

Dutchess County's Rapid Response Team helping businesses network

By Rich Thomaselli

Ron Hicks said he's not ashamed. Not ashamed in the least. "When I'm on the phone with our small business owners," he said, his voice breaking, "it's hard not to cry."

But Hicks, the Assistant Dutchess County Executive to Marc Molinaro, is more than just an empathetic ear, more than just taking the concerns and frustrations of small business owners to heart.

He's helping lead the charge to take action in the wake of the devastating effects of the spread of the coronavirus in the county by teaming with various other entities and implementing the Rapid Response Team.

A combination of county agencies, chambers of commerce, tourism councils, the Alliance For Business, Community Capital of New York and more, the Rapid Response Team was a creation of Molinaro after he first took office in 2011. It has been used twice in nine years – in 2014, when IBM had a layoff of more than 500 people, and in 2016 when The Gap distribution center in Fishkill suffered a massive fire and displaced

1,200 workers.

Hicks knows he's facing his biggest challenge now as the rapid growth of the COVID-19 virus forced Gov. Andrew Cuomo to literally shut down the state. With the exception of designated businesses such as banks, restaurants (takeout only) and grocery stores, business is closed as people are confined to their homes to help halt the spread of the virus. No barbershops, nail salons, movie theaters. No clothing stores, dress shops, hardware stores.

Business owners devastated. Employees out of jobs and swamping the unemployment system. Now is the time for the oldest business tactic in the book – networking.

"We focus on communication, being on site, understanding the needs of the business in terms of what they need now and what they need going forward," Hicks said.

So with the cooperation of all of the aforementioned agencies, the Rapid Response Team formulated an initiative to connect all the parties involved from owners to employees.

"We got all the partners to give up their

database emails," Hicks said. "We reached out to the small business associations, put them into one protected database and we push out a daily email of what's going on."

In barely a week since the Rapid Response Team was engaged, there are more than 8,400 subscribers to the email. The state of Connecticut, a border state to several New York counties, greatly assisted the state of NY by including it in its application for small business loans.

"We needed to communicate," Hicks said, "because let's face it, this is unprecedented that almost every business is affected."

Many of those businesses are travel-related, and Dutchess Tourism Inc. is closely monitoring the pandemic as it relates to New York and Dutchess County.

"Our top priority is the safety, health, and wellbeing of our community, its residents, and visitors. This is a rapidly evolving situation that changes by the hour and there is a lot of uncertainty," Dutchess Tourism president MaryKay Vrba said in a statement to the Southern Dutchess News. "We are collaborating with the Think Dutchess Alliance for

Business to provide resources for tourism business and their employees. Our team is in regular contact with the State Tourism Office (ILNY) and monitoring weekly messages from Destinations International and the U.S. Travel Association to stay informed on the latest updates as it relates to travel. When given the word we will be fully prepared to market our storied experiences to invite visitors to come and enjoy the summer in Dutchess County."

Hicks said Molinaro understands the concerns and the fears more than anybody.

"My boss is running a business as well, with 1,700 employees and a budget that's going to be wiped out. This county relies on sales tax revenue and that has hit us hard," Hicks said referring to county employees and the county budget. "He's telling people we have to knock this down now. I don't know what the official word is, but I'm looking at June 1 as a moment when we're not working 20 hours a day and not in isolated locations."

Resources for City of Beacon residents

Compiled by Kristine Coulter

Beacon City School District Meal Program Reminder- Children in the Beacon City School District are eligible to pick up a lunch and a breakfast daily at the Beacon High School parking lot from 10:10:30 and South Avenue from 10:30- 11. Special thanks to Karen Pagano and her amazing team for making this meal program happen. Soup Kitchens.

