

OUR VIEW

Teamwork helps spread the vaccine

Last week's joint effort between Carlton County and the Fond du Lac Band shows how two communities, working together, can have a significant impact on members of both.

Kudos to the Fond du Lac Band for reaching out to the county to share 500 coronavirus vaccines sent to Fond du Lac by the state. They didn't have to do that, and could have reserved the doses solely for their own members. Instead, they recognized that we truly are one community, and what benefits county residents often affects Band members.

"Having the opportunity to vaccinate our neighbors will increase the overall health and well-being of our community," Fond du Lac Human Services associate director Nate Sandman was quoted in last week's Pine Knot News.

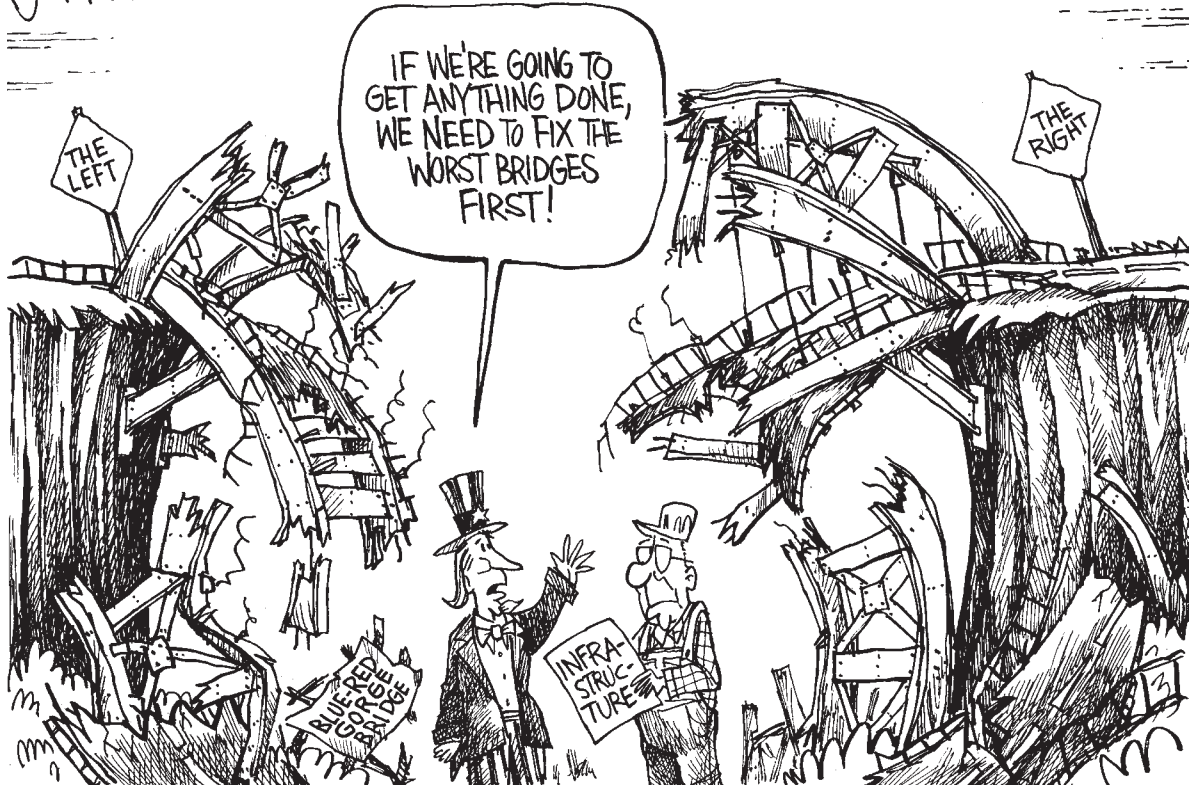
It took the efforts of many people to bring the vaccination event together, and we're impressed with how smoothly the operation came together to serve more than 450 county residents. The event was put together on short notice, and required the cooperation of all sorts of people and organizations. "We only had a couple planning meetings to work through the logistics of how to move up to 500 people through the convention center in a day," said Carlton County Public Health and Human Services director Dave Lee.

