

A PATH FORWARD Steven P. Dinkin

PATIENCE WEARING THIN FOR UNVACCINATED, UNMASKED

As a career mediator, I'm a big fan of differing opinions, especially when those opposing views are expressed in a respectful manner. Mediators bring squabbling parties together to find common ground, which is usually the first step in resolving even the thorniest of conflicts.

But in the fight against COVID-19, the principles of mediation go out the window. Vaccines and mask wearing are effective. There is no point in searching for common ground in a public health crisis.

President Joe Biden gets it. He recently dropped the hammer and announced wide-ranging vaccine mandates for government employees and contractors. Companies with 100 or more employees must verify that workers are vaccinated or test workers weekly. Biden also threatened to sue states that undermine COVID protections ordered by local school officials.

The president explained, "Many of us are frustrated with the nearly 80 million Americans

who are still not vaccinated, even though the vaccine is safe, effective and free."

Noting that some hospitals are overrun with COVID patients and unable to serve people with other medical needs, Biden drew a line in the sand.

"Our patience is wearing thin," he said succinctly. "And your refusal has cost all of us."

To which I say: "Thank you, President Biden. Thanks for stating what so many of us have been thinking. It's about time."

We, the 70 percent of Americans who have done our part in the fight against COVID, are fed up. The stubbornly unvaccinated — for all their selfishness — don't seem to care about the data that show they are 11 times more likely to die of COVID. Their blatant disregard for the rest of us is breathtakingly inconsiderate and irresponsible. Enough is enough.

What is most perplexing is that we can't find common ground in getting kids back to school safely, even after 18 months of remote learning. Things are especially

bleak in disadvantaged communities. We've heard stories about inequities and lack of access, from shortages of laptops and tablets to inadequate Internet connectivity. The pandemic widened pre-existing opportunity and achievement gaps, hitting these students hardest.

In July, McKinsey & Company issued a report on the effects of unfinished learning. It showed that the pandemic's impact on K-12 student learning was significant, leaving students — on average — five months behind in math and four months behind in reading by the end of the school year.

Also, more than 35 percent of parents surveyed by McKinsey said they were very or extremely concerned about their children's mental health. Remote learning also took a toll on working parents, who were stretched thin by overly packed schedules and work-from-home pressures.

And so, the Los Angeles Unified School District deserves high marks. It recently mandated that all students age 12 or older be fully

vaccinated. The Board of Education voted 6-0 to pass the measure, making Los Angeles the first major school district to take such an action. Students must provide proof of vaccination by Jan. 10 to be allowed on campus. Unvaccinated students will take classes remotely, through independent study.

L.A. Unified is doing its part to keep its schools from becoming centers for outbreak. While children are in fact at reduced risk for contracting COVID-19, the risk for that group is still quite real. And because the Delta variant is so infectious, more children are getting sick and hospitalized.

But that doesn't seem to matter to a significant swath of parents. In a recent poll conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, 20 percent of parents of 12- to 17-year-olds said they will "definitely not" get their child vaccinated. The most vocal opponents are unvaccinated themselves, and many believe the vaccine is a bigger risk to their child's health than COVID-19 itself. They ex-

pressed concerns about side effects and long-term impacts.

We can't even get agreement on wearing masks. In the Poway Unified School District, masks are required indoors for all students and adults, regardless of vaccination status. Outdoor mask wearing is optional.

Not all Powegians are on board: A recent school board meeting was adjourned early — on advice from law enforcement — when anti-mask protesters interrupted the proceedings. The group forced its way into the district office and pushed past staff members, ignoring requests to leave.

The board never got to discuss the important business of the day: school safety measures and public health updates. No wonder our patience is wearing thin.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com.

SPACES

FROM B1 irrigation and landscape architecture. The third area was staged as a "lounge, bistro area where people can just hang out and mellow out," said Stebbins.

Just north of that parklet was an 8-foot sculpture in the middle of a parking spot outside of the art gallery Art On Third. The installation caught the eye of many pedestrians and drivers, so curious and others who said they were not pleased with fewer storefront parking spaces available.

"It's doing what it was intended to," said Art On Third owner Rich Walker as he pointed to his tall sculpture. "It's making people stop and see and the hope is to get more people out here."

Walker said he has participated in four other annual Park(ing) Day events, including in San Diego, and was excited that Chula Vista was joining the international celebration.

After the pandemic canceled several events and inspired the creation of COVID-19 parklets and streeteries, Chula Vista's Third Avenue Village Association saw the event as an opportunity to bring more activity to a street that has been transforming into a more pedestrian-focused



From left, Andrew Hatch, Casey Jacobs and Brittany Borden, members of the American Society of Landscape Architects, help transform parking spaces into parklets during Park(ing) Day on Third Avenue.

area over the years.

