

BOE, bus contractors modify contract

The Worcester County Bus Contractors Association has partnered with the Board of Education to modify its contract in light of the mandated school closures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). During a special Board of Education meeting via teleconference last week, the Board voted to approve a reduction of the fuel component of the contract's mileage reimbursement rate for the duration of school closures as a result of COVID-19.



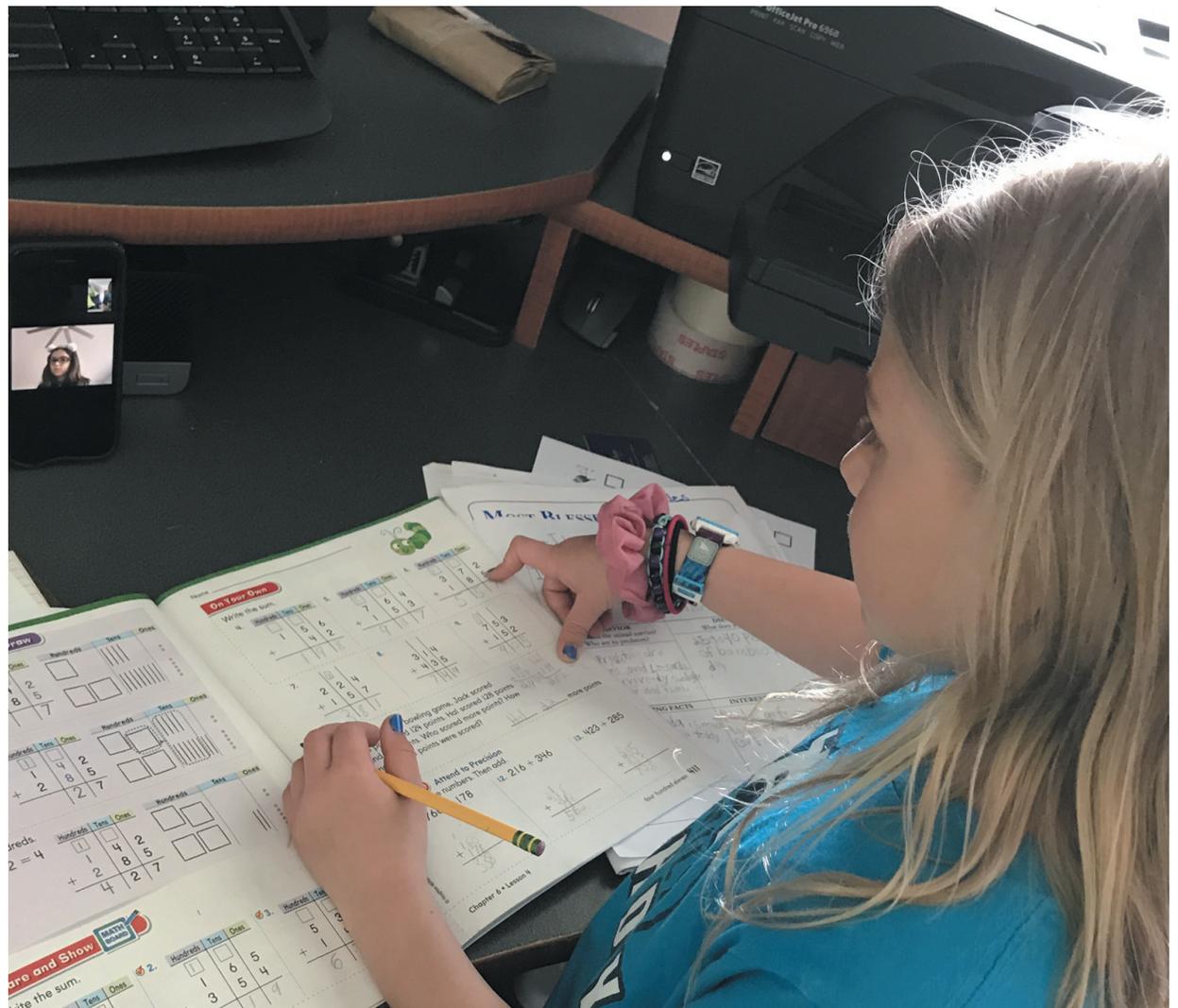
Lou Taylor

"We are very grateful for the partnership we have with the Worcester County Bus Contractors Association (WCBCA), and their willingness to come to an agreement that is in the best interest of both our school system and the bus contractors they serve," said Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor.

