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Could a Llama Save Us From COVID-19?

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people have turned to their four-legged friends for help and comfort. In Nebraska, an 11-year-old girl and her pony, Peanut, cheered up nursing home residents through their windows this spring, while in Pennsylvania, an award-winning golden retriever named Jackson starred in videos that kept thousands laughing. Pets like these have given the national mood a boost, but another four-legged critter deserves just as much recognition. Her name is Winter, and she's the 4-year-old llama whose antibodies could help us beat the coronavirus.

At this point, you're probably thinking, "Llamas? Really? What will these scientists think up next?" But in fact, Winter wasn't an outside-of-the-box discovery during the COVID-19 vaccine scramble. Llamas have been helping scientists battle viruses for years. That's because, along with her fuzzy brown coat and long eyelashes, Winter has a unique virus treatment hidden in her blood: llama antibodies.

According to The New York Times, Winter has participated in past studies for both SARS and MERS — diseases also caused by coronaviruses — and her

antibodies fought off both infections. Llamas have also helped out with research for HIV and influenza. It turns out llama antibodies are smaller than the ones found in humans, which makes it easier for them to wiggle into the tiny pockets in virus-carrying proteins. This superpower gives them the ability to "neutralize" viruses, including COVID-19. Studies are now showing that using these llama antibodies in humans could potentially keep coronaviruses from entering human cells as well.

At least two separate llama studies have shown the effectiveness of these antibodies on coronavirus infections. This summer, a team of researchers from the U.K. discovered that llama antibodies "have the potential to be used in a similar way to convalescent serum, effectively stopping progression of the virus in patients who are ill" when given to those patients in a transfusion. They also suggested that a cocktail of llama and human antibodies could be even more successful at temporarily blocking the virus.

Studies of the latter are in the works, and scientists around the world have their fingers crossed for success. In the meantime, Winter will continue peacefully grazing in Belgium, unaware that she just might play a role in saving the world.

WHY I VOTE AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

I WANT TO PRESERVE MY RIGHTS AND SAY MY PIECE

The pandemic has caused an upheaval in the world and in our communities. As I am writing this article, the number of COVID-19 cases in Santa Barbara County are decreasing and government, businesses, and schools are opening. The courts are now open and cases are moving forward, mostly on Zoom, which works well and is mostly convenient. However, civil jury trials in Santa Barbara and most counties are being postponed until things get better. Many schools have gone back to in-person learning. During the last six months, we have all learned to be flexible and resilient. Young and old have learned to use platforms like Zoom.

At NordstrandBlack, P.C. we have adapted to the technology: Our lawyers and staff were able to sharpen our skills through Zoom training offered by several trial lawyers associations. We have been able to advance our cases toward settlement, and many cases have resolved in mediation using Zoom. We have moved forward with precautions, wearing masks, disinfecting surfaces, and socially distancing. Despite these precautions, someone very close to my family tested positive for COVID-19, which means that because she was in our home after her exposure, my family had to get tested, too, even though we had no symptoms. Thankfully, we all tested negative. In hindsight, I realize we let our guard down and didn't wear masks in our house with this person. So, the bottom line is that we should all be cautious and assume that everyone we encounter has COVID-19 or has been exposed.

After coming to the realization that we were potentially exposed, we went through a range of emotions. One of my 9-year-old twin girls cried when she realized she



would miss the first day of in-person school. After that breakdown, we pulled it together and found distraction watching the third "Harry Potter" movie, playing on the swings, in the pool, and with the pet chickens. Once the girls settled down, I had a chance to refocus. In times of adversity, my tendency is to look for inspiration as a way out. I think about what the less fortunate have endured and how they came through. I also think about what others have achieved. I am generally a very upbeat and happy person, but I have to say I've had my ups and downs during this last week or two. Working at home, managing children, handling the overflow of emails not only about work but also about the kids' school, anticipating the elections, and now mourning the untimely death of the beloved Ruth Bader Ginsburg — all this leaves me working too late most nights to get it all done.

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Justice Ginsburg, nicknamed “the notorious RBG,” was the ultimate inspiration to me and many others. Justice Ginsburg stood for equality and justice for all. She was a Supreme Court justice for 27 years and trusted by all Americans to stand up for their rights. She started her law education at Harvard Law School, where she was one of only nine women in a class of more than 500. After transferring to Columbia Law School because of her husband’s cancer diagnosis, and with a young child in tow, she graduated first in her class in 1959. She couldn’t get a job as a lawyer in a law firm so she went to work as a professor at Rutgers University and then Columbia. It was there that she had the opportunity to argue cases before the United States Supreme Court to advance gender equality.

During the entire time she was a Supreme Court justice, her “liberal” views for gender equality were in the minority. She wrote many dissents that impacted society and led to a change in the law. Her dissent in a 2007 case involving a woman named Lilly Ledbetter, who was not paid the same as her male co-workers and filed a pay discrimination lawsuit, led Congress to pass the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009, which expanded the statute of limitations for equal-pay lawsuits.

Justice Ginsburg was a pioneer and role model for all women to break through the glass ceiling and status quo. Let us endeavor to keep her work alive and carry her strength forward to inspire generations to come. With the presidential election now less than one month away, this is the time to honor Justice Ginsburg and exercise our hard-fought right to vote in the November election.

