

# THE People of PORT

SUMMER 2020: ISSUE 5

News for Donors and Friends



## COMMUNITY CHEST RESPONDS TO COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

In March 2020, the Community Chest of Port Washington reacted to the Coronavirus pandemic by forming the **Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response Working Group**--a group of community leaders that meets regularly to address and respond to the emergency needs of Port Washington residents as a result of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic. The working group includes representatives from the Town of North Hempstead, Port Washington School District, PW Public Library, PW Police, the PW Crisis Relief Team, PW Clergy Association, PW Parent's Council and community and faith-based organizations (CFBOs).

The Community Chest also established the **Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response Fund** which is hosted and administered by the Community Chest of Port Washington and is seeded with up to \$100,000 from the Community Chest. As of August 5<sup>th</sup>, the amount raised is at approximately 325,000. **The Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response Fund** is being used to make COVID-19 emergency grants for food needs, housing costs and other expenses to existing community and

faith-based organizations that have strong experience supporting local families. \$95,000 has been granted to date; another \$18,000 has been spent on bulk purchases of needed supplies.

Donations for the **PW COVID-19 Community Response Fund** are being collected through the Community Chest website and a Certified Charity GoFundMe campaign <https://bit.ly/2WUAKQG>.

The Fund expands the local capacity of outreach organizations to address the many needs created by the coronavirus crisis. 100% of donations is going to organizations helping Port Washington residents impacted by this public health crisis. As of now, five organizations have been identified (Our Lady of Fatima, Parish Outreach; St. Peter of Alcantara, Parish Social Ministry, Littig House Community Center, the Port Washington Parent Resource Center, Outreach and Port Washington Community Action Council) as providing critical needs for approximately 400 at-risk Port Washington families. Community Response Grants to community and faith-based nonprofits are made on a rolling basis. As fundraising continues through the outbreak and recovery phases of the crisis, the Fund will adapt to emerging needs as the situation evolves.



PPSS co-coordinator, Francine Furtado delivers bags to Sister Kathy at Our Lady of Fatima. Reusable bags are made from 60% recycled materials. Kalpana Bhandarkar serves as co-coordinator

## PORT PANTRY SUPPLY SQUAD IN ACTION

In response to COVID-19's impact on Port Washington residents disproportionately affected by this pandemic and its economic consequences, the Community Chest of Port Washington, along with its partners in the Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response working group, launched the **Port Pantry Supply Squad**. The "Squad" puts funds raised by the PW COVID-19 Community Response Fund to good work -- purchasing in bulk and distributing paper and personal care products to hundreds of families in town, in partnership with local community and faith-based organizations.

"The Community Chest is prioritizing direct support for local families who have experienced loss of work or declines in income as a result of COVID-19," said Julie Meer, Executive Director of The Community Chest. "As donations for our COVID-19 related initiatives have been received primarily from our Port Washington neighbors who are able to make contributions, we see this initiative as the definition of *Community*. We are incredibly grateful for the outpouring of support." The Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response working group realized that low-income families could benefit from household supplies like laundry detergent, dish and bath soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, and feminine products.

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Since March we have focused on COVID-19 humanitarian needs. The needs from this pandemic shift but are ongoing; we will continue to fundraise and support relief efforts.

In our hearts & minds too are the nonprofit organizations who have always provided vital services to PW residents. They need us now more than ever.

**MAKE YOUR ANNUAL GIFT NOW IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY!**

## GUIDANCE CENTER RESPONDS TO PANDEMIC

When North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center shut its doors on March 17, 2020, the staff went into action immediately to make sure that kids and families in Port Washington and other Nassau communities would continue to access vital mental health services. The Guidance Center seamlessly transitioned to remote video conferencing to see both new and existing clients within days of closing, so no one was left behind. The need for services was and continues to be more critical than ever, as current clients are experiencing highly exacerbated symptoms, including an increase in depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and other mental health challenges. The Guidance Center also experienced an influx of new clients who were experiencing difficulties for the first time. In addition, many were facing the sudden loss of

a parent, grandparent, or other family member due to the virus. "The normal bereavement process, which involves getting support and love from family and friends through wakes, Shivas and other memorial services, is unavailable," said Andrew Malekoff, Executive Director at the Guidance Center. "Our highly trained therapists are helping kids and families process their grief and move toward healing."

