even if I don't agree with their message. It's America, after all.

*Pete Radosevich is the publisher of the Pine Knot News and an attorney in Esko who hosts the cable access talk show Harry's Gang on CAT-7. His opinions are his own. Contact him at Pete.Radosevich@PineKnotNews.com.*

### HARRY'S GANG



Pete Radosevich

***If hundreds plan to show up and protest, they should clean up after themselves. Litter isn't making a positive statement. Neither is violence and disrespect.***

# Vaccinations are coming; county is ready

Excitement is mounting as approval and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines are here. We know these vaccines are effective at preventing people from getting sick, but we don't have enough data yet to indicate whether someone who gets vaccinated could still spread the disease to others. This means that throughout the duration of the vaccination efforts, please keep masking, staying 6 feet apart, washing your hands, and following other public health recommendations even if you get vaccinated.

Here's what we know about vaccination efforts as of Dec. 14 based on the Minnesota Department of Health:

## GUEST COMMENTARY



Meghann Levitt

- Protection from the vaccine is not immediate. It will take one to two weeks after the second dose to provide immunity. While a vaccine will not be required or mandated, it is highly encouraged.

- It is important to remember that there will not be enough vaccine initially for everyone.

For this reason, vaccines will be rolled out in a phased approach.

- The first waves will be given

to health care personnel dedicated to working directly in Covid-19 units, care, or vaccine administration, EMS, and long-term care staff and residents in skilled nursing facilities.

- More doses will continually be made and distributed, but the process of vaccinating Minnesotans will take time and will be a fluid situation: moving from one phase to the next will be determined by vaccine supply and uptake.

Carlton County Public Health and Human Services submitted its vaccination plan to the state on Dec. 4 and will be working closely with the MDH for roll-out as we know more about future

shipments and plans for priority populations.

There are three principles that will guide our distribution of the vaccine that align with MDH:

- Immunize for impact and maximizing immediate health benefit, reduce death and serious illness, and minimize the harm created by Covid.

- Equitable distribution and access, making sure no procedural or structural issues impact access to the vaccine among any particular group or population. We want everyone to know they can trust the process, the safety, and the effectiveness of the vaccine.

- Transparency and sharing in-

formation as quickly as possible.

We are interested in your vaccination plans. Take a quick, anonymous survey online at [covid19-carltoncounty.hub.arcgis.com](https://covid19-carltoncounty.hub.arcgis.com) so we can best plan to meet your needs.

Information about vaccinations will be sent out on a regular basis as plans become final and accessibility becomes available to residents through the phased approach.

*Meghann Levitt is the public information officer for Carlton County Public Health and Human Services. Contact her at [meghann.levitt@co.carlton.mn.us](mailto:meghann.levitt@co.carlton.mn.us).*

# There's a magic to outdoor skating

Finally, the lakes froze three or more inches deep. So deep that, with temperatures in the teens or lower, snow did not stick to the surface. It seems magical to me that water I swam and paddled in months ago can serve up a platform for outdoor aerobic exercise in the depths of winter.

I skated as a child, as a mother and, even after my son left home, on the lakes wherever I lived.

In New Jersey, we used skate sails, holding them to windward, speeding along the lake surface and peeking through the plastic window of the sail to ensure we didn't collide with our fellow club

members. In Minneapolis after I returned in 1999, I skated every winter afternoon I could on Lake of the Isles. Long, aerobic loops, often skating backwards.

Now I'm more cautious. Several years ago, I bought knee, elbow and wrist guards — designed for inline skating — from a sports shop. It takes a while to get them on, not to mention my old-fashioned lace-up skates.

It's magical to fly on your feet across a completely empty, quiet lake. Many of

the houses are shuttered, summer places. Sometimes, a couple of dogs race down to bark at me. A raven might croak from a white pine. When the wind blows and the snow is cold enough, you can see down

into the ice. When it's suddenly much colder, the lakes boom as the freezing process expands the ice. Pressure cracks extend several feet down.

I like to skate late in the afternoon, when the lowering sun casts long shadows of my limbs across the surface. As I skate, my fingers and toes warm up. The steam from my breath sometimes obscures the view through glasses

or goggles.

I love how the entire lake surface becomes sculpted with windswept coves and ridges. You don't have to follow a path, unless you're pushing a shovel to make one, necessary after a two or three inch snowfall. That's fun too. Last year, my nephew Jack and I had an amusing time shoveling loops around each other.

