

Years ago, I moved here from another small, isolated, rural, community very much like ours. People traveled there from far and near to be rejuvenated by the natural beauty to which they had no access back home. One of my best friends, who lives in the Bay Area, has a second home there.

By now you must be asking why I'm telling you all this. But please bear with me and read through this letter in its entirety.

Recently my friend went there as she does every year, with her beau, to enjoy the last beauties of winter. Unknowingly, they carried with them the COVID-19 virus, as did many others who flock to this destination ski resort from all over the world. Now, Blaine County has the highest count of COVID-19 virus in Idaho; a state that was heretofore untouched by the virus.

Yes, like us, they had closed their hotels and restaurants. **And yes**, they had requested social distancing, with all its accoutrements.

Here, at first, we asked people to comply voluntarily: If you're from here stay home, and if you're not from here stay home. Then we put some teeth into it: requiring residents to stay home, and closing the hotels and restaurants that offer respite to tourists escaping from COVID-19 virus in our neighboring counties.

All of this is like turning up the heat but leaving the front and back doors open. Our doors are still open. People are still coming here via Highway 20 and Highway 128. Even more alarmingly, people are still leaving here, via Highway 20 and Highway 128, going to outline cities (for reasons of varying importance) where the virus is prevalent; and returning home again. Mendocino officials have been taking bold measures to prevent social contact here in the county. These efforts are all for naught, if we do not stop the trafficking of the virus.

We have virtually only two access routes to the coast. If there were an emergency on either of those highways emergency personnel would be there within minutes. This is an emergency of a much larger scale than a traffic accident. Closing Highways 20 and 128 to all but essential providers, should have been the first thing done to isolate our community. I realize that law enforcement personnel are few here. But it has to be done immediately, and law enforcement staff would be the most knowledgeable in devising and implementing such a program. Other small communities, (e.g. Bolinas in Marin County)\*, are doing it, as are others around the world I'm sure. We do not have to re-invent the wheel. But in the era of COVID-19 it is essential that we learn from others' mistakes.

As I sit here thinking about whether my friends will die of this virus, and if their bodies will even be allowed to be transported home, I'm also thinking about how many of my other friends there will be afflicted or effected by the COVID-19 virus; simply because someone traveled to or from a large population base, unknowingly transporting the virus with them. I do not want this scenario to come here. We must close our ingress and egress ways to all but essential providers IMMEDIATELY.

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