"We've narrowed the street, created crosswalks for traffic to slow down and have a more pedestrian-friendly feel. It's been a big process but it's also brought

more pedestrians and it's a safer environment," said Kelly Lannom, director of the association.

Stebbins said San Diego, which has previously participated in Park(ing) Day, has

been focusing on its "Spaces as Places" program, which would make restaurants' outdoor dining areas permanent in exchange for paying a city fee. Revenue would go toward widening and beauti-

fying sidewalks to welcome more pedestrians and cyclists.

"It's a very noble effort," Stebbins said. "We've had this wonderful connection with all the business owners

here, and so we're focusing most of our efforts here in Chula Vista."

Chula Vista is also working to keep outdoor dining spaces along Third Avenue for at least another year under a newly launched initiative that allows businesses to keep their structures so long as they cooperate in creating a more orderly and accessible thoroughfare.

Park(ing) Day dates to 2005 in San Francisco when art studio Rebar set up a park for two hours in a metered spot.

"We began discussing parking spaces in San Francisco and determined that at the curbside meter rates, a parking space was an incredibly cheap piece of San Francisco real estate," read the studio's event page myparkingday.org. "Calculating that between 20-30% of San Francisco's land area was streets, and that minus the sidewalk, 70-80% of that space was dedicated to vehicle movement and storage, we began to discuss ideas for more useful ways of occupying this precious part of San Francisco's public realm."

The event spread to more than 100 cities and dozens of countries over the years and is now celebrated annually on the third Friday in September.

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ANIMAL CENTER HOLDS ADOPTION CAMPAIGN

BY LAURA GROCH

RANCHO SANTA FE

Helen Woodward Animal Center invites the community to Remember Me Thursday, an international pet adoption campaign now in its ninth year.

The event takes place at 9 a.m. Thursday in the center's outdoor pavilion at 6461 El Apajo Road, and will virtually unite animal advocates to help orphan

pets and #SeeTheLight about pet adoption.

Register to watch at bit.ly/3zjMH27. Those who would like to attend in person are also welcome to do so.

For more on Remember Me Thursday and a list of participating celebrities and animal welfare organizations, visit remembermethursday.org.

People can also win funds, toys and food for

adoptable pets at their favorite nonprofit pet adoption organization through the Remember Me Thursday Social Media Contest. Just upload your rescue pet's photo and story to the #RememberMeThursday Photo Wall for a chance to win.

Call (858) 756-4117; email info@animalcenter.org.

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BLUFFS

FROM B1 time the area was closed was amazing. The sea lions were much calmer, the pups were able to nurse and they were able to take up the whole area in a way they couldn't before. It's been really encouraging. We're really happy with the closure. We think that's the way to go."

Though discussions are under way about future closures during pupping season, Toye said now that the area is open, there needs to be ranger presence. During the closure, at least one ranger was stationed in the area for enforcement.

"We feel that, going from completely closed with rangers ... to completely open and having people rely on signage is not ideal," Toye said. "That's the only thing we would like is for the city to put in a management plan with a ranger and for the stairs to be closed at night. Sometimes people go down there at night ... so there should be a closure of the stairs at night to protect people."

She said the Seal Society wants to continue to work with local government agencies to find a "practical" solution.

"We're very much trying to have a reasonable approach," Toye said. "We're in contact with different people because we want to come up with the best solution. We don't want to assume we know what that solution will be. We have our views on how long the closure should be, but we want to work with people."

First day of reopening

On Thursday morning, many of the people who were at Point La Jolla to see the sea lions did so from behind the short wall that separates the sidewalk from the bluffs.

Tiffany and Ailee Sykes, visiting from Kansas City, Mo., went to La Jolla to see the wildlife but opted to do it from a distance. "We wanted to stay back here and not disturb (the sea lions)," Tiffany Sykes said.

She said she was uncertain exactly where public ac-



ASHLEY MACKIN-SOLOMON U-T COMMUNITY PRESS

The staircase leading to the bluffs at Point La Jolla was open on Thursday following a five-week closure.

cess is allowed. Nevertheless, "I wouldn't want to get closer, so sitting here is good," she said.

"I think it's really cool to see sea lions in an open, unenclosed environment," Ailee Sykes added.

But some opted to take advantage of the public access.

One pair walked along the bluffs and were quickly approached by Toye, who suggested they keep their distance from the sea lions.