My skating workout is aerobic. It gradually warms up the limbs. I've got my face swathed loosely in a wool scarf that will

## ON THE MARK



Ann Markusen



Writer and lifelong skater Ann Markusen likes to skate late in the afternoon, when the lowering sun casts long shadows across the surface.

stay warm even when wet with breath.

Usually the good ice lasts only a week or two. After that, we are lucky to have ice skating rinks. Cromwell's Tom Johnson is making one again this year, and Cloquet, Carlton and other communities also create and maintain rinks. Skating is a great outdoor sport, as well as a muscle and balance

builder. Hope to see you on some of our area's crystal surfaces soon.

*Ann Markusen is an economist and professor emerita at University of Minnesota. A Pine Knot News board member, she lives in Red Clover Township north of Cromwell with her husband, Rod Walli.*

# Early gift buying is my mantra this year, I think

It's Christmas and holiday time again and that means the annual ritual of finding presents for family and friends is well underway. Usually I am a last-minute shopper, and by last minute I'm talking about no sooner than a couple of days before Christmas Day.

For me the easiest part is having a complete and utter knowledge of the person I am giving the present to. That and the fact that normally my wife does most of the shopping and all I have to do is give her a little nod and say "nice job." When it comes to shopping in general I am pretty lazy but very once in a while I get stuck and have to do the chore on my own.

A number of years ago Mike Sylvester, a former newspaper editor, and I were working at the old Pine Knot office on Highway

33. In those days we worked well into the night writing and editing stories and that day was no different. At around noon Mike looked at me and said, "Do you realize tomorrow is Christmas Eve?" I responded by telling him I had forgotten all about it and I had not bought one present.

## RODD'S RAMBLINGS



Kerry Rodd

So, it was off to the races for the two of us. We made stops at numerous local shops and stores. Our final stop later that night was at a local big box store for some last minute stocking stuffers. Mike was buying for his mom and dad and I was buying for my wife and kids. Needless to say, it got embarrassing when Mike and I were standing in the aisle of this store talking about pillows and blankets for his parents when my eldest daughter came around the corner with a weird look on her

face. "What are you guys doing?"

I suppose it looked rather unusual that her dad and another buddy of his were shopping together at 8 p.m. on the eve of Christmas Eve, holding pillows and blankets.

This year I decided to research ideas well in advance. My goal was to have a big list of gift items so that I could match up the person with the right gift. Of course all of this was to have a sports theme per my narrow-minded way of selecting gifts. So the following are some of my ideas for this Christmas.

For anyone with young children or grandchildren, I thought what could be cooler than a cereal bowl with a built-in basketball hoop. That way while they are eating their Froot Loops and Cheerios, they can have fun tossing the cereal through the hoop. I am sure parents would love the fact that they could keep their kids entertained during breakfast.

If you know of someone who likes to have a few beers and barbecue, how about getting them a game-used hockey stick bottle opener, as well as a barbecue set

of tongs and spatulas also made from hockey sticks.

You can head over to the Mail Station in Cloquet and pick up a stadium puzzle like we did. Ours was a puzzle of US Bank Stadium. It had about a billion pieces and took 42 days for my wife and I to get it finished.

You can find myriad baseball-related trinkets. There are bobblehead dolls of your favorite players, jerseys, cufflinks, miniature bats, helmets, hats, just about anything you can imagine. But how many people have a home plate paperweight with your favorite team logo plastered across the top? Perfect for any office.

This year you can find things like a soccer kicking coin bank, mittens made just for wiping the snot off your nose on a cold day, a door that turns into a ping pong table, or even an outdoor hockey rink for under \$400. You name it, you can find it.

Did you know you can buy a heated bleacher seat? How many of us have sat through a cold high school football, soccer, softball, or baseball game on a metal bleacher seat? This new seat al-

lows you to watch your kids play and keep your fanny warm. You can even buy a bleacher cushion called Sweet Cheeks which makes it look like you're wearing a thong from behind.

You can buy a toilet putting green to practice putting while you're doing your business. There's a softball glove with a built in flask, giving "beer league softball" a whole new meaning. If you've ever wanted a ski mask for those cold days at Pine Valley, you can pick up a thing called the "Beardo HD Ski Mask," a ski mask with a high-definition image printed on the front so you can look like any animal you choose.

I spent hours looking at all these unique gift ideas. Unfortunately, I have never ordered anything online. I wouldn't know what to do or how to do it.

So, here we are less than a week to go before Christmas and I haven't done my shopping again. All these ideas and not a gift to be found.

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