For the past several months, the Guidance Center has expanded its reach by conducting free webinars with its own staff and outside experts to help families cope with the stresses brought on by the pandemic. They have also started free Parent Pandemic Support Groups, held over Zoom, where parents can receive guidance and support from a therapist and their peers. To get help call (516) 626-1971 or visit [www.northshorechildguidance.org](http://www.northshorechildguidance.org).



Shown nurturing plants from seed are the Nicholas Center Navigators, by their greenhouse

## PLANT A ROW SEASON NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

After 10 years of running the Port Washington Plant A Row for the Hungry Program, founder Marv Makofsky was looking for new challenges and a way to expand his program to grow more produce. He learned that large areas of the Long Island Science Museum property (owned by Nassau County) were underutilized. Marv matched that land supply with Laurie Murdock, a Port Washington resident farmer looking for to grow more produce. Murdock has been growing produce in Brentwood, Long Island along with her two Autistic sons for several years and donating hundreds of pounds of organic produce to the Plant A Row Program.

Makofsky contacted Nassau County legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton and the Associate Director of the Department of Parks, Recreation & Museums and began discussions with the Board of Directors of the Science Museum. An agreement was signed in February 2020 to develop a major garden on the Science Museum property. The project will bring a large volume of produce to families in need, as well as provide opportunities to educate students and families on the art and science of growing produce gardens.

The timing could not be more perfect as the Science Museum had just decided to expand their science programs. The Plant A Row Garden was a perfect fit! The garden project will include a natural plant area coordinated by Rewild Long Island (an organization that brings native plants to private yards and community spaces) as well as a garden designed by the North Shore Audubon Society, whose goal is to promote, protect and preserve the environment and the birds that inhabit it. The natural plantings will attract butterflies, bees and birds and will provide opportunities to extend teaching on how vegetation enhances our environment. Volunteers from Growing Love Community Garden (located in Manorhaven) add to the learning experience for all students and interns at the garden by sharing healthy gardening practices that restore and beautify the land.

Through early July, the Science Museum Garden, grown from seed in the Nicholas Center for Autism greenhouse, has already yielded several hundred pounds of produce donated to the Outreach Program at Our Lady of Fatima. Thousands of pounds of produce are yet to come as harvesting continues through November.

## A Note From the Executive Director



On March 25<sup>th</sup> we held the first Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response working group Zoom call. The idea was simple: raise money and give it out to nonprofits who are already working with vulnerable populations. We called it the **Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response Fund** and since that day we have raised over \$320,000 (this includes \$100,000 of Community Chest campaign funds). At first, I thought I was going to be giving out grants only. Turns out its been a foray into direct service...which is a welcome change for me.

Every month we see a new need and create an initiative to help fill the void. You can read about all our projects in these pages. There is still more to tell. To list all the people who have helped would be impossible. If hugging were allowed, I would gladly give those away. To ALL of you who have helped, I say...

*Thank you*

from the bottom of my heart.

Julie Meer  
Executive Director

## CANCER SUPPORT FUND EASES THE WAY

The Good Neighbor Cancer Support Fund was launched in January 2020 as a partnership between the Community Chest of Port Washington and The Cancer Institute at St. Francis Hospital. Designed to ease the way for Port residents undergoing cancer treatment at St. Francis, the effort is being coordinated by the social work team at St. Francis Hospital's Cancer Institute in East Hills. In addition to coping with the challenges of cancer treatments, patients may also struggle with financial or logistical needs including paying for transportation, nutritious food, and other expenses.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, this otherwise helpful program became a lifeline for many patients. Supermarket gift cards purchased with grant funds enabled no-contact food delivery for their safety and further eased the burden during a time of unexpected financial stress.

As one grateful community member and patient expressed in a note recently: "I received your generous Stop & Shop gift cards on Friday. Your caring and support are greatly appreciated! Please send my deepest thanks to the Community Chest."

## PRC OUTREACH FAMILIES GET HELP

The Port Washington Parent Resource Center (PRC) Outreach Program stepped up to the plate and hit a homerun for its families during the COVID-19 pandemic. While in-person classes are not possible, the PRC is in close touch with its Outreach families who are hardest hit from the economic crisis. Concerns of food insecurity, rent arrears, and other matters are also being addressed through the PRC's collaboration with the PW COVID-19 Community Response Fund.

Through the generosity of its members and a Bingo fundraiser run by three local families in May the PRC partnered with the Grill Shack Food Truck to provide dinner for its 55 Outreach families. The drive-by pick up included the free family meals, a \$100 Stop and Shop gift card and a Stepping Stones Craft Box.