Since the start of state-mandated school closures on March 16, the school system has continued to fulfill its promise to our employees: making every effort to ensure employees would not be financially harmed as a result of this health crisis. As school buses have not been on the roads since last month, school system leadership has been communicating with WCBCA to find a fiscally responsible amendment to the contract that would ensure our contractors are able to continue to keep and maintain their buses.

"As contractors, a work stoppage like what has occurred during COVID-19 could be devastating for our members," said Ronnie Thompson, president of WCBCA. "We are grateful that we were able to work with school system leadership to protect our contractors while serving the financial interests of Worcester County taxpayers." The current mileage reimbursement is comprised of both fuel and maintenance components. The new agreement adjusts the fuel component, bringing the overall mileage reimbursement rate from \$1.554 to \$1.214. The rate will return to its original level once the school system returns to normal operation. All other components of the bus contract remain intact.

"We value our bus contractors, and we look forward to the day that we will see our buses carrying kids back to our schools" said Taylor. "Through this amended agreement, our bus contractors, and their buses, will be ready to go when this crisis ultimately passes."



MBS student learning online

MBS engages with students through E-Learning

Beginning on March 16, Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School students have been spending their time away from our school continuing their educations at home. On receiving the news that the school would be closing its doors, teachers were already prepared to share two weeks of schoolwork with their students. While this school closing is unprecedented, students and families were familiar with completing schoolwork at home. Five years ago, the school, in conjunction with the Catholic Schools Office in Wilmington, implemented "Blizzard Bags" to continue learning on days we are out of school.

Of course, this closing is much different than a two-day snowstorm, but it was helpful to already have a plan in place. With the news that a closing was very likely to happen, principal Kathy Manns, instructed teachers to have two weeks of current and

meaningful schoolwork prepared to distribute to our students in all grades, pre-K through eighth.

While this is new territory for educators at large, one thing is certain, the emotional well-being of students is a main priority. Families within community are all struggling at different levels and children can feel it. Checking in with families to find out how students are doing is very important. Teachers and guidance counselor have been reaching out to check in with our families. This has been a very positive avenue for communication.

Additionally, students have connected electronically with their teachers and classmates through Zoom calls and Microsoft Teams. Older students are well versed in working at home in Microsoft 365. Students throughout the school had the option to take a device home if they needed one. The goal is to

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Healthy Hand Hygiene Habits



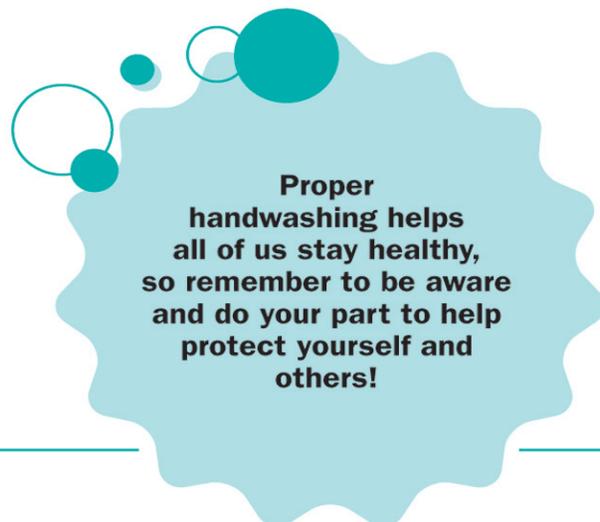
Protect yourself against COVID-19 and other diarrheal and respiratory illnesses, and help prevent the spread of germs to others, by following these simple hand hygiene guidelines:

- 1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water, lathering for at least 20 seconds.**
- 2. If soap is unavailable, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol to clean your hands.**

Wash your hands throughout the day, and particularly under these circumstances:

- Before preparing food
- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- After changing a diaper or helping a child use the toilet
- Before and after exposure to someone who is sick
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
- After touching an animal or picking up animal waste
- After handling pet food or treats
- After handling garbage or garbage cans
- Before and after attending to a cut or wound

Information resource: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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A test of family endurance

A family deals with pandemic realities

By **Victor Fernandez**

Each day blends into the next these days. It's a frustrating and unnerving trend, even though the reason why we're living this way is clear, because none of us know what we will find when the end to this historic pandemic and economic crisis comes into focus.

