

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

3 YEARS POST-LOCKDOWN, LONG COVID HAS NEW MEANING

On March 13, 2020, our lives changed in inestimable ways. It was the day President Donald Trump declared a national emergency concerning the coronavirus disease outbreak. A week later, California Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered a lockdown, the first mandatory restrictions in the U.S. Our state's 40 million residents were told to stay home to stop the spread. At the time, Newsom said, "Home isolation is not my preferred choice, but it is a necessary one. This is a moment in time."

It was a long moment. Three years since Trump's declaration, we are still debating the origins of the pandemic. Two federal agencies recently declared that COVID-19 most likely began with an accidental laboratory leak in China.

Other agencies continue to believe it was due to natural transmission from animals to humans. Given continued obstruction by the Chinese government, we will likely never know for sure.

But there's no debating COVID's impact, in terms of lives lost and economic fallout.

As of Feb. 27, 2023, there have

been 1.1 million deaths related to the disease in our country, according to statista.com. There have been 100,816 deaths in California, more than any other state (although the death rate here was among the lowest in the nation).

As reported by the Center on Budget Policy and Priorities, the economic consequences have been widespread but remain particularly prevalent among people of color.

These disproportionate impacts reflect long-standing inequities — in matters like employment and health care — that the pandemic only exacerbated. Households with children also continue to face especially high rates of economic hardship, according to CBPP.

From appearances though, our lives are back to normal. We gather, shoulder to shoulder, in rooms filled with hundreds or thousands of people. Few are masked.

If the visual reminders of the pandemic have all but disappeared, we don't have to look too hard to see that our country is suffering in a different way, with heightened levels of impatience,

inhumanity and incivility. It's another type of long COVID — not associated with physical symptoms, such as fatigue, shortness of breath and loss of smell — but perhaps more insidious and widespread.

Just one example: Last year, airlines reported 2,359 "unruly passenger" incidents to the Federal Aviation Administration; 823 were so severe they triggered investigations. On Sunday, a man on a United Airlines flight tried to open the plane's emergency door and stab a flight attendant.

But it seems COVID's lingering effects are being felt hardest in our schools, by students, teachers, staff and administrators.

Readers of this column know that I frequently write about schools.

They are a microcosm of our society — and a growing part of the work we do at the National Conflict Resolution Center. Today, we are serving nine San Diego County school districts, in partnership with the San Diego County Office of Education.

Students across the county are struggling still, even as the school year nears its end. Prob-

lems that existed before the pandemic have been magnified and behavior has suffered. No wonder: It's been estimated that the pandemic cost students two years of social-emotional learning, on average. SEL is essential for managing emotions, problem-solving and building relationships.

Think about what a two-year deficit means for a rising fifth-grader who will enter middle school this fall.

SEL losses have led to more classroom disruptions, rowdiness on school campuses and tardiness.

Other consequences of the pandemic have included greater student and teacher absenteeism, academic setbacks and a heightened need for mental health services. Taken together, it's an enormous toll and one that's causing educators to wonder if Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis got it right.

In November 2020, DeSantis declared that Florida schools would be required to remain open despite a rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. At a press conference, DeSantis said, "Closing schools due to coronavi-

rus is probably the biggest public health blunder in modern American history."

Rather than second-guessing decisions made, now is the time to reimagine our school systems to ensure the best possible outcomes for students.

In our work with the county office of education, we are guiding a shift toward restorative practices (and away from a punitive paradigm) to build positive, affirming relationships in the school community, in a way that supports students, teachers, staff and administrators.

We are building skills that empower students to stand up when they face microaggressions and bullying.

Structural change like this takes time. But to eradicate long COVID, we must first restore humanity in our schools. It's an investment in our future that can't wait.

A Path Forward will return April 2. 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 ncrcnline.com

SEA LION • Removal of nearly 100 rocks cleared out room for food in animal's belly

FROM B1
sibility that after Rocky caught the bacteria, the animal slurped up the rocks while drinking sea water excessively — a behavior that itself is odd. Sea lions don't drink water. They get their water from eating fish.

The medical team tried to get Rocky to vomit some of the stones out, Herrick said, but "his stomach was too heavy." So the team performed five procedures over five weeks, during which the doctors removed several rocks from Rocky's stomach each time.

