

A mask is the best tool we have to protect one another

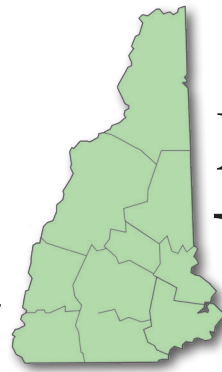
OUR STATE MOTTO is “live free or die,” and I respect that. It speaks to diversity of thought and the importance of individuality and self-determination. But here is the thing: when General John Stark penned that toast in 1809 he was talking about the Revolutionary War, not a global pandemic.

I firmly believe in individual freedoms. I also believe we are citizens of a great state and of a great nation. Being afforded the benefit of living here also burdens us with the responsibility of being good citizens, of giving a little more than we take. “Good citizen” may be defined differently by different people, but right now there is one easy and obvious action we can all take to be a good citizen: Wear a mask. Like all the time. It’s not hard. You slip the straps over your ears and cover your mouth and nose. That’s all there is to it. And for that simple act you drastically reduce the risk of transmitting or receiving the coronavirus.

More than 27,000 of our fellow New



Justine Vogel



NEW HAMPSHIRE VOICES

Hampshire citizens have contracted the virus since March, and it has killed 570 of us. Mothers and daughters and sons and fathers and husbands and wives. 570 deaths are 570 too many.

The virus is wily. It is silent and blind and then loud and aggressive. And right now, it is spreading like wildfire in our state. We were doing really well this summer, but let’s admit it... we got comfortable and lazy. We were around too many

people, we took too many risks, and we didn’t always wear our masks. Fighting the virus is hard. It is killing people. It is killing the very people committed to others’ health — our health care workers. My friends and colleagues are fighting against it every day, risking their own personal health and safety to help ensure the health and safety of others. It is heroic work, and yet we are making it harder for them every time we don’t wear a mask. Why?

A vaccine is coming, and for that I could not be more grateful, but until then we have limited tools to prevent infection (until we have proven therapeutic drugs, prevention is our only way to fight the virus). We can wash our hands, a lot. We can stay away from larger groups of people. And we can wear a mask. But that mask? That mask is the most important tool and piece of equipment we have right now.

In most contests, events, or challenges, the players use tools to help them do their work and be successful. Firefighters wouldn’t go into a blaze without a hose. Baseball players wouldn’t go on the field without a glove. Singers don’t go on the stage without a microphone, and carpenters don’t build without a hammer. For us to fight this awful virus we have a piece of cloth to cover our mouth and nose. It’s our tool, and it’s effective. We owe it to one another to wear it.

Justine Vogel, CEO of the RiverWoods Group, began work at RiverWoods as part of the pre-opening team in June 1994. She formerly served as trustee and treasurer for the board of Leading Age of Maine and New Hampshire.

Believe in data, not snake oil

“It’s no wonder that truth is stranger than fiction. Fiction has to make sense.” — Mark Twain

Snake oil salespersons are people who profit from saying or doing anything to convince you that something other than the facts are true. 2020 has been a banner year for snake oil salespersons. “Snake oil” is a pejorative term referring to an artificial or fictitious entity that is sold to the public on the basis of belief or wishful thinking. It promises to cure both real and perceived problems, when all it really does is to rid you of your money and your free will.



Dr. James Fieseher

Those gullible enough to buy these promises victimize themselves and the people they care about.

Snake oil contains its own venom that poisons those associated with it. When it is sold by politicians and elected officials, it poisons our belief in our own government and, more recently, in our electoral process. When it is sold by doctors, it poisons the medical profession.

Snake oil salespersons who are doctors are particularly odious. Such doctors during a pandemic can wreak sickness, suffering and death on an immense scale. It often takes years for the medical profession to regain the public’s trust afterward.

The most recent examples of such people are Drs. Scott Atlas, Ramin Oskoui and Jane Orient.

These three doctors used their medical credentials and authority to promote reckless practices that continue to endanger the life and health of Americans.

Until recently, Dr. Atlas was a member of the White House COVID response team and openly cast doubts about physical distancing and the effectiveness of face masks. Because of his statements, millions of Americans, mostly Trump followers, eschewed face masks and demonstrated against their

state government mandates on face masks and physical distancing (including here in New Hampshire).

Sadly, the pandemic has affected Trump Republicans disproportionately as a result Dr. Atlas’s words.

Drs. Oskoui and Orient recently testified before a Senate congressional committee at the request of Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wisc.) against the wearing of face masks and physical distancing and in favor of promoting the potentially lethal use of the antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine.

All three doctors defended their words by stating that these were “opinions” rather than cite any specific study or clear data to prove their point.