My family, like hundreds of millions of others across the United States, are following mandatory stay-at-home orders issued by our states' respective governors because it's what we need to do to, hopefully, resume our normal daily lives one day soon. Until then, all we hear about is the new normal facing Americans moving forward, and we truly don't know what that will entail.

All we know right now is what's going on right now. And for my family, it means not knowing when our next paycheck will arrive. I have been on furlough from my primary job, and my wife has been laid off from hers, since both businesses were forced to close as part of

Governor Larry Hogan's shutdown order for nonessential businesses. We're not different from others who have been unemployed since the potentially deadly coronavirus reached our shores, both across the Eastern Shore and beyond.

Which is why I'm sharing my family's personal experience, to show that we're all not alone. We're all in it together, for good and bad.

It has been a perfect storm, so to speak, since cases of coronavirus, or COVID-19, began spreading like wildfire several weeks ago.

We started with three people in our Berlin home - my wife, 9-year-old son and me. Our youngest son was already preparing for life as an online student at home while our 24-year-old son was in town for a visit. Then his stay became indefinite, when he learned the restaurant where he works in

Michigan closed. Now, he's here with us wondering what will happen next for him in the job market.

Then our 20-year-old son, a sophomore at a college in West Virginia, learned his school would shut down, and he had to move off campus immediately. Now, there are five of us



From left to right: **Victor Fernandez**, **Zachary Fernandez** (youngest of the bunch), **Nicholas Helias** (in the gray T-shirt), **Anthony Helias** (in the black sweatshirt) and **Michelle Fernandez**.

in a three-bedroom apartment, and we're anxiously awaiting what will happen next.

My wife and I have filed for unemployment, like millions of others across the country. And like millions of others, we're trying to stay patient while waiting for our first unemployment funds to arrive, and wondering when the additional \$600 each week under the CARES Act will follow. I have spent more time looking inside our mailbox in the past few weeks than I have in a long time.

And although we understand that Maryland's Department of Labor has been inundated with unemployment claims since the pandemic arose, the nerves continue to intensify as we wait for those funds to arrive.

Meanwhile, I'm keeping a close eye on our bank accounts now more than

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Mary Beth Carozza**



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www.marybethcarozza.com

By Authority: Friends of Mary Beth Carozza. Pat Schrawder, Treasurer

Empathy and governing documents

Commentary by **Joe Reynolds**

These are troubling times. The threat of contracting COVID-19 hangs in the air like a thick fog, obscuring our vision for what until recently was the everyday pace of life in Ocean Pines and in the entire country. The Ocean Pines Association is making every effort to protect OPA employees and association members. The board is to be applauded for their efforts in this regard.

However, in the board's zeal to protect us it has also taken at least one action that it does not have the authority to take. The Ocean Pines Board voted 6-1 to extend the 2020 assessment deadline by 90 days, to August 1. Doing so will be a direct violation of the Declarations of Restrictions (DRs), and the board lacks the authority to change the Declaration of Restrictions.

The Declaration of Restrictions states: "Every such charge (assessment) so made shall be paid by the member to the Association on or before the first day of May of each year, for the ensuing year."

Rumors have circulated that the board believes the association's Charter gives them the ability to change the DRs payment date requirement. What the Charter actually does is require the board to enforce

the DRs, and the DRs can only be changed by a vote of association members in each individual section of Ocean Pines. The board does not have the authority to change the DRs.

