

Let's Turn the Page on March ...

Today we say farewell to March, and I'm sure none of us is sorry to see it go. The words "March Madness" will never again have quite the same meaning. In March, the world as we know it came grinding to a halt, and friends, neighbors, and relatives that we would always greet with a handshake, or a hug, or a kiss, were suddenly restricted to remain at least six feet away. Occasions and events were postponed or canceled or altered to fit "social distancing" guidelines. Kids that normally would spend their day in school with their classmates and playing outdoors with their friends were now confined to their homes, doing lessons remotely while their parents struggled to help them learn and keep them occupied – the struggle is real! Working from home became the norm and the fight for a quiet workspace and bandwidth replaced fighting through traffic and for a seat on a train. And even though our first responders and healthcare workers have continued to report to their jobs as usual, it has been anything but business as usual for them; they are constantly exposed to danger and for the most part are separated from their families in some way as they care for the sick and keep all of us safe. Our elderly and most vulnerable are the loneliest among us, disconnected from loved ones which, although it is for their own good, cannot be easy on them as they sit anxiously waiting for something not (hopefully) to happen. There are those of us that are struggling economically, whether it be due to the closure of a business or the loss of a job, and even if those situations are temporary the unknown of when things will improve hangs over the heads of those that now are living month to month, or week to week, or day to day. Sadly, there are people that we know that have been infected and become seriously ill, and we have heard the news of those that have died. Our hearts hurt for those that are suffering and for the families of those that have passed away, and we hope that their pain is eased as time passes. There is a saying that "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." Well, we've certainly had our head in the lion's mouth; it sure would be nice if the lamb would make an appearance.

Hidden in all the gloom that March has brought is the one glimmer of hope that always comes in March – Spring. While it was not "celebrated," the world kept turning and the calendar kept changing and Spring arrived, and with it, perhaps some hope. As April dawns, we can begin to look ahead to better and brighter days while we remain vigilant in following the guidelines that will help keep us all safe and healthy. At some point, we will all emerge from our hibernation and be able to be together again, in school, at work, in parks, in restaurants and bars, in stores and anywhere we have gathered in the past. We naturally will be smarter and more cautious – this event will have a profound effect on how we interact with each other in the future – but with that knowledge we will regain the feeling that many of us are missing now, the feeling of community. Personally, I look forward to returning to work, to being in court doing the work I enjoy. I look forward to coaching my roller hockey team and little league team, and watching my kids play with their friends and ride their bikes without worrying if they are too close together. I look forward to being able to play hockey with my teammates and friends, and to being able to be together with friends. I look forward to seeing my daughter graduate from middle school and begin her new adventure in high school, and not worrying when my sons leave the house to hang out with their friends. And I'm sure we all look forward to the day our kids go back to school! I could go on and on, but probably most of all, I look forward to the little things, like being in a store where every other person is not wearing a mask and gloves, or shaking a friend's hand and not worrying about getting sick or getting others sick. Unfortunately, many aspects of our old

routines will change, possibly forever, but we can hope that in time we get back to somewhere we will consider normal, and that it will resemble what it used to be. Our job is to do everything in our power so that we all get to enjoy and experience the new “normal.”

It would be great if we all woke up tomorrow and this all turned out to be an April Fools’ Day prank, but if there is one thing we have learned, this is no joke. Nevertheless, in about a week, many of us will be celebrating – as we do each Spring – the religious holidays of Passover and Easter. These holidays bear great significance during this difficult time: Easter is a celebration of rebirth, and Passover is a celebration of freedom. Our celebrations may look different than they have in past years, but the concept is still the same – we look forward to a new beginning and better times with family and friends. Granted, the future is uncertain to the extent that we do not know when our lives will get back to normal, but as each day passes we get closer to that day. Faith and hope will help get us there.

I look forward to seeing everyone in the near future at school events, on the little league field, and out and about in Island Park. Maybe the April showers will make it easier for us to pass the time indoors so we can all be out to enjoy the May flowers together (Sorry for the Dad joke – too corny?). Seriously, I hope everyone stays healthy and makes the most of their time together with family looking forward to being together again with friends and neighbors, as a community. Hope Springs Eternal.

Be smart, be healthy, and be strong,

Jack Vobis

President, Board of Education