Last Thursday's clinic was also the product of a year's worth of work and planning by both the county and the band — both have Emergency Operating Committees that have been very active during the pandemic and they've learned from experience over the past year. You can read more details of the event on Page 5 of this week's Pine Knot News, but we felt this story deserved a little more accolade from those of us in the community who benefitted from the work of the organizers and participants.

The people getting vaccinated deserve a pat on the back too, because getting a shot can be unnerving and requires one to trust the science. The reasons for getting a shot run the gamut from the personal — to avoid illness, a desire for in-person contact — to the overall good of society by stopping the disease through herd immunity. Whatever your motivation, thank you.

Competition is good, but cooperation is better. We appreciate all of the medical personnel and public health officials from Fond du Lac and Carlton County for being so focused on the health of our overall community. This is further evidence that we all do better when we all work together.

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Sexism lesson learned after snarky response to email

I had an interesting experience the other day. In an email with a fellow attorney over settling a case, the attorney told me that her client's previous offer was no longer on the table, because "unforeseen circumstances" had made it impossible for her client to honor the agreement. So, even though we had agreed on a settlement, her client was backing out. That was annoying, but it happens.

But in this case, I had a little more information than opposing counsel had. This was the third lawyer the client has had on the case, which is usually a sign that they are the problem, not the lawyer. I had been dealing with her client for several years, and I knew she was likely bluffing, or outright lying, when she agreed to the offer. So, I was not too surprised when she backed out. Her attorney, on the other hand, seemed to be sincerely surprised, and was quite apologetic. I responded to her email by saying that I understood; that her client had a long history of dishonesty and shady behavior, and that I had never really believed her client would honor the settlement. I should have stopped there. But it was 9 p.m.; I was a little insulted, and felt snarky. So I continued: "But it's sweet you believed her," I wrote. I hit send and immediately wished I had not written that last part.

I expected a response from the other attorney, and I got one. You should know that this attorney is very accomplished; she's a partner in a boutique law firm in the Twin Cities area,

has high credentials and, most importantly, has never treated me with anything but respect and professionalism. I never doubted her motivations and trusted her integrity; she was simply representing the other side, that's all. Lawyers deal with opposing counsel all the time, and most of us can separate the work from the personalities.

But part of her response truly surprised me. Naturally, she pointed out that my response was snarky and unhelpful, but then she went on to say she found my "It's sweet that you believe her" comment to be sexist.

Sexist? I was shocked. I never intended my comment to be sexist, and I was certainly sorry she had interpreted it that way. This attorney did not seem to be one of those people who sees sexism in every negative comment, so I took her criticism seriously and asked myself how this could be sexist. I would have made the same comment to a male colleague, if the situation called for it, I told myself.

Then I reviewed my thoughts. This attorney is very accomplished and has been a female her entire life, so she's probably encountered sexism a lot more than I have. I'm a white, middle-class male. What do I know about sexism? Aside from having three smart, older sisters and a strong mother, none of whom would tolerate sexism from me, I have little to no experience identifying sexism. That attorney probably has, and recognizes it when she sees it. So, she's probably right. My saying it was "sweet" that she

believed her client probably was sexist.

I asked my older sisters about it last weekend, during our weekly family Zoom call. They agreed my comment was snarky and condescending, but disagreed that it was sexist. My niece Reshma, though, disagreed with her mother and aunts, and told me that she could easily see how the attorney felt it was sexist. Reshma is about the same age as the attorney, and is well educated and accomplished herself.

"Men are sexist all the time and most of the time don't even realize it," she said. "I believe them when they say they didn't mean to be sexist. But it's an unconscious bias that you don't even recognize unless you've been the victim of it countless times."

This story ends just fine. I apologized, told the lawyer I was wrong to say it, and she accepted my apology. But a part of me is concerned that she will always think, in the back of her mind, that that attorney from Esko was a kind of a jerk to her. When I mentioned that to Reshma, she said, "Don't worry. She will. We think that about a lot of you men out there."

I guess I'll be more careful in the future.