"He also removed some rocks on his own — in two different ways," Rescue Team member Jeni Smith said — with a laugh — in a video interview provided by SeaWorld. "We removed over a pound and a half of rocks from that California sea lion — which is crazy."

Getting rid of the rocks cleared room in Rocky's belly for food. When the team rescued the sea lion in January, he weighed nearly 63 pounds. By the time he was released back into the ocean March 3, he was pushing 95 pounds.

Rocky had company on his return home. SeaWorld San Diego also released an elephant seal found in Imperial Beach in January. The seal, a female, was dehydrated and suffering from more than 10 cookie-cutter shark bites. "Poor thing had bites everywhere, Smith said.

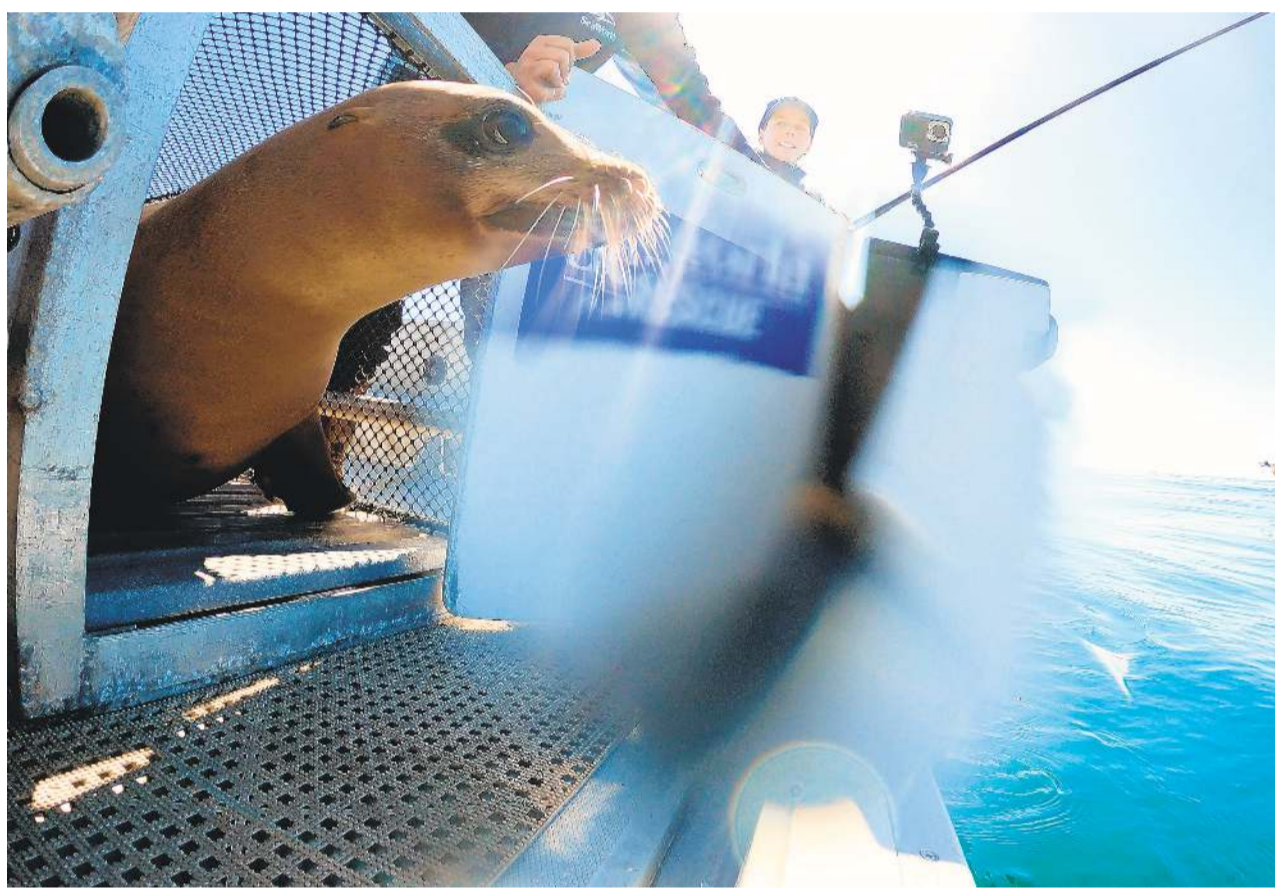
"Her wounds have healed," Smith said. "She looks amazing and she gets a second chance."

