

A PATH FORWARD Steven P. Dinkin

HOLIDAYS A FITTING TIME TO HONOR THE AMERICAN FAMILY

It's the most wonderful time — of a most stressful, and unusual, year.

With millions of Americans poised to travel and gather for Thanksgiving and Christmas (or thinking about it, at least), officials have unveiled new restrictions in hopes of curtailing the spread of COVID-19 amid a nationwide surge in cases. The governors of North Dakota and Utah — states that have resisted mask-wearing — have now mandated that their residents mask up in public and physically distance from others when outside of their households.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom has joined other governors in announcing a travel advisory that discourages nonessential out-of-state travel and asks residents who leave to quarantine for two weeks when they return.

If not for the ever-resilient Black Friday sales — both in-store, and online — it might feel like, this year, the holidays were being canceled.

But honestly, that's not where my stress is coming from. I have a

heavy heart these days because I really do miss my mother terribly. She's alone in our hometown of Milwaukee. I haven't seen her since last year.

Thanksgiving together, in her home, is a family tradition that dates back some 40 years. I have so many wonderful Thanksgiving memories, like waking up early to watch the Macy's Day Parade; beating my brother at football in our snowy backyard; sharing funny stories with my sister and father; and helping mom with the stuffing, to make sure it was perfectly seasoned.

Yet, in many households, the holidays will feel different this year. I think about the quarter of a million families who will never again enjoy a meal with their loved ones because they were lost to the coronavirus. The pain is a reminder that family is our most important institution, especially as other institutions, like democracy, seem so fragile. Even as the ground crumbles beneath our feet, families prevail.

So, as the editorial staff of

Time Magazine gathers in the next few weeks — either in person or virtually — to consider candidates for the publication's "Person (s) of the Year," I'd like to nominate, without hesitation, the American family.

Think about it. No one has toiled harder this year than families, as moms and dads — often without the help of grandparents — try to hold things together as the pandemic rages.

In too many households, this has meant struggling with food insecurity for the first time ever. Food-insecure families are uncertain about how they will get their next meal, with little or no food available at home.

Here in San Diego County, 1 in 7 adults and 1 in 5 children face food insecurity, according to the San Diego Hunger Coalition. The problem is widespread: A recent food bank distribution event in Dallas served 25,000 people, 40 percent of whom were first-time visitors.

For these families, what many of us know as the abundance of

Thanksgiving will be nothing more than wishful thinking.

Other households are more fortunate. While not struggling to make ends meet, they are nonetheless trying to pull off another sort of magic trick: managing full-time jobs and carrying out 24/7 parental duties. As schools remain closed — or face closure yet again — remote learning presents daily challenges to families, from unreliable technology to advanced math. For parents who work outside the home, there's the added stress of finding qualified, reliable and affordable child care.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the pandemic is taking a toll on our nation's mental health. A government report cited in HealthDay News found that 41 percent of adults surveyed in June are experiencing "an adverse mental or behavioral health condition," a sharp rise from 2019. The number of Americans suffering from anxiety disorder has tripled, and the number experiencing depression has jumped fourfold. Kids as young as age 3 are suffering from pandemic-

induced anxiety.

Still, families soldier on — resilient in the face of adversity. And in the most American of ways, they continue to show kindness and compassion to their neighbors in need. One-third of U.S. households have given money this year to charitable organizations, even amid economic uncertainty. And while in-person volunteering has been curtailed, families find new ways to pitch in from the comfort and safety of their own homes.

Given the enduring spirit of the family, even in a year full of challenges, a Time magazine cover is a fitting tribute. So, too, is an even greater honor that the institution of family has already earned: the love and respect of the American people.

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 NCR's programming, visit nrcr.org.

LAKE

FROM B1
ducing the region's reliance on imported water.

Lake Miramar is key to the project because it is where San Diego plans to store the recycled water before sending it out to homes and businesses across the city.

Other communities that recycle sewage into water typically store the treated water underground, but San Diego's terrain prevents that. The city requested and received a state waiver to store the recycled water above ground.

Once the Pure Water system is built, Lake Miramar will end its long history of storing water flowing south to the reservoir from both the Colorado River and the California Aqueduct.

Imported water is now pumped from the aqueduct to the reservoir before it is treated by the adjacent Miramar Water Treatment Plant and delivered to customers.

Once Pure Water is built, the lake's water will all be recycled water from the new treatment plant in eastern La Jolla. The water will then go through a second treatment process at the Miramar treatment plant before being distributed to homes and businesses.

In addition to recreational activities, classes of school children regularly visit the reservoir to learn



K.C. ALFRED U-T FILE

Lake Miramar attracts an estimated 100,000 people a year for jogging, biking, fishing, boating, picnicking and other activities.

about fish and biology.

Wulfeck said the lake has been popular during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that closures of malls and other businesses have made recreation at the lake an appealing option.

Construction of Lake Miramar and its dam were completed in 1960 as part of the second San Diego Aqueduct. The reservoir was officially dedicated on Sept. 16, 1960, a year after ground was broken for the project.

