

Message from Kathleen McDonough, Board Trustee 4/20/20

Dear Neighbors, Friends and Loved Ones,

Over the past few weeks, we have been faced with unprecedented times. While Island Park might be a small town, we are without a doubt a strong one that always bands together. As someone who was born and raised here, Island Park has always been a town that puts our personal needs aside to help our fellow neighbors. I have witnessed the selflessness first hand with our residents purchasing food in our local grocery stores for their elderly neighbors and leaving them on their doorsteps. The daily birthday parades that have grown to thirty plus cars on any given day that put enormous smiles on faces both young and old along the route, are momentous. Residents making face masks and donating or delivering food to hospitals is another example of why I have such pride in our community. I would be remiss to not acknowledge our dedicated Island Park Fire Department volunteers for leading our birthday parades and driving the Easter Bunny around town the same as they do for Santa in December, in addition to their tireless efforts of ensuring our safety on a daily basis. Thank you for your service! Our school district community is no different. Please know that we are doing everything within our power to ensure that our students have a sense of normalcy with their education, while maintaining a healthy balance of down time which is a necessity for the mental health of the entire family.

As an educator and mother of a sixth and third grader, I understand the challenges of finding a healthy balance between working from home as a government employee and ensuring my children have completed their daily assignments, all while keeping everyone healthy, happy and safe. Some days are harder than others and that is okay. I have found that maintaining a schedule that consists of breaking up their day works best for us. You know your child best! If they need some down time then give it to them. You can always let them grab a snack, have a picnic in your backyard or go for a family walk while practicing social distancing to enable your child to regroup and then continue their assignments. Some children work best standing; let them stand. Other children work best laying on the floor, so let them lay. There will be plenty of time for them to sit still in their desks when everyone returns to school. If you need assistance with your school aged child I encourage you to reach out to your child's principal, teachers, psychologist, social worker, related service provider or support staff. They are here and willing to assist you with any academic concerns you might have.

Just like our Island Park teachers, I must continue to provide instruction to my students through distance learning. The struggle of continuing to educate my students without my materials in hand is at times challenging. I have learned to embrace the internet and the available materials within it. Google Classroom and I have become best friends over the last few weeks. I have spent hours learning about new websites, programs and how to upload documents to make sure that my students continue to learn their third grade curriculum.

I have never been prouder than I am today to be an Island Park School District Trustee and represent this beautiful community. Our teachers and administration are truly top notch. Once again, they were faced to make last minute decisions with constant changing hurdles and did not once hesitate to put their personal needs aside and rise to the occasion. In doing so, their goals have always remained the same: to ensure the safety, well being and education of your child(ren). They have accomplished this without ever having missed a beat. Know that all we are asking of you is to try your very best. Once we are all back together in our classrooms, our faculty, staff and administration will ensure that any gaps your child may experience will be addressed. That is what we are trained to do. As educators, we worry about your children because they become ours the moment they walk through that door. Thank you for sharing them with us!

At this point in time my son should be playing on his Little League team, learning new karate moves and attending religion classes. My daughter should have been in school on her birthday celebrating by having her locker decorated for the first time, taking religion classes and performing in our school play. My mother had to celebrate her 75th birthday by herself because we are listening to the professionals and practicing social distancing. My hope is that we will all get past this and are back spending time with our loved ones and creating beautiful new memories together shortly.

I try to live my life by finding the positives, even in the worst scenarios. The Coronavirus pandemic is currently our worst scenario. So here are some positives that I have experienced; I have enjoyed lengthy family dinners with my children without having to race to a practice or meeting, I have cooked meals with my children, I have popped popcorn and cuddled with my children to watch movies or read books almost daily because we have the time, we have gone on walks keeping our distance from others, I have read Facebook posts encouraging people to support our local restaurants, I have watched families spending time together as they pass our home and most importantly, I have created lasting memories with my children that we will cherish forever. I encourage you to look for the daily positives in your life right now. I promise they are there, you just have to look.

A special thanks to our Island Park residents that are out there placing their lives in danger to keep us safe. Please join me in honoring their tireless efforts by staying home and practicing social distancing. I can't wait to see you around town and back at our schools and events. Until then, stay safe.

Respectfully,

Kathleen McDonough
Island Park School Board Trustee