

# 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going'

'Already tough' veterans pitch in to help by preparing meals for kids

by Tom Zurhellen

Thanks to my parents, who grew up in a 1950s America that was still recovering from World War II, I still repeat a lot of old sayings I learned from them, particularly when something goes wrong, or a new challenge awaits.

Heck, I used to whisper "Where there's a will, there's a way" 10 times a day when I walked across the country last summer. But now, the saying I find myself repeating these days with our sudden health crisis is definitely one we all know:

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

When I think of the toughest people I've met in my life, I realize most of them are probably veterans. Of course, veterans have an advantage over most of us when it comes to toughness or resilience; they already have a lifetime's worth of training when it comes to courage, hard work, sacrifice and just all-around chutzpah. Admittedly, that toughness also tends to make veterans some of the most stubborn people on the planet, but hey, that's a whole

a topic for another future Dispatch.

I have been reminded of this innate toughness in our veterans this week at the Poughkeepsie VFW, as we are faced with the coronavirus pandemic and all the challenges and anxiety it brings to the Hudson Valley and beyond. Many of our VFW members are in the crosshairs of this virus because of their advanced age or health complications, so you would assume they would shrink away or retreat until this health crisis passes.

But remember, these are veterans – so that's not going to happen.

When we discovered that many local kids won't get a full meal now that our schools have closed, these veterans and their families sprung into action. We made 50 lunches this Saturday, we made 50 more on Sunday, and yes, we're making 50 more this afternoon – there's no complaining, there's no bellyaching, there's no talk about "kids these days." There's just a group of older folks working hard as a team to make sure kids in our community don't go hungry while the health crisis continues.

And you can bet your bottom dollar these veterans will make 50 more meals tomorrow.

Sometimes I think we forget the true definition of toughness.

No, it's not being mean or cruel, and it's



At the Poughkeepsie VFW, service officer Jimmy Metrandio gets ready to help prepare 50 lunches for local school children. *Courtesy photo*

not being careless or forgetting our own safety. To me, toughness is doing what you think is right, regardless of the sacrifice. Toughness is putting others above ourselves because we know that's the right thing to do for our community, and for our nation.

To our younger folks, the sudden challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic can seem almost overwhelming as they disrupt our daily lives. But to our older folks, particularly our older veterans who served overseas in combat, it does not seem nearly as catastrophic. They say wisdom only comes with experience, and one of the things our older vets have in abundance is experiences. Those experiences count for a lot, and they also give our veterans a toughness, a readiness that most folks simply don't have.

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Yes, it's an old saying but it still rings true, doesn't it? And when I walk in the VFW each day this week, I already know I'm going to see some very tough people doing the work to help others in their community. After all, that's what veterans do.

Thanks for listening! Stay safe, and we will see you next time!

*Tom Zurhellen is the commander at Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 170 in Poughkeepsie. A Navy veteran, he served aboard the cruisers USS Truxtun and USS California during the Persian Gulf War. He currently serves as Associate Professor of English at Marist College, where he has taught Creative Writing courses for the last 15 years.*

## POUGHKEEPSIE VFW TAKING FOOD DONATIONS

to replace school lunches during health crisis

VFW Post 170 in Poughkeepsie is accepting lunch food items, as well as donations to purchase lunch food items during the coronavirus pandemic, to supply lunches to our local kids who rely on school lunches as their primary source of nutrition.

The VFW has partnered with other local non-profits like Hudson River Housing and Hope On A Mission (HOAM) to make sure no local child goes hungry during this crisis.

Lunch food items must be new and sealed. The items requested are: jars of peanut butter and jelly, loaves of white bread; individually wrapped chips, cookies, crackers and snacks; juice boxes; paper lunch bags; plastic sandwich bags.

Lunch food items and donations to purchase lunch food items can be delivered to VFW Post 170 at 1 Violet Avenue in Poughkeepsie. We are open 12-8pm every day. Our phone number is (845) 452-5407.

## Cuomo suspends nursing home visits in midst of COVID-19 outbreak

by Kate Goldsmith

In his press conference last Thursday, Gov. Andrew Cuomo outlined new steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. One of the major initiatives, a ban on visitors to nursing homes, aims to protect those who are most vulnerable to the virus. Until further notice, only medically necessary visits will be allowed.

"We're putting additional requirements on nursing homes," said Cuomo. "All staff must wear masks. All staff must be monitored for symptoms as they're coming in. No non-medical staff, personnel, to enter a nursing home. This means no visitors in a nursing home, which sounds very difficult. But, look ... if you care about someone in a nursing home, the last thing you want is to endanger that person."

The state is also asking nursing homes to set up Skyping and other online communication capacity so families can tele-visit their loved ones. Additionally, the state will require health screenings for all nursing home workers each day when they enter a facility and require them to wear surgical masks to guard against any potential asymptomatic spread.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), those most at risk for serious illness from COVID-19

include older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. Often, nursing home residents fall into both high-risk groups.

A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies "older adults" as those over age 60, and adds cancer to the list of conditions putting individuals at higher risk for "severe disease and death." Cases of COVID-19 in people age 19 and younger seem to be "relatively rare and mild," according to WHO.

Facilities in the region are complying with state requirements.

"Resident safety is a top priority," said Brian Zeidan, administrator of adult day healthcare and pavilion at The Community at Brookmeade in Rhinebeck. "Every resident and family should have a clean, safe living environment. Brookmeade Community is in close contact with our local and state health departments, as well as the CDC, to stay up to date on the information to prevent and manage the spread of coronavirus."

Zeidan suggested that families can make use of technology to stay in touch during the visitor ban.

"Loved ones can communicate with residents by using video chat such as Skype or Facebook messenger, calling, texting or social media; and staff will work with fam-

ilies on how best to connect," he said. "Our population at Brookmeade is particularly vulnerable to this virus and we appreciate the assistance in ensuring our residents are cared for in a safe and healthy environment."

Zeidan added: "We have reviewed and updated our infection prevention and control plans and our emergency communication plan. We have also reinforced protocols, already in place before COVID, to our staff that anyone who is sick to stay home. We are following the recommended infection prevention procedures used during the flu season: handwashing, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, covering coughs, and disinfecting the environment."

Sarah Colomello, spokeswoman for The Thompson House in Rhinebeck, said staff at the facility "has been collaborating with our Nuvance Health system's global health and infectious diseases specialists to perform around-the-clock assessments to identify risks to our residents. They are elderly and/or have medical conditions, and therefore are the most vulnerable."

Colomello said The Thompson House is "updating several electronic devices to be HIPAA-compliant to connect residents with families members who cannot visit.

"In addition, we are training and re-training our staff on personal protective

equipment, monitoring supplies and drilling for emergency situations with our seven-hospital system's support, including Northern Dutchess Hospital on our campus," she said. "Remaining vigilant is the best way to protect our residents."

Julie Primavera, RN BSN, is the regional vice president for sales & marketing for Wingate Health. Wingate has locations in southern Dutchess in Beacon and Fishkill.

"Each of Wingate Healthcare's communities are taking proactive approaches to keep our residents and staff safe; this is always our priority," said Primavera.

Primavera said that "Wingate has provided education and CDC fact sheets for the residents and families. We have implemented numerous preventative strategies in our communities, reviewed emergency preparedness plans and illness triage protocols." She also noted, "Wingate has 24-7 Infection Preventionist consultants on staff and able to provide resources as needed. As State associations, Department of Health and CDC recommendations are made, they are incorporated into our protocols and communications.

"We have extensive communication with the Department of Health, CDC and State Associations for updated information and provide daily contact with our teams in the communities," said Primavera.