While everyone is certainly entitled to their own opinion, it is an entirely different matter to represent that opinion as a medical “fact” when the actual data indicates just the opposite. Professional opinion should be based on actual data, not personal belief, as was the case with Dr. Atlas or in the congressional testimonies of Dr. Oskoui and Dr. Orient.

(Note: Donald Trump also played a major role in spreading false information about the COVID virus, but as he has had no medical training, his opinion cannot be misidentified as a medical opinion.)

We can see from the tragic statistics what effect these snake oil doctors have had on the sickness and death rates in America. It is too early to tell what effect these misleading statements from those doctors will have on the medical profession as a whole, especially now that vaccines are becoming available.

It’s time we Americans stop believing in snake oil and look for the data and evidence in official statements. Only then will we be able to separate fact from fiction.

James Fieseher, MD lives in Dover.



Letters

Rep. Kuster vaccinated already?

To the Editor: So Ann Kuster, age 64, steps to the front of the line to get a COVID shot. Why? Because she is an elitist, who firmly believes she is better than anyone else. She is another Democrat politician who touts one set of rules and cautions and then does what they want, from Democrat governors and mayors who tell their citizens to lock down, stay home, don’t visit family and friends, and then they fly to Mexico with family, travel to another state for Thanksgiving, fly to Hawaii for a “business meeting,” or travel to a posh restaurant for a birthday celebration.

Front line nurses and doctors who are dealing with COVID patients on a daily basis are waiting for the vaccine. The elderly, like my 88-year-old dad, are waiting for the vaccine.

But Ann Kuster, she is in the special elitist class. She is not one of those flunky little people who are dealing frontline with COVID every day, or elderly, where most of the deaths are happening.

Ann could not be bothered with the concerns of the little people. “Let them eat cake” is Ann’s motto to all us little people. To all those that voted for this disgusting politician a little over a month ago, I hope you are proud that she deprived someone who really needs the vaccine. That vaccine shot may have saved the life of someone you know. Disgusted.

EDWARD GAGNON
Francestown

Kool-Aid for Trump supporters

To the Editor: I’m confused. Donald Trump made fun of a special needs reporter. He made fun of a protester for her weight. White supremacists like him. He lied about COVID to not worry us weak Americans.

Russians are friends and Democrats are enemies. He calls himself the best president. His words always blame someone. Hitler did that too. What an absolute joke. Most good CEOs purposely hire different views, to keep things well rounded. He fires his own people for other ideas. Imagine a sports team acting in such a way. Too many changes are a sure sign of weakness.

And his followers? Remember that bully jerk in school who made fun of everyone, but had the cool car and great parents’ house. Some refused to be his friend. Yet others liked the cool stuff, so they laughed when chubby girl was made fun of. This is your president. A clear look into human darkness. A clear look at what is not decent.

They say our true character is revealed by our actions when no one is looking. Very scary to behave in such a manner when everyone is looking. A president who attacks SNL for the jokes they make about all presidents. Is he limiting free speech? Oh yeah, a president who doesn’t have a pet? Oops, he does. Millions of followers. Hurry up and get your treat, purple Kool-Aid.

KEVIN MARQUIS
Cillely Road, Manchester

Harm reduction is about more than providing clean syringes

To the Editor: The New Hampshire Harm Reduction Coalition offers a needle exchange (also called “syringe services”) every Sunday afternoon from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Veterans Park. Some have raised concerns about this service.

The issues associated with the harm reduction movement are complex enough that I won’t try to address them comprehensively in a brief letter. I will note that harm reduction has a robust evidence base as to its effectiveness in diminishing some of the negative

ramifications of substance misuse. Hospitalizations for endocarditis go down, for example, when syringe services are offered in a community, as do HIV infection rates.

It’s also worth noting the HRC service is not simply a syringe giveaway; it is a touchpoint for connection with needed services, including substance misuse treatment, recovery support, and medical services.

At the same time, those who raise concerns about a safe, welcoming environment for individuals and families in public spaces deserve to be heard.

So, I’m advocating for ongoing dialogue between harm reduction entities, and public officials and private citizens with concerns — dialogue which includes openness to listen to all sides of the issues, and to work to effective compromise.

MIKE BRADLEY
Hillsborough

No more Republicans

To the Editor: I am a registered Independent voter, no allegiance to either party. I have been a proud voter for over 45 years, in general, state and local elections. I am so thoroughly disgusted with the Republican Party right now. The way they have blindly stood by Trump these past four years, no matter what insane things he says or does.

Now they stand by and some even actively participate while he tries to destroy our democratic way of life by trying to overturn the will of the voters. All so they can stay in power, at whatever cost. I may never vote for a Republican again, for any office! I bet I am not the only Independent who feels that way.

JILL MINOUGHAN
New Boston

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“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Liberty” — II Corinthians 3:17

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MALLARD FILLMORE

By Bruce Tinsley