It was the only elephant seal among the 17 wild animals SeaWorld San Diego rescued and brought to its facility this year, as of Friday. Rocky was one of 10 rescued sea lions. The other rescues this year include one harbor seal, two sea turtles and three Guadalupe fur seals.

The goal is to heal them and return them to the ocean.

SeaWorld Rescue Team members are on call 24 hours a day. To get help for a marine mammal in need, call the team's hotline at 800-541-7325, or email SWC.Rescue@seaworld.com.

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SEAWORLD SAN DIEGO

Rocky peers out at the ocean before his release on March 3. When the SeaWorld Rescue Team found him in January, he was about 63 pounds. By the time his treatment was complete, he was pushing 95 pounds.

SMOLENS

FROM B1
sweater weather is upon us.

An hour difference each way may not seem like much, but even for those who like the time change, there's no denying it creates disruption to varying degrees — and it has triggered argument for the better part of a century.

While partisans in the pro-con dispute may not agree, it seems that the debate has become a perpetual draw.

Doctors who specialize in sleep disorders agree that standard time is better for us.

"Although I love sunshine, getting rid of daylight saving time, instead of making it permanent, would be a healthier option," says Dr. Victoria Sharma, medical director of the Sharp Grossmont Hospital Sleep Disorders Center.

The change in time disrupts our circadian rhythm, or body clock. This is particularly significant for teens.

"Teenagers have a naturally later sleep cycle than children and adults, which means they should wake up later in the day to stay in sync with their body clocks," according to the Sharp Health website.

The sleep loss may simply mean more tiredness, but it can have larger health impacts for some people.

According to the website Time and Date, studies have linked the lack of sleep at the start of daylight savings to an increase in car accidents, workplace injuries, suicide and miscarriages.

Research suggests the risk of heart attack is reduced when clocks fall back, but increases when springing forward.

Naturally, not all studies agree on the positive or negative effects of more daylight later in the day and less in the morning.

Some research links the return of standard time and early-evening darkness to depression.

The Time and Date website cites studies that found daylight saving time contributed to improved road safety by reducing pedestrian fatalities by 13 percent during dawn and dusk hours.

Another study found a 7 percent decrease in robberies



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A couple is silhouetted against the sunset at Pacific Beach Tuesday, in the waning days of standard time.

following the spring shift.

Currently, Hawaii and Arizona (with the exception of the Navajo Nation) are the only states that remain in standard time all year, as do U.S. territories in the Pacific and Caribbean.

In Indiana, a peculiar situation created difficulty figuring out what time it was in some regions until daylight saving time was adopted statewide in 2006. Until then, some counties chose to observe daylight saving time, while others didn't. Layer that on top of the fact that the state is in two time zones — Eastern and Central — and, well, you get the idea.

A study in Indiana actually found increased energy use after daylight saving time was enforced across the state, which is intriguing since daylight saving time was largely created to save energy. A 2005 study by the U.S. Department of Energy found extending daylight saving time would result in a very small reduction in energy consumption.

But that's in these modern days. Daylight saving time was implemented in Europe and the United States to save fuel and power during World War I. "War time" was reinstated during World War II and made seasonally permanent in the U.S. in 1966.

Year-round daylight saving time was signed into law by President Richard Nixon in January 1974 during the energy crisis. But public displeasure with the rule — particularly the dark mornings that were blamed for traffic fatalities — was such that Congress voted to end it the following October.

Like it or hate it, the consensus complaint is about having to change time. Consistency is said to be the hobgoblin of little minds, but don't tell that to the cranky people who don't want their lives inconvenienced, or worse, every March and November.

For a long time, farmers took the fall for this disruption. There was a belief that daylight saving time was designed, at least in part, to help them. Au contraire.