Five weeks of closure

In June, the Seal Society and Sierra Club San Diego called on Mayor Todd Gloria to declare an emergency and temporarily close Point La Jolla to the public during sea lion pupping season while keeping the viewing area from the adjacent wall open.

Rather than pursue a closure, the city in early July posted signs at the entrance to Point La Jolla and Boomer Beach urging people to stay back from the sea lion birthing area and cautioning that sea lions can bite and that harassing them is against the law. Stenciling placed on trash cans, the sidewalk and the short wall reads "Do not approach mothers or pups" and "Do not approach sea lions."

At the Aug. 5 La Jolla Community Planning Association meeting, City Coun-

cilmember Joe LaCava, whose District 1 includes La Jolla, said a "responsible tourism" public education campaign and the sign program were "not particularly effective" and that the city had decided to take "more assertive steps."

He told the La Jolla Light, a publication of the U-T Community Press, that he was "impressed" with the Parks & Recreation Department's solution to close the area by way of signs that "could be easily removed."

The temporary closure was authorized through an emergency coastal development permit from the city Development Services Department. For any future closures, the city would follow a regular coastal development permit process with the California Coastal Commission, LaCava told the La Jolla Light.

When an emergency coastal development permit lapses, the procedure is to apply for a regular coastal development permit and go through a more comprehensive process that includes more public input.

A timeline for applying for a permit for future closures is not yet set, though LaCava said the application "is expected in the near term."

Mackin-Solomon writes for the U-T Community Press.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, Sept. 19, the 262nd day of 2021.

Today's highlight in history

On Sept. 19, 1796, President George Washington's farewell address was published. In it, America's first chief executive advised, "Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all."

On this date

In 1777, the first Battle of Saratoga was fought during the Revolutionary War; although British forces succeeded in driving out the American troops, the Americans prevailed in a second battle the following month.

In 1881, the 20th president of the United States, James A. Garfield, died 2 1/2 months after being shot by Charles Guiteau; Chester Alan Arthur became president.

In 1945, Nazi radio propagandist William Joyce, known as "Lord Haw-Haw," was convicted of treason and sentenced to death by a British court.

In 1957, the United States conducted its first contained underground nuclear test, code-named "Rainier," in the Nevada desert.

In 1984, Britain and China completed a draft agreement on transferring Hong Kong

from British to Chinese rule by 1997.

In 1985, the Mexico City area was struck by a devastating earthquake that killed at least 9,500 people.

In 1986, federal health officials announced that the experimental drug AZT would be made available to thousands of AIDS patients.

In 1995, The New York Times and The Washington Post published the manifesto of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, which proved instrumental in identifying and capturing him.

In 1996, IBM announced it would extend health benefits to the partners of its gay employees.

In 2001, the Pentagon ordered dozens of advanced aircraft to the Persian Gulf region as the hour of military retaliation for deadly terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 drew closer.

In 2008, struggling to stave off financial catastrophe, the Bush administration laid out a radical bailout plan calling for a takeover of a half-trillion dollars or more in worthless mortgages and other bad debt held by tottering institutions. Relieved investors sent stocks soaring on Wall Street and around the globe.

Ten years ago: In a White House address, a combative President Barack Obama demanded that the richest Americans pay higher taxes to help cut soaring U.S. deficits by more than \$3 trillion. Mariano Rivera set a major league

record with his 602nd save, closing out the New York Yankees' 6-4 win over the Minnesota Twins.

Five years ago: Angelina Jolie Pitt filed for divorce from Brad Pitt, citing irreconcilable differences.

One year ago: President Donald Trump urged the Republican-run Senate to consider "without delay" his upcoming nomination to fill the Supreme Court vacancy created by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg just six weeks before the election.

Today's birthdays

Author Roger Angell is 101. Actor Rosemary Harris is 94. Actor David McCallum is 88. Singer-songwriter Paul Williams is 81. Singer Bill Medley is 81. Singer Sylvia Tyson (Ian and Sylvia) is 81. Singer Freda Payne is 79. Retired professional golfer Jane Blalock is 76. Singer David Bromberg is 76. Former NFL player Larry Brown is 74. Actor Jeremy Irons is 73. Model-actor Twiggy Lawson is 72. TV personality Joan Lunden is 71. Actor Scott Colomby is 69. Musician Nile Rodgers is 69. Singer-actor Rex Smith is 66. Singer Lita Ford is 63. Celebrity chef Mario Batali is 61. Actor-comedian Cheri Oteri is 59. Singer Trisha Yearwood is 57. "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon is 47. Actor-TV host Alison Sweeney is 45. Singers-musicians Sara and Tegan Quin are 41.

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