Other programs offered in Beacon are:
First Presbyterian Church of Beacon
50 Liberty St.
845-831-5322
Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. – Noon

Tabernacle of Christ Church
483 Main St.
845-831-4656
Monday – Thursday, 11 a.m. – Noon

Springfield Baptist Church (Seniors)
8 Mattie Cooper Square
Last Saturday of every month, Noon

Salvation Army (Seniors)
372 Main St.
845-831-1253
Tuesday and Thursday, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Beacon Senior Friendship Center

(Seniors)

One Forrestal Heights
845-838-4871
Monday – Friday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Food Pantries

Salvation Army Beacon
372 Main St.
845-831-1253 *By appointment only*
Tuesday – Thursday

St. Andrew's/St. Luke's
15 South Ave.
845-831-1369
Saturdays, 10 – 11 a.m.

New Vision Church of Deliverance @ Beacon Rec. Center
23 West Center St.
845-202-7199
Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. – noon

Trinity Episcopal Church
1200 Main St. Fishkill
845-896-9884
Tuesday - 6 – 8 p.m.,
2nd and 4th Saturday - 9-11 a.m.

Fishkill Food Pantry @ First Reformed Church
1153 Main St. Fishkill
845-896-4546
By appointment only Monday –

Thursday - 9 a.m. - noon
Tuesdays - open until 2 p.m.
Fareground Tiny Food Pantries – Beacon

24/7 Location 1- Beacon Rec. Center - 23 West Center St.
Location 2- The Howland Public Library - 313 Main St.

Community Action Partnership- *By appointment only*
10 Eliza St. Beacon,
845-831-2620

They will continue to serve families with food emergencies. They are not taking any walk-ins at this time.

Families must call ahead at 845-831-2620 to schedule a time to come.

Mayor Lee Kyriacou recently let residents know:

Essential City Services: Beacon police, fire, water, sewer and curbside trash/recycling are at full strength. City Hall is open – but we strongly urge you to interact by mail, phone and email if possible. As Mayor, I'm here every day, all day.

Essential Stores Open: Kudos to our groceries, pharmacies and take-out food

shops for staying open. Patronize open stores. Only buy what you need, and we'll all have enough.

Non-Essential Closed: Other Beacon businesses are closed, as are schools and library.

Social Distancing: This is the most important action that each of us can do – six feet – and of course hand washing/sanitizer.

Outdoors at a Distance: With social distancing, being outside is healthier than cooped up. It's okay to use our parks and trails – alone or at a distance; obey any posted signs.

Financial Flexibility: The Governor has halted evictions, foreclosures and utility cutoffs. If needed, talk to your landlord/tenant/bank/utility – work it out.

Official Information: Rely on official information from the state or county; the City will relay that information via phone, Channel 22 and website (www.CityofBeacon.org).

"We're all in this together, so let's do our part here in Beacon to help protect at-risk individuals and limit stress on our healthcare system. Check in on your neighbors," he stated.

Nuvance launches initiatives to prevent COVID-19 spread

As it navigates the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) outbreak, Nuvance Health recently launched several initiatives to help keep patients and the community safe as well as up to date on the latest information. These include:

COVID-19 Community Hotline: To address questions, concerns and offer remote screenings for community members, concerned individuals are encouraged to call the Nuvance Health COVID-19 Community Hotline at (888) 667-9262. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week.

Hospital visitation: For everyone's safety, hospitals across Nuvance Health have sus-

pending all visitation with exceptions for active labor and delivery, pediatrics, nursery and NICU. Other exceptions will be considered for circumstances including end-of-life and life- or limb-threatening situations.

Tips and FAQs: Visit nuvancehealth.org/coronavirus for frequent updates, answers to commonly asked questions and tips for coping with coronavirus, such as managing your stress and talking to children about the pandemic.

What You Can Do

Stay home and distance yourself from others. Avoid large crowds and stay home as much as possible.

If you have a doctor's appointment, call the office before you arrive. If you must come into your doctor's office, stand six feet away from the check-in desk and other patients in the waiting area. When possible, attend medical appointments alone unless you must have someone accompany you. Be advised that patients and visitors will be asked COVID-19 screening questions. Visitors showing signs of respiratory illness, such as cough, fever or difficulty breathing/shortness of breath will be asked to go home and the clinical team on-site will provide further guidance.

