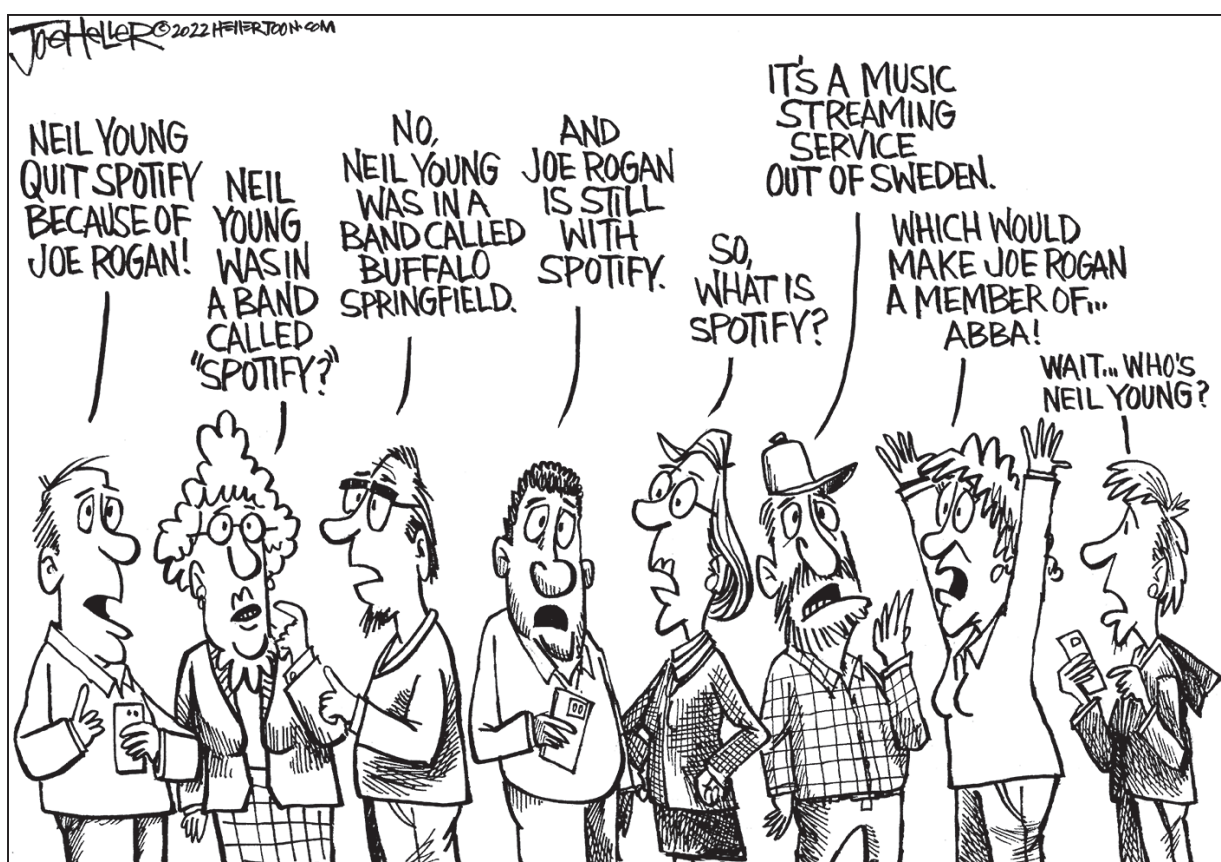


# Opinion



## Using Rock Star Power To Combat Covid Lies

Neil Young and Joni Mitchell have a lifetime of writing and performing legendary music. Now they have another accomplishment they can be proud of.

Young last week demanded that the music and podcast platform Spotify remove his music from the service because it lets COVID-19 vaccine misinformation to be spread on podcasts.

Mitchell followed suit, in support of Young, a fellow Canadian.

Young and Mitchell were reacting to content on Joe Rogan's popular podcast.

The protest follows a public letter from more than 200 scientists and public health experts that

asked Spotify to take down an episode that promoted "several falsehoods about COVID-19 vaccines."

Rogan is known for interviewing vaccine skeptics on his podcast. After the move by the two musicians, Rogan sought some cover by saying he isn't a doctor or scientist so he can't know if guests are spreading misinformation.

That's a lame defense. Any credible podcaster, journalist, TV or radio host who interviews people has a responsibility to do enough fact checking to ensure they're not spreading misinformation from crackpots. You don't

need to be a scientist or doctor to do some research before giving a large platform to people spouting known falsehoods.

Young said that he supports free speech and knows that private businesses can choose the rules they want to live by, right or wrong.

"I have never been in favor of censorship. Private companies have the right to choose what they profit from, just as I can choose not to have my music support a platform that disseminates harmful information," he said.

Mitchell said in a statement

**Rock Stars See Page 5**

## Continuing To Love One Another As Neighbors

### Letters to the Editor

January 27, an Associated Press article was written about our town which included quotes and comments from me. Although those quotes and comments were taken out of context, I have to acknowledge that I'm still responsible for the hurt and offense that they caused.

When I was contacted by the AP reporter, I was told that he wanted to do a story about media bias in small town newspapers. With a background in journalism, I thought that I might have something useful to offer. But my words were used to attack a good man (Publisher Reed Anfinson) and to convey things that I never attempted to convey.

The comments I made (related to the COVID vaccine, President Biden and other political things in general) were all offered as examples of how the media chooses to cover (or not cover) certain things. They were not given as statements about my personal beliefs. But clearly that is how many people have taken them (because, I think, that's what the reporter wanted).