In the same spirit, and again with the help of the Bingo fundraiser, the PRC hosted a "drive-through" graduation for its Stepping Stones students who graduated in June 2020 and who will be starting Pre-K in the fall. Each Outreach family picked up two Carlos' pizzas and ice-cream as well as a bag of paper & personal care items from the Port Pantry Supply Squad. The PRC gave out a book and a bag of crafts and



activities to have fun with this summer. The graduates received their diplomas, a graduation t-shirt and a backpack filled with school supplies. Congratulations to the Graduates!

The needs of families do not end with food and supplies as the PRC discovered when surveying its Outreach families. Beginning this summer and continuing indefinitely, the PRC will be the conduit to supply Port Washington's low-income families with diapers and wipes via its Diaper Drive on SignUpGenius. This tool matches needs of families with donations from residents of the Port Washington community. On designated days families drive through the Landmark on Main Street parking lot, open their car windows, and collect their donated diapers and wipes. Deliveries are arranged for families without transportation. Families can register for this program through one of Port Washington's food pantries.

## PORT PANTRY SUPPLY SQUAD

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The Squad, composed of energetic volunteers, packs items in reusable bags for each household and delivers them weekly to partner organizations for distribution to families. Partner organizations include Littig House Community Center; Lutheran Church of Our Savior Paper & Personal Care Pantry; Our Lady of Fatima, Parish Outreach; St. Peter of Alcantara, Parish Social Ministry; the Parent Resource Center Outreach Program and EOC/Port Washington Community Action Council. To date, more than 325 families have received fully stocked bags of supplies, and replenishment of toilet paper on an on-going basis.

# NICHOLAS CENTER ALTERS MODEL TO SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM

Nicholas Center, a non-profit organization which supports individuals with autism in leading full and productive lives in the community, successfully pivoted its business model and found creative ways to service individuals with autism, during the COVID-19 health crisis.

In less than 72 hours after it was ordered to close its doors in mid-March, Nicholas Center's team of 35 support staff shifted from working face to face to creating an online platform and operating entirely at a distance. Nicholas Center's essential workforce ensured that its 90 participants with autism had access to a continuum of service, with the routine and comfort of seeing familiar faces. It offered

four remote ZOOM classes per hour every day - over 35 hours of instruction per week. Topics included: communication and social skills, personal health skills, prevocational training, virtual field trips, foreign languages, fitness regimens and dance parties!

This online educational atmosphere provided participants the opportunity to continue to develop work readiness skills, independent living skills and personalized goals. In mid-May, in adherence to the social distancing requirements and re-opening strategy, Nicholas Center acquired an additional 1,900 square feet of space in the Community Chest Building. As it slowly began opening its doors,



*Fiona is engaged while in a Zoom class.*

Nicholas Center hired additional staff to provide services in smaller ratios. Today, it has close to 50% of its clients (42 participants) back on site, while the rest of its clients continue to receive services remotely or in their homes. Nicholas Center's staff report seeing incredible breakthroughs everyday both virtually and on-site.

## PW MASK BRIGADE: SEWING SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF PORT



*Logo: MichelleShain.net*

Fifty-two volunteers in Port Washington worked to make over 2,000 fabric masks for local at-risk families, through the **Port Washington Mask Brigade** effort, a project of the Port Washington COVID-19 Community Response working group. The masks were donated to families at Littig House Community Center, Our Lady of Fatima, Port Washington

Community Action Council, Port Washington Parent Resource Center, Outreach; and St. Peter of Alcantara, Social Ministry.

Under the coordination of volunteer Betsy Liegey, and with the help of cutters and seamstresses, the Port Washington Mask Brigade created washable 3-layer face masks. Donations of fabric, elastic and more from the Port Washington community enabled the crew to stay hard at work. Spectrum Suds, a program of Spectrum Designs Foundation, washed and steamed them and by June they were in the hands of our grateful families. "The Mask Brigade did an amazing job, creating masks for our Port Washington families," said Betsy Liegey. "They opened up their hearts to neighbors in need and gave their time (and a lot of it) to make fabric face masks that were distributed

through the PW COVID-19 Community Response humanitarian effort. It just shows what an incredible community we have here in Port."

