

# KEY PENINSULA NEWS

253-884-4699

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[editor@keypennews.org](mailto:editor@keypennews.org)

PO Box 3, Vaughn, WA 98394

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Lisa Bryan

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Ted Olinger

STAFF CONTRIBUTORS:

Krisa Bruemmer, Matthew Dean,  
Caleb Galbreath, Joseph  
Pentheroudakis, Megan Schowalter,  
Dave Stave, Sara Thompson

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS: Intern Ryan

Fischbauch, Ed Johnson,  
Chris Konieczny, Richard Miller,  
David Zeigler

CONTRIBUTORS: Vicki Biggs, Art Jarvis,  
the late Ted Ralson, Herald Ugles

CALENDAR EDITOR: Matthew Dean  
[calendar@keypennews.org](mailto:calendar@keypennews.org)

WEBMASTER: Chris Konieczny

SOCIAL MEDIA: Joseph Pentheroudakis

PAGE LAYOUT: Caleb Galbreath

OPERATIONS/DESIGN: Tim Heitzman

AD SALES: Deanna Hunter  
[sales@keypennews.org](mailto:sales@keypennews.org)

BOOKKEEPER: Linda Grubach

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## Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR, KP NEWS

The coronavirus pandemic put the brakes on customary municipal fireworks shows, but no doubt the skies above the Key Peninsula will light up July Fourth as usual with private displays to celebrate with all the customary pops, booms and bangs.

The dazzling displays that have come to represent Independence Day, marking the signing of the Declaration of Independence, may feel diminished this year as our nation wrestles with a past and a present we can no longer deny.

In April, a dear friend embarked on a coronavirus-inspired mission to clean and sort through decades of accumulated stuff. He came upon a cardboard filing box covered with dust. Combing through the assortment of old papers, he found the speech he wrote in preparation for the day he would become a naturalized citizen of the United States of America.

"What do I love about this country? Freedom, equality and hope."

Freedom for him meant the opportunity to live authentically, as well as to respect the courage and hard work of others trying to do the same. He wrote that "becoming a citizen is the ultimate proof of what equality means. As new citizens, we will be accepted as full citizens by the people and society as a whole."

He made his speech in front of the judge and other immigrants about to become U.S. citizens that day, with the hope that being true to themselves would be good — not only for them and their families and friends — but for our country. He shared his hope that this country and the whole world may always be guided by the bright star of equality.

A few years ago, I was with a small group of friends talking about immigration policy when it dawned on us that four of the five of our mothers were naturalized citizens.

My mother came to the U.S. through Ellis Island as a young girl with her parents after spending years as refugees in Sweden after World War II. We were raised on stories of their brave escape from Estonia, how they fled as their home was swallowed up by the communist Soviet Union.

Once in America, my grandmother worked long hours as a seamstress and

later as a tailor to support my grandfather, who earned a degree in theology and became a Methodist minister. They worked hard, and saved enough money to send my mother to the University of Puget Sound.

That conversation with friends made a real impression on me then. I am reminded of it now for very different reasons: Our experience as relative newcomers to America

is testimony to the unrecognized entitlement of being born white.

The American Dream hasn't been anything like that for Black people who have lived in this country since before it was born.

How many generations will it take for Black people and other racial minorities in this country to be treated like Americans?

It's obvious now that reality affects every person in this country. It feels like a line has been crossed.

And it's not the only one.

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department passed a resolution June 17 asking residents to protect each other by wearing face coverings in outdoor and indoor public areas, especially when they cannot maintain a physical distance of six feet from others.

The resolution is not a mandate to wear masks.

Few of us like being told what to do. But when there is something in it for us, most of us can put feelings aside to work together to do what's right for our community.

Many forces benefit from pitting us against one another. But when we join together for our common good, difficult goals are achievable.

Protecting each other with the least expensive option, such as wearing a bandana or mask when shopping, has made a huge difference in halting the spread of disease. It also builds confidence in people who remain at high risk. Ensuring our neighbors feel safe and comfortable eating, shopping and enjoying public spaces strengthens our community and our local businesses.

The number of confirmed COVID-19

cases west of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, including Key Peninsula, rose slightly in June but remains well below infection rates in comparison to other communities in Pierce County.

As a rural community our greatest challenge is not winning the war against COVID-19 — a feat currently beyond our capacity — but working together to hold the line against it.

Total eradication at this stage of the

pandemic is impossible without a safe treatments and an effective vaccine. We're not going to win the war against COVID-19 anytime soon by the looks of it, but I refuse to believe we are incapable of putting ideological and political differences aside in favor of rallying together for our common good.

I was raised to believe this was what America was all about. Doing the right thing. Standing together. Holding the line.



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