

Another welcome pandemic reprieve

With COVID-19 case rates plummeting and the easing of mask mandates in most public places and schools at the end of February, March 2022 started to feel like May 2021.

Back then, the lifting of restrictions brought a palpable sense of relief as the weather warmed and people could again gather and socialize after a year of various lock-downs, mask mandates and social distancing requirements.

It was a welcome respite, but of course it did not last. The year ended

VIEWPOINT with the worst surge of the pandemic so far, fueled by the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the virus.



Eric Crump
Columnist

News from around the world suggests that we might want to enjoy this moment while we can, too.

There are reports that an Omicron

subvariant, BA.2, is generating new spikes in China, Hong Kong and parts of Europe.

In the past, European trends especially were good forecasts of what would happen in the U.S.

In his "Covering COVID-19" newsletter on Wednesday, March 23, journalist Al Tompkins reported BA.2 is the dominant strain in parts of the U.S., and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it accounts for about 35% of cases nationwide.

There also remains one mask mandate in effect to remind us that we aren't necessarily out of the pandemic woods. The mask requirement on public transportation remains in place. The federal Transportation Safety Administration announced March 10 that it was extending the requirement until April 18.

Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told the Washington Post on March 22, "I would not be surprised at all if we do see somewhat of an uptick. I don't really see, unless something changes dramatically, that there will be a major surge."

It still might be a good idea to keep those masks handy. We might need them again.

New businesses coming

In the spring edition of the Homewood Village Key, Mayor Richard Hofeld listed new businesses that are in the process of opening.

Some we've reported on in the past,



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

The long-abandoned former Citgo gas station is expected to be purchased by the new owner of the former Homewood Gas Station, seen in the background, on the corner of Harwood Avenue and 183rd Street. The old Citgo station was purchased by the village last year and has undergone EPA review for environmental safety. Homewood Mayor Rich Hofeld announced in the spring Village Key that the new owner plans to develop a restaurant there.

including Wind Creek Casino, Homewood Brewery, Stoney Point Grill (in the new Hartford Building), Burlington Coat Factory, 5 Guys, Pita Mediterranean Street Food, Go Puff and the new gas station at Harwood Avenue and 183rd Street.

Some were new to us, including a Big Rocco's restaurant, which is slated to go into the former Citgo gas station at 2124 183rd St.; Homewood Veterinary Clinic, which will make its home in the current StayFit24 location at 18265 Dixie Highway; Bath and Body Works, which will be located near Best Buy on Halsted Street; and maybe a Raising Cane's, although Hofeld said the chicken finger restaurant does not yet have a location.

Visit Flossmoor

Flossmoor got a shoutout from Thrillist magazine as a Chicago suburb worth visiting. That's not news around here, but it's nice to get a mention elsewhere. See <https://bit.ly/3IGW5le>.

Recent losses

Eugene N. Parker, formerly of Flossmoor, died March 15 at age 94. The legendary astrophysicist first developed the theory of solar winds in 1958. He made his mark on Flossmoor, too, inspiring music and art to honor his work and sharing his expertise with the community.

We found this quote by Parker in a



Chronicle file photo

Michael Towns introduces the idea for restaurant and entertainment establishment Culture to the Homewood Board of Trustees in September 2019.

Washington Post story noting his passing:

"If you do something new or innovative, expect trouble. But think critically about it because if you're wrong, you want to be the first one to know that."

Michael Towns, one of the founding co-owners of Culture in downtown Homewood, died suddenly on Feb. 26 at age 55.

Towns was an entrepreneur and successful music executive with Culture co-owner Joan Sullivan for many years. In addition to co-founding Culture, he helped manage four record labels as part of Kingdom Records.

HOMEWOOD-FLOSSMOOR CHRONICLE

About us:

The Homewood-Flossmoor Chronicle was launched in July 2014. The editors, with help from a number of community members and paid staff, are volunteering their time and talents to bring the latest news to residents of Homewood and Flossmoor.

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