Nor does the board have the authority to arbitrarily waive the interest on any assessments not paid prior to May 1. The DRs state: "If any such charge (assessment) shall not be paid when due, it shall bear interest from the date of delinquency at the rate set by the Board of Directors at an open Board meeting in February of each year." If the board allows its decision to stand, it will be in violation of our governing documents as of May 2.

Interestingly, if you desire to file as a candidate for the Board of Directors in the upcoming election then you must pay your assessment by May 15, not the extended August 1 deadline. If you wish to vote in the election you must pay by July 1. The board has sowed confusion.

Extending the deadline also brings economic damage to OPA, and this is perhaps why OPA Treasurer Larry Perrone voted against the 90-day extension. He favored a shorter 60-day extension. As a result of the extension, OPA is certain to lose three months of interest on possibly millions of dollars. The exact amount is not important. Point is, OPA will have less income as a result of this improper extension of the payment date.

The board's desire to accommodate members who may have financial issues is admirable, but that desire should not be allowed to violate the Declaration of Restrictions, a document that is, as a practical matter, our Constitution.

Some, perhaps many, may applaud the board's action. The board should indeed have compassion and empathy but only in those areas where it has the authority to do so.

OPA was asked to comment on this issue last week. There has been no response.



On this day in 1912, the British luxury passenger liner *Titanic* sank en route to New York City from Southampton, Hampshire, England, after striking an iceberg during its maiden voyage; some 1,500 people died.

BJ's membership offer returns to Ocean Pines

BJ's Wholesale Club is once again partnering with the Ocean Pines Association to bring a special membership offer, effective through April 24, to benefit the Worcester County Veterans Memorial at Ocean Pines Foundation.

In addition to offering special membership benefits, BJ's will donate \$5 of each membership fee to the foundation.

With this offer, new members receive a 12-month BJ's Inner Circle Membership for \$25 or a BJ's Perks Rewards Membership, which earns 2 percent cash back on most BJ's purchases, for \$50 with BJ's Easy Renewal.

Renewing members can purchase a 12-month Inner Circle Membership for

\$40 or a BJ's Perks Rewards Membership for \$80 with BJ's Easy Renewal. Renewing members will also receive one bonus month with the offer.

BJ's membership applications are available at the Ocean Pines Association Administration Building at 239 Ocean Parkway and online at OceanPines.org. Applications must be returned with payment by April 24. Check and credit card payments will be accepted.

Applications may be placed in the drop box in the administration building lobby or mailed to Ocean Pines Association, Attn: Josh Davis, 239 Ocean Parkway, Ocean Pines, MD 21811.

For more information, call (410) 641-7717.

e-learning
from page 1

make everyone's e-learning experience as streamline as possible.

With the closing lasting much longer than initially expected (MBS is part of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington and is currently not scheduled to reopen until May 18) teachers and faculty are doing their very best to continue to provide the same quality of education. As challenging as it is, students are doing their best. To continue with the school schedule, Manns airs morning announcements and prayers via a Facebook Live video each day at 9 a.m. It has proven effective in keeping school community connected.

The comforts of modern technology are helpful in keeping our tight-knit community together. MBS is using social media as another tool to connect through hosting virtual spirits weeks, featuring a teacher of the day and sharing other Facebook Live videos. Manns shares a bedtime story to engage younger students during our MBS Tuesday Tales segment and prays the Rosary weekly.

Manns, shared, "I am humbled by the devotion to Catholic education, the dedication to instruction and the compassion as to what is truly taking place around us that our teachers have shown. MBS has not missed a beat educating the mind, strengthening the body and nurturing the soul of our student."

There actually aren't "57 varieties" of Heinz ketchup, and never were. Company founder H.J. Heinz thought his product should have a number, and he liked 57.



Hint: Hit the glass bottle on the "57," not the bottom, to get the ketchup to flow.

-heinz.com

The Courier

Chip Bertino Publisher/Editor

Mary Adair Comptroller **Linda Knight** Advertising Representative

Contributing Writers

Dan Collins, Ron Fisher, Douglas Hemmick, Jean Marx
Robert B. Adair 1938-2007

P.O. Box 1326 Ocean Pines, MD 21811
410-629-5906

thecourier@delmarvacourier.com
www.delmarvacourier.com

I-M-A-G-I-N-A-T-I-O-N

It's been many years since our children were in grade school. And although I very much miss those times, there's just a little part of me that's

fossils, make mud castles (much to the chagrin of their mother) and, if the mood hits them, rake leaves. They also spend a lot of time calling their



It's All About. . .

