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City of Warwick wishes you good health and safety - by Joseph Solomon

April 10, 2020 - Rhode Island

Joseph Solomon

I hope this message finds you well as the country continues to endure the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be sure, these are unprecedented times, and the city of Warwick has been working cooperatively with our state and federal partners to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 virus in our community and throughout Rhode Island. On Friday, March 13th, I declared a state of emergency and closed the Mickey Stevens sports complex, which includes McDermott Pool and the Thayer and Warburton ice rinks. The following week, all non-essential personnel began working remotely from home. We subsequently made the difficult, but very necessary, decision to close all municipal offices to help to ensure the safety and well-being of our residents and employees. As it became apparent that many people were not complying with the governor's and department of health's social distancing and stay-at-home directives, the city has also closed, until further notice, all municipal parks, beaches, and recreational facilities in an effort to help contain further spread of the virus.

Despite the stress and anxiety that many are facing during this worldwide health crisis, we have also seen examples of humankind at its best. Many local restaurant owners, who themselves have been hard hit during this time, are nonetheless donating and delivering meals to our first responders and local hospital employees. Our department of human services and its band of volunteers have been working with a Warwick-based non-profit, WestBay Community Action, to deliver meals to seniors and the homebound. WestBay also has emergency curbside pickup for families in crisis. United Way of Rhode Island held "401Gives" on April 1. Nonprofits from across the state participated in this inaugural event, Rhode Island's largest statewide day of giving. In just 24 hours, 7,097 Rhode Islanders donated more than \$1.1 million, supporting 364 area social service and civic organizations. This funding is particularly critical and timely, as a number of non-profits have had to cancel or postpone the large-scale fundraisers that account for significant portions of their annual budgets.

Our public safety personnel have always been among the most professional, experienced, and compassionate in the region, and recent weeks have proven to be no exception. I am extremely

proud of the men and women of our police and fire departments and the department of public works, who are putting themselves on the front lines during this crisis – and going above and beyond for people in need. For example, when the Warwick Police Department got word that an 87-year-old woman and her disabled son were going to spend the weekend without food, one of our officers did a wellness check, got their grocery list, and went to a local Shaw's market. There, both store management and shoppers who overheard the story gave generously, allowing the officer to return with every item on the family's list. In other public safety matters, as personal protective equipment (or PPE) remains difficult to find, some talented residents have begun making face masks and sharing them with others throughout our community.

Students statewide will continue with remote learning at least through the end of this month. Our teachers, students, and parents are all working very hard to make the most of a difficult situation. In concert with remote learning, the governor announced an April Reading Challenge. Our hardworking public library children's staff is presently sorting and bagging books by reading and grade level for distribution to families who request books. Others in our community, including executive directors of non-profits and our police officers, have taken to social media to read to students.

We are all looking forward to the day when this crisis has passed, businesses can reopen and life returns to some semblance of normalcy. In the meantime, I wish you, your families, and your colleagues good health and safety. I encourage you to visit warwickri.gov for updates and additional information about all we are doing during this crisis.

Joseph Solomon is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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