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

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Looking at those hit hard by pandemic

In Minnesota, we value strong schools, strong families, strong communities, and strong local economies. The last year has been full of hardship and sacrifices, including tragedy for too many families. Despite the trials and tribulations, it's clear Minnesotans are resilient, and we're on the verge of putting the Covid-19 crisis in the rearview mirror. Now, it's time for us to do our part at the Capitol to prioritize those who have experienced the greatest hardships over the last year.

Much of our work this session has been in House committees, identifying solutions to the past year's numerous difficulties. There's no blueprint on paper for how to build back following a pandemic, and we've thoughtfully listened to Minnesotans describe their struggles, concerns, and aspirations as we move forward to strengthen everyone's health, economic security, and overall quality of life.

I'm perhaps most proud of the work we've done in the House Agriculture Committee, which I chair, to help farmers recover from Covid. Agriculture is one of Minnesota's most significant economic drivers, and farmers play an integral role in ensuring Minnesota families have food to put on the table. We've tackled important issues such as sustainable crop production, soil health, financial hurdles in agriculture, and the unique mental health needs of farmers and people in Greater Minnesota. This committee is one of the most bipartisan in the entire Legislature and during a time of deep divisions in our politics, our work can serve as a model of collaboration.

Aside from urgent Covid-related work, our communities have other ongoing needs as well. I've authored legislation to strengthen our own region, including measures to fund a new Carlton County jail and new fire hall in Cloquet, investments in the water line from Lake Superior to Cloquet, and a local sales tax in Cloquet

– if approved by voters – to pay for the proposed Pine Valley Regional Park project.

This session, lawmakers will assemble a new two-year state budget, and House DFLers have put forth a budget framework that comprehensively recognizes last year's challenges. We're working to strengthen investments in what students, families, workers, and small businesses need to not just get

past this crisis, but to truly experience the success they deserve.

Students, educators, and families have done their best over the past year in an impossible situation, and not being in the classroom has had an undeniable effect on learning. Minnesota students deserve the opportunity to make up for that learning loss, and following declining enrollment, we must increase investments in school districts so they can continue providing education at a high level.

To protect people and communities, the livelihoods of small-business

owners, management, and workers have been impacted. Lawmakers delivered a robust economic assistance package late last year, and the federal government recently enacted the American Rescue Plan. However, businesses and workers are still fighting an uphill battle. At the Capitol, we need to commit to taking bipartisan action to help them rebound.

The state is in a good financial position right now, with a projected positive budget balance. While working Minnesotans and small businesses have felt the greatest brunt of the pandemic's impacts, the very wealthiest individuals and large corporations have done fairly well over the past year. By ensuring they pay their fair share, we'll be able to count on sustainable revenue to fund the things we value, such as education, not just now but well into the future.

There are plenty of reasons to be optimistic we're reaching the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Cases, hospitalizations, and deaths due to Covid are all trending downward. Following an initially slow rollout due to limited supplies from the federal government,

the increase in distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine has been remarkable. All Minnesotans are now eligible to get the vaccine, and we're leading the nation in our effectiveness of getting shots into arms.

The weather is warming up. Baseball games are here. Community celebrations and everything else we love about spring and summer in Minnesota is around the corner. We're about to end an extremely dark period for all of us, and as we move forward being hopeful, while also being careful, I'm confident everyone in our state can have a bright future.

Rep. Mike Sundin, a DFLer from Esko, serves the residents of Carlton, Pine, and St. Louis counties in the Minnesota House and chairs the House Agriculture Committee. Contact him via telephone at 651-296-4308, or email: rep.mike.sundin@house.mn.

GUEST COMMENTARY



Rep. Mike Sundin

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please open government offices

The Our View in the April 2 issue of the Pine Knot News took the words right out of my mouth. Please open Cloquet City Hall for customer service. When I've been there to pay my water bill, I'm almost always the only customer there. Are the employees worried about crowds? I bet most of them visit stores like Walmart or Super One, where they are exposed to many more people not barricaded by a glass window.

I think continuing to shut out the public is flirting with overkill. The same could be said for that new county services building in the middle of town.

Dan Unulock, Cloquet

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