Try to stay healthy. Continue practicing good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds — or use an alcohol-based sanitizer if

soap and water are not available. Avoid touching your face and shaking hands. Cover your cough and maintain distance from people who are coughing and sneezing.

If you develop symptoms, such as a cough and fever:

Call the community hotline at (888) 667-9262 to speak with a clinical staff member about your concerns.

Call your doctor's office or medical provider for guidance.

For more severe illness, including difficulty breathing, call ahead before heading to your local Emergency Department.

Call 911 if you are unable to go to an Emergency Department and, again, advise them of your symptoms and risks.

Update on COVID-19 locally

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wear a mask for the duration of the visit.

-On March 19, the Governor announced the Department of Financial Services has issued a new directive to New York State mortgage servicers to provide 90-day mortgage relief to mortgage borrowers impacted by the novel coronavirus. The directive includes waiving mortgage payments based on financial hardship, no negative reporting to credit bureaus, grace period for loan modification, no late payment fees or online payment fees, and postponing or suspending foreclosures.

COUNTY

-Nuvance Health, in cooperation with Dutchess and Ulster counties, openED two COVID-19 drive-through collection sites on Monday, March 23. The sites are the Intermodal Center at Dutchess Stadium on Route 9D in Fishkill and Tech City at 300 Enterprise Drive in Kingston. Enterprise Drive is easily accessible from either Route 209 or Route 9W via Boice Lane. These sites are used to collect samples from people who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. The samples will be sent offsite for test-

ing. A person must have a physician's order before entering these locations.

-On Sunday, the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral & Community Health (DBCH) confirmed the first death relating to COVID-19 in Dutchess County. While specific information cannot be provided for privacy reasons, it was confirmed the individual was a 69-year-old male who developed respiratory distress and went directly to Mid-Hudson Regional Hospital where he was treated, but died on Friday, March 20. The individual had not been screened or monitored by DBCH prior to hospitalization.

-There are currently more than 60 positive cases of COVID-19 and the numbers are expected to increase as more testing becomes available this week. Staying home is critical to stop the spread of COVID-19 to flatten the curve.

-Dutchess County Parks currently remain open for people to enjoy "isolated recreation" as Governor Cuomo has called it. This includes walking, running and enjoying the trails.

-The Dutchess Business Notification Network was created as a resource for local

businesses to navigate the fast-changing guidelines in this challenging situation. Business owners are encouraged to direct all questions to the Network in lieu of contacting state agencies directly.

-Small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives and most private not-for-profits in all Mid-Hudson counties are now eligible to apply for SBA economic injury disaster loans. The SBA can provide up to \$2 million to help meet financial obligations and operating expenses that could have been met had the disaster not occurred. The loan amount will be based on the business' actual economic injury and the company's financial needs.

Long-term postponements/cancellations (past March)

-The Bardavon Gala has been rescheduled to Sunday, Oct. 25, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets on sale now at Ticketmaster.com

-Murder Cafe has canceled its scheduled performances for the next eight weeks.

-Kaatsbaan announced that in lieu of live classes and performances during March/April, it will live-stream masterclass-

es, studio visits/rehearsals and previously scheduled shows. A detailed schedule is available at www.kaatsbaan.org as well as on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

-DC Office for the Aging has postponed or canceled its upcoming programming until further notice. See this week's Golden Living column for details.

-Beginning Saturday, March 28, Royal Carting will suspending town dump pickups for two weeks. This service is currently scheduled to resume on April 11. Regular town garbage pickups will remain in effect.

-Vassar Temple Community Seder, scheduled for April 8, has been canceled.

-Concerts in the Village in Kinderhook has postponed its upcoming events. Rescheduled concerts will be announced.

-West Point Band has canceled its concerts through April 5. For additional information, visit <https://www.westpoint.edu/coronavirus>.

-The Rhinebeck Chamber Music Society has canceled the remainder of its concerts this year. "We are hoping to reschedule all of the performances and tickets purchased for the current season will be honored," said RCMS President Joan Monder.