Our country was founded on the democratic principle that the people (although it was only white male landowners at that time) determine who their representatives should be. It was a right that people fought and died for then, and many have fought for it since. Black men and women had to fight slavery and Jim Crow laws for the right to vote. White women had to fight for the right to vote until the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920. And many continue to fight for voter rights today.

We do our country and ourselves a disservice by not participating in something so meaningful as voting. I’m proud to come from a line of women who understand the importance of our democracy. My mother, Elaine Rudin, is a former president of a chapter of the League of Women Voters, which recently commemorated the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the

women’s suffrage movement. You can find out more by visiting NationalWomensHistoryAlliance.org.

Why vote? Well, no one wants to live under a dictatorship, having others make decisions without their input. How do you know who and what to vote for? Start by thinking about what’s most important to you and vote for a representative or position that best reflects your values and priorities. The decisions that result from voting control every aspect of our society. Your elected representatives give you a voice as to how your tax dollars are allocated: How much of your tax dollars will go to education and how much to the military and infrastructure? How important is climate change and the environment as a whole? Do you value preservation of national parks? What will the nation’s approach be to capital punishment and incarceration verses rehabilitation in the criminal justice system? Our health care system is also in a state of flux, which will likely be affected by who is elected. Personally, I want to be a role model for my children, to teach them the importance of voting and participating in our government. I want to show them that supporting the causes they believe in is the right thing to do, and that participating in rallies and marches empowers them. I want to show them, as Justice Ginsburg showed me, that standing up for their beliefs is how they can effect change.

Now is the time to make sure you are registered to vote. You can register as late as Oct. 19, 15 days before the Nov. 3 election. With COVID-19 still a continuing threat to our health, California is making it easier to vote by sending all registered voters mail-in ballots.

You can drop your completed ballot off early at a local dropbox, election office, or polling location. To be sure your vote is counted, you should track what happens to your ballot by visiting California.BallotTrax.net/ voter. If you decide to vote on Election Day in person, remember to adhere to health and safety procedures. But no matter what, do not let these turbulent times keep you from casting your ballot. It is your right, and you should exercise it.

—Renée Nordstrand

SAFETY IS FASHIONABLE

There’s a lot to love about our Santa Barbara community, and one of my favorites is the passion of the people who live here. One such inspirational person is Arlene Larsen, who has recently set out on a mission we can all participate in to brighten our days.

The Larsen name might be familiar to you if you’re a fan of magicians. Arlene is the co-founder of the Magic Castle Cabaret in Montecito, and her husband Milt is a co-founder of the world-famous Magic Castle in Hollywood, which has been in operation since the 1960s. While Arlene’s latest undertaking might consist of a little less wand waving, it’s no less of a magical feat.

With controversy over wearing masks intensifying, Arlene felt the call to do something that would inspire people to stay safe. As a member of the Hollywood

Costume Designers Guild with years of experience in promotion, she has connections to several of Santa Barbara’s influential celebrities. Arlene’s goal is to show the community, through celebrity participation, how wearing masks doesn’t have to be punishment; it can be a creative, fun fashion statement. She’s spending her own money and time making stylish and eye-catching masks and face shields in a variety of different themes, then mailing them to celebrities to wear in public and hopefully post on their social media.

Arlene hopes to help spawn a phenomenon of willingness to adhere to safety practices by having fun while doing it. She’s already sent masks to many local celebrities like Steve Martin, David Copperfield, and Oprah Winfrey. Most recently, she’s received word from Jason Alexander that he and



his wife will be promoting her masks and shields together.

Through celebrities, people are more likely to realize that masks can be fashionable extensions of their expressions of style, and not just a one-size-fits-all nuisance. That means they become much more willing to don them in public, promoting better health for all. So, instead of an aggravating chore, it becomes a chance to have some fun with this new normal we’ve all been asked to adhere to.

To find out more about how you can participate in Arlene Larsen’s “Safety is Fashionable” project, send her an email at Zamagic@aol.com. She welcomes support, connections, and suggestions from the community.

We Want You to Think of Us as Your Law Firm

If you have a legal matter that needs attention, let us know. If we can’t handle the matter, we will refer you to a firm that can. Please feel free to refer us to your friends and family for their legal needs. We welcome the opportunity to help!

WORD SEARCH

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- Apples
- Calendula
- Candy
- Halloween
- Horror
- Masks
- Opal
- Popcorn
- Scary
- Scream
- Treat
- Trick

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SPOOKY STRAWBERRY GHOSTS

These adorable chocolate-dipped strawberry ghosts will be the stars of your Halloween party!

INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz white chocolate, chopped
- 24 strawberries
- 1 package mini dark chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat the white chocolate at 50% power for 30 seconds. Remove it and stir, then repeat the process until melted.
2. Lay out a sheet of parchment paper.
3. One by one, dip the strawberries into the melted white chocolate and set them on the parchment. Allow the extra chocolate to pool to form a “tail” effect.
4. Before the chocolate coating fully cools, add three mini chocolate chips to each berry to form two eyes and a mouth.
5. Let chocolate set, then serve your spooky snacks!

Inspired by CandiQuik.com