"We celebrate not only Miramar Reservoir's past, but the critical role it will play when the Pure Water system is completed," said Shauna Lorange, director of Public Utilities for San Diego. "Miramar Reservoir will continue to be a key part of our water system for many years to come."

The lake is an expansion

of a small reservoir that had served the large ranch of newspaper publisher Edward W. Scripps. The \$2.2 million required for the project came from an \$11 million water bond approved by voters in June 1958.

When full, the reservoir covers 274 surface acres, reaches a maximum water depth of 114 feet and has 4 miles of shoreline. It has a water storage capacity of more than 6,500 acre-feet.

The earthen embankment dam has a maximum height of 165 feet measured from the downstream toe. It has a base of 1,180 feet.

The adjacent treatment plant was completed in 1962 for \$3.5 million. It was significantly expanded and upgraded in 2010.

Recreational facilities, including the picnic area and boat dock, were added

in the mid-1960s with nearly \$400,000 from the state.

A few years after the reservoir was completed, development of Scripps Ranch began. It now has a population of more than 32,000.

The other eight city reservoirs, in order of their construction, are Lake Morena near Campo, which opened in 1912; Lower Otay Lake near Chula Vista, which opened in 1916; Lake Hodges in southern Escondido, which opened in 1918; Barrett Lake near Jamul, which opened in 1922; El Capitan Lake near Lakeside, which opened in 1935; San Vicente Lake near Lakeside, which opened in 1943; Lake Murray in La Mesa, which opened in 1950; and Lake Sutherland in Ramona, which opened in 1954.

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FENCE

FROM B1
and Del Mar sections will be issued early next year.

Trespassing on the tracks is the leading cause of rail-related deaths nationwide. San Diego County had 44 casualties, excluding suicides, from November 2013 to October 2017, according to the Federal Railroad Administration.

In addition to the extensive human toll the deaths have on victims and their families, the incidents can affect the mental health of train crews, passengers and emergency responders. There's also a huge financial cost, estimated at billions of dollars nationwide, just in terms of passengers and goods delayed by accidents.

People grow accustomed to crossing the tracks illegally, said district board Chairman Tony Kranz, an Encinitas City Council member.

"I grew up crossing the tracks every day to go to school," Kranz said. "That was in the '60s and '70s and there weren't nearly as many trains. We learned how to do it safely ... looking both ways."

Today he sees the train tracks differently.

"In my service as a City Council member and a board member, one of the most difficult things I ever did was to counsel the mother of a 14-year-old boy who took his life ... and the

devastation of that," Kranz said. "I can tell you that in this particular case, a fence would have prevented the death."

"It's important that we continue to work toward providing safe legal access across the corridor, with a fence that will channel people toward those legal crossings," he said.

Encinitas installed a pedestrian underpass beneath the tracks at Santa Fe Drive that opened in 2013, and plans to start construction soon on another one at El Portal. However, underpasses and overpasses are expensive and, while grant money is available, much of the costs must be paid by the cities that build them.

Another issue is that without increased safety measures, including the fence, the transit district will have to pay higher insurance costs and is more likely to encounter additional legal expenses.

A 2016 incident in Del Mar, in which a man was hit by a train while attempting to take a "selfie" photo, resulted in a lawsuit that will cost \$500,000, even if the defense is successful, officials said.

Train traffic on the coastal corridor is expected to increase significantly over the next decade, further adding to the need for the fence. Also, the trains will be faster, quieter and more difficult for trespassers to avoid.

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HOUSING

FROM B1
verity zone. Developing the land will require multiple city permits, including a major use permit, as well as state Coastal Commission approval.

The development plans are a joint effort. The multi-family housing company Greystar is handling the housing project, while the Belmont Village company is doing the senior facility. Representatives for both companies spoke at Thursday's meeting.

Beau Brand, a development manager for Greystar, said the project would provide "immense public benefits," including a 4-acre, deed-restricted open space area and a public hiking trail along the edge of the property.

Andy Gerber, a Belmont Village vice president, stressed his company's ties to San Diego County, noting that Belmont already op-

erates two facilities in the region, including Belmont Village, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, which is on Manchester Avenue about a half-mile away from the new project's site.

"We continue to own every community we've built," he added, stressing that "this is not a spec project where Belmont Village is going to be gone in a few years."

The two-story, 208,220-square-foot senior care facility is proposed to contain 77 of what are termed "independent living" units, 68 assisted living units, 27 units set aside for people with mild cognitive impairments who do not require a secure environment, and 28 for people who require a more secure environment, city documents indicate.

The housing plans call for eight single-family homes, with seven of them set aside for low-income people.

In addition, all eight of the homes will have what are termed accessory dwelling units and those also will be for low-income

Encinitas housing project proposed

Belmont Village would bring a 200-unit senior residential care facility and eight low-income single-family homes to Encinitas if approved.



Sources: city of Encinitas; Nextzen; OpenStreetMap

MICHELLE GUERRERO U-T

residents, plans indicate.

City senior planner Katie Innes said the developers are exceeding some city development standards. Among other things, the developers are proposing to include 183 parking spaces for

the senior facility, but they are only required to have 120 spaces, she said.

