

HOT TOPIC #3: MARCH 17TH

VOLUNTEERING: ISLANDERS UNITE

COVID-19 updates from San Juan County around subjects on the minds of islanders.

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

We are greatly heartened, though not at all surprised, by the outpouring of islanders looking to be of service to their communities. As we all know, the islands are home to an extremely resilient group with a tremendous volunteering spirit. It is that essence of heartfelt generosity and togetherness that will carry us through this crisis. Below are some recommendations on how you can help.

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

This should be the foundation of our island response. Take a moment to check in with neighbors, friends, family members, and people you know in the community who might need a hand. Informal networks coordinated through homeowner associations, churches, groups of co-workers, and other networks of island residents can provide an essential lifeline to islanders who are especially vulnerable or unable to meet their own needs. What does this help look like?

Call your neighbors, friends and loved ones. Just say hello or chat for 20 minutes. The reduction of social contact is an easily overlooked impact from this situation, and something as simple as a "Hey neighbor!" can make a tremendous difference.

Better yet, can you use a video chat platform to actually say hi "face to face"? This is a poor substitute for the real thing, but is far better than isolation.

Offer to deliver groceries, supplies, pharmacy pick-up, take-out meals, etc. to those in the islands who are less mobile or unable to leave their homes. This is really important!

Big shout out for take out meals. Our island businesses are hurting, and anything we can do to help them through is a huge lift. Reach out to your favorite restaurants and maybe pick a few nights each week to bring something home from their kitchen. Growlers of beer, coffee to go, a pie or cookie. Every little bit counts.

It's not just the food service industry. What about paying in advance for 20 haircuts or dog grooming sessions, renewing your gym membership a year in advance, ordering books over the phone from your local bookseller, buying gift certificates now for all of your holiday giving? Not everyone in the islands has the resources to be so generous,

but for those who do, now is the time to be proactive and creative in how we think to help those in need.

Be innovative, be bold, share good ideas with others, work to develop systems and approaches that solve problems. Coordinate with others who are similarly inclined. The more unified the effort, the more effective it will be. Pick up the phone. These amazing islands have the will, energy, and smarts to do this and to do it right.

BE SAFE BE CONSIDERATE

No matter what role you're filling or what effort you support:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash hands thoroughly before gathering or delivering groceries, before organizing supplies, before making meals (you get the idea).
- Practice social distancing. For example, place delivery items on the front porch/step, knock on door, step away from the door, and verify the item is picked up. Definitely wave or say hello. We are practicing social distancing, not social isolation. A friendly wave or smile will go a long way. Get back in vehicle and drive to the next location.
- Use hand sanitizer if hand washing is not available.
- Wash hands immediately after returning from route/upon entering home.
- Avoid working in large or varied groups.

WHAT IS SAN JUAN COUNTY DOING?

The work ahead is bigger than any one organization. For the last few months, the County effort has been focused on public health and contingency planning and preparations. But as the economic impacts come into focus, there's also a quickly developing effort around engaging with and supporting the incredible local work coming from trusted non-profits, the business community, and spontaneous efforts from civic minded folks. The goal of the County is to strongly support, coordinate with, and where appropriate lead- but never at the expense of slowing down or standing in the way of the incredible work underway. More will come in the days, weeks, and months ahead. The first step is to gauge the need, and all local businesses are encouraged to fill out [the survey put out by the Economic Development Council](#).

The County is also looking to build a database of local residents who have specialized medical training or licensure and who might be willing to support efforts to plan for and respond to COVID-19. If you think you might be a fit and be interested in joining our medical professional volunteer effort, please fill out this [form](#). The information provided will go into a database and volunteers will be contacted if a need for their service arises. There's no commitment by registering, this is just an effort to gather basic info.

Thank you islanders.