In other words, the article wasn't really about media bias. It seems to have been written for the purpose of dividing a town that, despite our political differences, never seemed divided before.

But, despite my words being taken out of context and used in ways that I didn't intend, I still have to take responsibility for them. So I want to apologize to the citizens of Benson- and especially the people that I serve at St. Mark's- for the hurt that I've caused. Christ prayed that His people would be united; and I have played a role in disrupting that unity. For that I am sincerely and profoundly sorry.

I'm also sorry for the way that our family's relationship with Reed was characterized, as though we only pretend to love our neighbor. Despite the reporter repeatedly trying to get us to say negative things about Reed, our family all refused to take the bait. We told the reporter that, despite whatever ideological differences that exist between us, we love Reed and Shelly Anfinson. They have been amazing neighbors to us, the best that anyone could ask for. Since the publication of the article, Reed and I have talked; and we know how we feel about each other. But I wanted everyone else to know it, too.

Although some big-city reporters may not believe it, people are able to have disagreements without having to become enemies of one another. I hope that that will be the case here. I pray that people will not become divided because of my mistake and that we will all continue to love another as neighbors.

**Jason Wolter**

**Benson**

## The Slow Erasure Of Outdoor Memories



### A Drop of Ink

By Reed Anfinson  
Publisher

Mittened hands cupped around our face, we peer through the fractured but still clear ice. We hear the scrape of skates as they glide across Sand Lake as our siblings continue to enjoy a brisk winter's day outdoors. During this moment of rest, our focus is downward.

What will we see beneath the 18 inches of frozen water? Will a large fish go gliding by? Will its predatory eyes glance our way? A child's imagination runs free. All these years later, it is a vivid and cherished memory.

Do parents still bundle up their children, pile them into cars, and set out to a nearby lake to let them skate in a winter landscape? Or are they dropped off at an indoor rink and picked up later? Do they join their children on the ice? Or, do they sit in bleachers focused on the trivial on their phones? We know the number of outdoor skating rinks around our communities where children skate beneath streetlights are far fewer than when we were growing up.

So much of what kids do today is structured. Then they return home, where they lock into their computers, televisions, or phones.

"Some kids don't want to be organized all the time. They want to let their imaginations run; they want to see where the

stream of water takes them," Richard Louv writes in his book, "Last Child in the Woods." They want to drop sticks off one side of a country bridge, race to the other side and see whose comes out first, then watch it as it fades into the distance. They want to chase fireflies through the fields at night, build forts in the trees, and peer through the ice on a frozen lake. These outdoor activities aren't just frivolous pastimes.

Many children today are suffering from what Louv calls "Nature Deficit Disorder."

"Nature deficit disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher physical and emotional illnesses. The disorder can be detected in individuals, families and communities," Louv writes.

"As the nature deficit grows, another emerging body of scientific evidence indicates that direct exposure to nature is essential for physical and emotional health," Louv writes. Studies are showing when children are outside in nature "their symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder are reduced and that it can improve all children's cognitive abilities and resistance to negative stresses and depression."

Too many communities have sterilized their landscapes by removing areas where children can play in a wild landscape or set down rigid rules structuring their activities. "Countless communities have virtually outlawed unstructured outdoor nature play, often because of the threat of lawsuits, but also because of a growing obsession with order," Louv writes. We take away the opportunities for children to

explore and then complain they sit around too much. Parents have stopped participating with their children in the outdoors. They set the example from which children can then leap into their own exploration setting their imaginations free.

In one study that included 800 mothers, 71% said they recalled spending time outside every day. However, Louv writes, those same mothers said their children played outside every day only 26% of the time. Those children are paying a price for staying indoors.

"Based on previous studies, we can definitely say that the best predictor of preschool children's physical activity is simply being outdoors and that an indoor, sedentary childhood is linked to mental health problems," James Sallis the director of the Active Living Research Program for the Robert Wood's Foundation told Louv.

Louv writes there is an assumption rural kids spend a lot more time outside in nature than urban children. That's not entirely true, he says. Rural children, those living in small towns, found it challenging to find places to play in nature. Rural children face the same pressures of structured play, sedentary parents, and the obsession of both child and adult with electronic devices.

In just a couple generations, we are erasing memories of our connection with nature as fewer and fewer children play outdoors. We pay the price for this as well. As children learn the wonders of nature, building memories, they also appreciate its value when they become adults. They are then more likely to support efforts to preserve natural environments and be concerned about our changing climate.

As with all challenges, there are opportunities.

Communities that pursue establishing outdoor experiences and providing incentives to get children outside could reap economic development benefits. Their efforts could be promoted to families seeking more fulfilling lives for their children and themselves.

In too many places where we walk close to nature, signs tell us to "stay on the path." The natural landscape is to be viewed not entered. Children need places to explore that encourage them to "get off the path" and wander through nature, letting their imaginations run free.

Want some help in getting children outside? Read the story on the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' new grant phase for its popular No Child Left Inside program. These grants are aimed at getting more children to fish, hike, bike or even study animal tracks. See Page 5 of this week's Times.

Perhaps our elementary schools could have a kite flying day. Of course, you need wind to fly a kite. With our modern day forecasts, we see when windy days are coming a couple days in advance. Have the kites ready. The children will be exploding with anticipation. How many children will ask their parents to find a field where they can fly a kite in the days before and after? It's one small step.

Louv's book features 100 things individuals and communities can do to support outdoor activities. Every park board should have his book available for reading. Every library should have it available to its residents. Every economic development body should explore the possibilities.

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