Lourdes Tagliatalata, Director of the Parish Social Ministry at St. Peter of Alcantara Church agreed: "The masks from the **Port Washington Mask Brigade** have been a God-send to the families that we serve here at St. Peter's Social Ministry. We have been able to supply our 105+ families with 3 or more masks each! They are colorful, well-made, and meaningful because they were made with love and concern for one's neighbor." The Mask Brigade began with a problem in need of a solution. Disposable paper face masks are expensive and not readily available, and families with lower incomes are more at-risk for contracting and suffering from COVID-19.

“ Providing masks to Port residents is incredibly important to help keep residents safe and we thank Betsy Liegey, the Brigade's 'fearless leader' and the MANY volunteers that made this possible

Julie Meer, Community Chest Executive Director

## OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

### GIRL SCOUTS OF NASSAU COUNTY GO ONLINE TO SERVE

During the NY Pause, Girl Scouts of Nassau County (GSNC) pivoted to online programming. Engaging, purposeful and comforting programs, badge materials and fun patch programs were made available to girl scouts, volunteers, and parents/caregivers. The virtual programming encouraged the girls to try new things, get active, help others, be creative and share their thoughts and what they learned with their friends and family all while remaining safe. It may have even prepared them for the *Girl Scouting at Home* patch.

Delivering even more help, GSNC program partners created YouTube demonstrations to teach everything from how to

stretch correctly, have fun kickboxing, practice self-defense techniques as well as how to make pasta from scratch. As always though, Girl Scouting is synonymous with service. Today, girl scouts of all ages in Nassau County are donating cookies, writing letters of encouragement, making masks, and cheering on our first responders and essential workers. They are finding new, socially distant, and safe ways to feed the hungry, communicate with seniors, comfort the sick, and express gratitude to our healers and helpers. Our Girl Scouts are leaders; and during the COVID-19 pandemic, they continue to make this world a better place.

### PORT SUMMER SHOW PIVOTS TO VIRTUAL "CAN'T STOP US" SERIES

COVID-19 surely was not going to stop the Port Summer Show (PSS) from offering Port teens in grades 7 through 12 a chance to produce a high-quality musical theater production as they have every year since 1972. The non-profit musical theater company board decided to take the show on the virtual road to ensure the health and safety of all PSS participants and created a free virtual summer workshop series called, the "2020 Can't Stop Us Series!"

The workshops in the series were free and taught by PSS' creative team. A sampling from the series included "Sight Singing", "Great Dances of Broadway" and "Musicals That Changed the Shape of Broadway". There was an audition workshop, a virtual performance workshop, and special workshops designed specifically for members of the crew. The program, which started on June 29 and ended August 7 registered 48 teen participants.

The program also featured two mentored programs: "The Totally Awesome 80's Music Video Project" which gave participants a chance to create their very own 80's music video and the "Senior Showcase," designed to honor PSS's graduating senior performers who sang in a virtual cabaret the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in August.

"This year, we've worked diligently with our incredible creative team to provide a theater and stagecraft series that captures the spirit of what we've been doing for the past 48 years," said Sandy Woods, Co-president of PSS.

"What's more, since we understand many families have been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, we decided to offer our '2020 Can't Stop Us Series' free of charge," added Bonnie Young, Co-President.

Simply put, for PSS, the show must go on. And this year, thanks to the "2020 Can't Stop Us Series," it did. And be sure, next year PSS will be back for its 49<sup>th</sup> year with a live performance.

Thank you

## HELPING HANDS FOR SENIORS

At its peak, **Helping Hands**, Community Chest's free shopping and no-contact delivery service was shopping for 55 residents who had been advised to stay at home. This helpful program was created specifically for older adults and others who have serious underlying medical conditions, who were advised to stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Julie Meer, Community Chest Executive Director explains why the program was started: "At the beginning of the pandemic, delivery of food was delayed by weeks and many shopping services were only handled on-line. We were concerned that some of our seniors who were at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 wouldn't have access to any food." In addition to shopping, the initiative encouraged seniors to register for Project Independence, a program of the Town of North Hempstead which assigns caseworkers to help with transportation,

food, entitlement benefits and other needs. Ena G., who has become close with her shopper, Elise, could not be more thrilled with the program: "My husband and I didn't want to leave the house, for safety reasons. But because of Elise, we've gotten everything we need; and a sweet friend too!" Those unable to procure food, medication or other essentials contacted the Community Chest and were matched with a community volunteer or a member of the Port Washington Crisis Relief Team. As anxiety over the spread of COVID-19 has decreased, so too has the need for the shoppers. "Currently 15 seniors and others who are home-bound, are using Helping Hands," says Shelly Persaud, Community Chest Helping Hands coordinator. Community Chest gives a big shout out to Landmark on Main Street Executive Director, Laura Mogul who stepped up to help with the program in mid-June.