"Not only is that not true, it is 100 percent not true. It is as far from true as one could get," David Prerau, author of "Seize the Daylight: The Curious and Contentious Story of Daylight Saving Time," told Nebraska Public Media.

"People think it was put in place for farmers, but the leading group against daylight saving time has always been farmers and agricultural people."

The timing of farm work doesn't change with the clocks, and the change added a degree of difficulty in getting crops to market.

Anyway, daylight saving time is here now — and may be to stay.

But enough chitchat. Time to get on with the day. It's a short one.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Mark Z. Barabak (@markzbarabak), political columnist at the Los Angeles Times.

"For every six Californians who left for Florida last year, five moved to California from Florida."

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CRIME

FROM B1
4,000 calls three years ago, the city last year hit nearly 4,500. The vast majority, more than 88 percent, involved emergency medical services.

Only about 200 calls, around 4 percent, concerned fires. A similar share involved people trapped in some way, which can include flooded cars.

It generally took 8 minutes and 50 seconds to respond to a medical emer-

gency, Koch said. (Fires saw a faster response time by about 35 seconds.) Some of the delay was due to factors outside the department's control, Koch told the council. If traffic was bad, for example, there was no way to safely drive faster.

But he did say he wanted to reduce the time it took firefighters and paramedics to dress and jump in their vehicles. That turnaround time is currently about 2 minutes and 15 seconds, if not more, when it should be closer to 2 minutes flat, Koch said.

He added that the city will eventually need to replace one of its three fire engines that is nearly two decades old.

The council already approved replacing an even older vehicle last year.

Lemon Grove is not alone when it comes to emergency calls. El Cajon is similarly grappling with a surge in incidents and emergency room wait times, leading the city to launch a new program to divert to nurses some callers whose lives are not in danger.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Sunday, March 12, the 71st day of 2023. There are 294 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history

On March 12, 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff pleaded guilty in New York to pulling off perhaps the biggest swindle in Wall Street history; he would be sentenced to 150 years behind bars. (Madoff died in prison in April 2021.)

On this date

In 1864, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant assumed command as general-in-chief of the Union armies.

In 1912, the Girl Scouts of the USA had its beginnings as Juliette Gordon Low of Savannah, Ga., founded the first American troop of the Girl Guides.

In 1925, Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen died in Beijing.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman announced what became known as the "Truman Doctrine" to help Greece and Turkey resist Communism.

In 1955, legendary jazz musician Charlie "Bird" Parker died in New York at age 34.

In 1971, Hafez Assad was confirmed as president of Syria in a referendum.

In 1980, a Chicago jury found John Wayne Gacy Jr. guilty of



TED SHAFFREY AP

The Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. headquarters in Manhattan. The organization began on today's date.

the murders of 33 men and boys. (The next day, Gacy was sentenced to death; he was executed in May 1994.)

In 1987, the musical play "Les Misérables" opened on Broadway.

In 1994, the Church of England ordained its first women priests.

In 2003, Elizabeth Smart, the 15-year-old girl who vanished from her bedroom nine months earlier, was found alive in a Salt Lake City suburb with two drifters, Brian David Mitchell and Wanda Barzee. (Mitchell is serving a life sentence; Barzee was released from prison in September 2018.)

In 2020, the stock market had its biggest drop since the Black Monday crash of 1987 as fears of economic fallout from the coronavirus crisis deepened; the Dow industrials plunged more than 2,300 points, or 10 percent The

NCAA canceled its basketball tournaments because of the coronavirus, after earlier planning to play in empty arenas. The NHL joined the NBA in suspending play. Major League Baseball delayed the start of its season by at least two weeks. (An abbreviated 60-game season would begin in July.)

Today's birthdays

Politician, diplomat and civil rights activist Andrew Young is 91. Actor Barbara Feldon is 90. Liza Minnelli is 77. Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, is 76. Singer James Taylor is 75. Actor Jon Provoost ("Lassie") is 73. Singer Marlon Jackson (The Jackson Five) is 66. Actor Jason Beghe is 63. Actor Courtney B. Vance is 63. Actor Titus Welliver is 61. Former MLB star Darryl Strawberry is 61. Actor Aaron Eckhart is 55. Journalist Jake Tapper is 54.

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