

The latest message from the Mayor about COVID-19

Dear Ridgway Community –

Here we are at the peak of summer in Ouray County, and I feel the need to reach out again about the importance of our efforts to contain the spread of the virus in our community. While I understand that there are those that don't even believe in the virus, the fact remains that well over half a million people have died from COVID-19 worldwide, with over 135,000 of those deaths occurring in the US. Locally, I think some people have doubts about the virus simply because we live in a place that's somewhat naturally socially-distanced, and thus we've been able to keep the impacts relatively low. If you don't know anyone who has contracted the virus, let alone died from it, then maybe it just doesn't seem real? Only one person has died from the virus in Ouray County, but I knew that person, and he was a kind, gentle man. Just like all of our elderly parents and other relatives who are cherished members of our families.

Due to a variety of circumstances, we're now seeing serious spikes in cases in many states, several of which are states which are home to a vast majority of our tourists this time of year. As a result, the County Board of Health just last week instituted a county-wide mandatory requirement to wear face coverings when inside public-accessible spaces and while waiting in line to enter such places, when unable to maintain adequate distancing. The three local government entities agreed to this Public Health Order in an effort to protect our community from a spike in cases. Everyone needs to understand that if we get a spike in cases, we will have to resume a lockdown, which would have a devastating effect on local businesses. Returning to lockdown could end up causing many local businesses to close for good, and that would be a tragedy, all the more so if it could have been prevented.

Regardless of what you believe about the virus, think of it this way: wearing masks and maintaining proper distancing when out in public is simply a matter of respect for your fellow citizens. It's really no different than the many other times in our history when citizens were asked to make sacrifices for the good of the country, to help keep us safe. Saying that wearing face coverings is somehow ineffective or unsafe is questioning a practice that is foundational to our medical world, and has been since the 1800's. Doctors and nurses the world over will tell you that wearing a mask all day, while uncomfortable, is essential to the health of both their patients and themselves. Lastly, remember that things you're being asked to do are what will keep many of your family, friends and neighbors from dying. It's really that simple.

In other words, you are of course free to believe what you will, but please, wear a face covering and maintain social distancing when in public, if only because doing so just might save a life. Isn't that why we do everything from wearing seat belts to washing our hands when we use the bathroom?

Respectfully,

Mayor John Clark