Alexa and Nicholas (from the Nicholas Center) harvesting the vegetables in front of the Community Chest for Plant-A-Row for the Hungry, Port Washington.

## PORT YOUTH ACTIVITIES KEEPS MOVING



Young Cassens catching a grounder

As an immediate response to COVID-19, Port Washington Youth Activities (PYA) shut down all activities and spring sports - baseball, softball, boy's and girl's lacrosse, tennis, martial arts, and yoga. But when quarantines were eased in the spring, PYA looked to get children and their families moving. In June, PYA launched its "PYA At Home Challenge" on its social media channels. This was a series of exercises and athletic skills to challenge children each day over a period of 10 days, through June 30. Families submitted videos of their children's activities, some of which

were posted on social media and prizes were awarded. When public gathering restrictions were gradually lifted in June, and Nassau County progressed through the re-opening phases, PYA offered annual sports summer camp affiliate programs, with adherence to social distancing protocols: NY Baseball Academy, First Pitch Softball Training Camp, Shore 2 Shore Boys Lacrosse Camp, PYA Girls Lacrosse Camp, Hoops 101 Basketball Camp, and Prime Time Flag Football Camp. "Enrollment in these camps has been phenomenal, and exceeded our expectations," says Brandon Kurz, PYA Director. PYA is hopeful that it can reinstate traditional programs this September.

## LANDLORD - TENANT RENT PAYMENT NEGOTIATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all of us physically, mentally, financially or some combination of all three. For those families who have experienced loss of work or declines in income because of COVID-19, there is also the anxiety of paying rent (or a mortgage). And for those who do not receive government financial aid in the form of unemployment benefits, stimulus payments or other aid, the burden is huge. While NYS Governor, Andrew Cuomo issued an eviction moratorium that now runs to October 1<sup>st</sup>, many Port Washington families, who normally live paycheck to paycheck, find themselves in a hole and scared. The **PW COVID-19 Community Response Fund** is helping. Collaborating with a team of attorneys, led by attorneys Rob Seiden and Fred Pollack, the first phase of rent arrears negotiated settlement payments was made. "The assistance we have received from the pro bono team is invaluable," said Drew Hershkowitz, Community Chest President. He added, "We are also incredibly grateful to the landlords who were patient and flexible during this process."

## ISLAND HARVEST FOOD REDISTRIBUTION

Free fresh food is now coming to Port Washington. Thanks to Island Harvest, Long Island's largest food bank, Port Washington's approximately 400 at-risk families will have access to good, surplus food—much of which might otherwise go to waste. Port Washington's at-risk families are served by three food pantries: Littig House Community Center, Our Lady of Fatima and St. Peter of Alcantara; and two Outreach Centers: EOC/Port Washington Community Action Council and Port Washington Parent Resource Center.

The redistribution program began on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, when volunteers picked up food for families at Our Lady of Fatima from the Island Harvest distribution center in Uniondale. Volunteer, Doug Bridges, had this to say: "It could not have gone smoother. They knew we were coming; food was brought out to our cars." Karen LaSoursa, the Nassau County coordinator for Island Harvest is thrilled to be able to get

food to at-risk families on the Port peninsula: "The issue in Port Washington has always been the inability of the pantries to accept our deliveries—which can be two-to-three pallets of food that need refrigeration."

Thanks to Island Harvest's flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic in allowing volunteers to collect food on behalf of the pantries, Port's food pantries will be getting fresh meat and produce three times per week.

**MAKE AN EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT BY:**

- Naming Community Chest as a beneficiary of your estate plan, life insurance policy or retirement plan
  - Doubling your contribution by asking your employer about its Matching Gift Program
  - Donating appreciated stock to avoid paying tax on the unrealized capital gain and get a charitable deduction equal to the fair market value of the stock
  - Making tribute gifts in honor/in memory of someone; recognized in our annual brochure
  - Donating your IRA's required minimum distribution (if you are 70 ½ or older)
- For stock or funds transfer instructions or additional information, please email Julie Meer, Executive Director, at [jmeer@portchest.org](mailto:jmeer@portchest.org) or call (516) 767-2121.**

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