Because they're including so many accessory dwelling units in the housing portion of the project, the developers also have a sur-

plus of 11 low-income units beyond what's required, she said.

Commissioners Doyle and Sherod said they particularly liked the inclusion of the low-income housing in the development plan.

"Overall, I'm in favor and it's a good project from what I've seen," Sherod said, mentioning that she believed the developers had done well in preserving the property's open space areas.

Commissioner Farrow disagreed, saying that if the site was entirely developed for housing, rather than being a mixed project with both housing and a senior living area, it would contain far fewer total units — more like 53 rather than 208.

"I have serious concerns about this project," he stressed.

Both Farrow and commission chairman Ehlers questioned whether there really was a need for any more senior living facilities in Encinitas, noting that the city already has a lot of them.

Ehlers said he wasn't keen on building a senior facility next to a freeway on-ramp area, saying putting elderly drivers in such a situation amounts to a "recipe for disaster."

Various developments have been proposed for the strawberry fields site over the years. At one point, the owners suggested putting an agriculture-themed hotel on the land. Costco also once considered buying the property.

City documents state that the land was used for agriculture from about 1947 through 1953, then was left fallow from the mid-1960s through much of the 1980s. Agricultural production again began on the site in the late 1980s and has continued to the present day.

The state Department of Transportation recently acquired one corner of the property for a direct-access freeway ramp and a park & ride area.

Henry is a freelance writer.

SMOLENS

FROM B1
is attended by lobbyists and financed in part by corporations.

The four-day event kicked off Monday, three days after Newsom urged Californians not to travel out of state, according to the Los Angeles Times.

In media interviews, some of the lawmakers defended their attendance, saying important policy issues were being discussed. Independent Voter Project President Dan Howle said safety precautions had been taken, including a requirement by the state of Hawaii that people show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 72 hours before they visit.

He said participants pledged to quarantine for 14 days upon returning to California — which the state government is recommending for all travelers

from out of state.

Newsom admitted he made a mistake by going to the party at The French Laundry restaurant in Yountville on Nov. 6. By their actions, Pelosi and McCarthy acknowledged missteps.

All of this, of course, sends a troubling message to a public that's tired of pandemic restrictions, skeptical of them or both. Then there's a lesser, though still disconcerting notion: How in the world can these otherwise politically savvy people be so tone-deaf?

While Newsom's moral authority to enforce COVID-19 restrictions may have taken on water, his legal authority to do so is being challenged.

A Sutter County Superior Court judge at the beginning of November issued an injunction barring Newsom from issuing executive orders that change laws, create new laws or set legislative policy — which is how

he has bypassed the Legislature in setting some COVID-19 rules. A state appellate court on Tuesday stayed the injunction until Newsom's appeal can be heard.

Meanwhile, businesses and local governments are challenging Newsom on scientific grounds, saying he is cracking down on businesses and organizations that are not responsible for the vast majority of COVID-19 outbreaks.

San Diego restaurants and gyms have sued the state and county, seeking to halt the shutdown of their indoor operations that was enacted because of the surge in COVID-19 cases.

They used some of the same arguments and data the county put forth earlier in asking the state to keep San Diego out of the most restrictive purple tier on the COVID-19 reopening scale.

"San Diego's increased cases are not due to the sectors impacted by moving

into a more restrictive tier," the county told the state, according to a report by Paul Sisson of The San Diego Union-Tribune.

The state rejected the county's request. Superior Court Judge Kenneth J. Medel is expected to rule on Monday whether to grant the businesses a temporary restraining order to allow their indoor operations to continue.

Sisson wrote that contact tracing interviews with county residents who have tested positive for coronavirus infection show that many of the places subject to some of the more restrictive COVID-19 operational requirements are not those most regularly visited by individuals who have gotten sick.

Since early June, bars and restaurants have made up 9 percent of the locations that residents told case investigators they visited in the two weeks prior to the onset of illness — a figure

that has dropped even more recently. Gyms have come up in 0.4 percent of interviews. Places of worship were mentioned by 1.7 percent of those interviewed.

"According to the county, the top locations mentioned by those who have been sickened by the virus are households, work locations and travel, which made up 33 percent, 30 percent and 17 percent of locations, respectively," according to Sisson.

On Tuesday, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted to pursue a lawsuit against the state aimed at getting a reprieve from the purple tier.

Among other things, supervisors pointed out that some rural areas have low infection rates and should have fewer restrictions than areas with higher rates.

The state is going in the opposite direction. The governor on Thursday ordered a near-statewide

curfew, in addition to his earlier restrictions on indoor activities.

Meanwhile, businesses in San Diego and elsewhere are facing cease-and-desist orders for violating the state's COVID-19 regulations. Law enforcement agencies also have been directed to be more aggressive in citing individuals flouting the rules.

As yet, it does not appear the governor has received a citation.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Soumya Karlamangla (@skarlamanla), health reporter for the Los Angeles Times, early last week.

"something that seems false but isn't: COVID is killing nearly one American every minute"

(Update: On Friday, the 1,862 deaths reported far exceeded one per minute.)

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