

April 6, 2020

Livermore,

If you are like me and prefer the outdoors, the past few weeks of sheltering at home may have taken a while to get used to. It isn't easy going from daily treks outdoors to isolating yourself at home. Fortunately, going outside for fresh air or taking a walk around the neighborhood is still allowed. In fact, it's encouraged. Spending time outside (safely and responsibly) has physical and mental benefits; it lowers stress, boosts your immune system, and just makes you feel better.

My daily routine has been changed dramatically; no hiking or rolling around, no camping among the wildflowers. So, I drive. I make my way to Brushy Peak Regional Preserve, where I sit in the car on Laughlin Road and listen to meadowlarks and hawks. If you close your eyes and focus, and you can almost hear the grass grow. I spend time in my yard and smile at the sound of a Flicker chirping from a dead Cedar; a pair of Anna's Hummingbirds yapping at each other while streaking at subsonic speeds in the Mulberry trees; a squirrel taunting Bozwell and Rufus from the top of the fence. You too can find joy in the outdoors while safely sheltering at home.

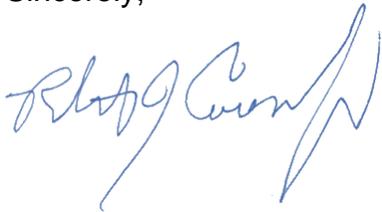
We are going to beat this virus together. It will take everyone heeding the guidance from the Alameda County Public Health Department. Stay home and only leave for essential activities. If you have to leave for essential travel – such as to doctor appointments, grocery shopping, or pharmacy visits – the current recommendation is to wear a face mask. Wash your hands frequently and avoid close contact. We will see the day when this is behind us. We will get back to dining out, sending our kids to school, and playing soccer with friends.

Until then, get outside, exercise. Trails and open spaces are still open, so check Livermore Area Recreation and Park District's website (www.larpd.org) and East Bay Regional Park District's website (www.ebparks.org) for ideas of where you can venture. Just be sure to avoid close contact with people and maintain a 6-foot distance from those who are not from your household, so we can all help slow the spread.

Adventure to your backyard and have a good old-fashioned campout. When walking around your neighborhood, take in new sights. Notice the teddy bears in your neighbors' windows encouraging children to count them as they "go on a bear hunt." Feel encouragement from the chalk art and messages reminding you that this will pass, and tomorrow is a new day.

Let's commit to looking ahead to better, safer times. Satisfy our cravings for the outdoors while still obeying the rules. Take some of that free, isolated time and learn what is making those sounds you hear in the tree or flying overhead. Watch the sky for an hour at a time, making note of the changes in appearance as the sun floats through and clouds pass over. Let nature do some healing for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Coomber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Bob Coomber
Council Member
City of Livermore