By **Chip Bertino**

chipbertino@delmarvacourier.com

grandparents, especially my granddaughter who just loves to talk and talk and talk. She's quite the conversationalist, sometimes going into great detail about what she did the day before or what her brother did to get in trouble.

thankful they're not in grade school now. I tip my hat to the many, many parents who have had their children home for many weeks so far, and more weeks to come. I admire all of you greatly. Also, the teachers and administrators of our local schools deserve much gratitude. They are going above and beyond the call of duty to stay connected with students and ensure children are educated. Awesome!



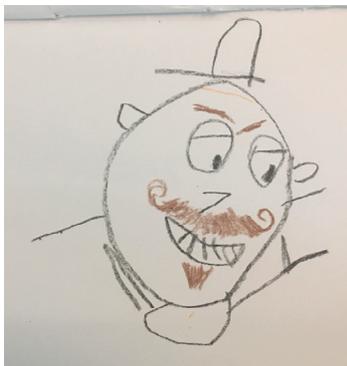
My daughter is home with her children, making sure they do their assigned school work and getting them connected via Zoom so they can have face time with their teachers and classmates. But there's also a lot of down time especially because after school activities have been cancelled. My daughter and son-in-law limit the amount of television the kids watch and video games have never

ble. She told my wife the other day that she's looking forward to when this

is all over so she can give my wife a hug. My wife teared up on that one.

My grandson has taken up drawing. Not only does he draw characters, he also gives them backstories. For instance, there's "Pony Bologna Ben" who'll steal your horse and your deli meats too. Another character is "An Italian Man Named Luigi."

As I write this it's anyone's guess when life will return to normal or some near facsimile. I do hope that once this is behind us, my grandchildren continue to let their imaginations guide them.



Pony Bologna Ben

found their way into their home. So, in the absence of electronic distractions, the kids, ages eight and five, rely on their imaginations to get them through endless days.

The kids have a wide range of inventory to work with such as Play Dough, crayons, paper, K'nex, Legos, Hot Wheels, blocks, cards, board games and books. And then there's the backyard where they can search for



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Unsung heroes of Ocean Pines Public Works

What does Ocean Pines Public Works do? The answer is a little bit of everything.

Public Works helps build and maintain Ocean Pines, from the buildings themselves, to the roads, bulkheads, ditches, and all the little things in between.

They keep the roads clear when it snows, and the amenities cool during the summer. They do visible things during major construction or maintenance projects, and they do behind-the-scenes things like keep the pools clean or build shelves inside the new Craft Club building.

While virtually everyone at Public Works covers a lot of ground, three employees were singled out as particularly prominent members of the team:

Justin Riner Drainage

Justin Riner is a Berlin native, a local guy, who started with Public Works in 2002 and specializes in drainage.

Riner largely learned on the job,

starting with how to install new pipes. He was initially surprised by the many infrastructure issues in a community that's now more than 50 years old.



Justin Riner

"If you shoot the grades and put them on a map, [the drainage pipes] look like a rollercoaster," Riner said. "A lot of them really weren't kept track of when they were building Ocean Pines. Some people just set them

in the ground, covered them up, and that was it."

He said many pipes rusted or were otherwise damaged by age, or the root systems of nearby trees. Some need to be replaced, while others must be flushed out.

Public Works uses a hydro jetter to clear pipes, a machine with a hose that will put itself through a pipe and jet out water behind to break up any material lodged inside.

When flushing doesn't work, Public Works will look at replacing smaller pipes with larger. Four or five years ago, Riner said Public Works replaced a small, failing pipe near Pinehurst Road with a larger one that helped reduce flooding by 80 percent in an area of more than 100 homes.

"That was just one pipe under the road," he said, adding of the new one, "It clogs less because it's a wider pipe and it just takes more water. It's amazing how much difference it can make."

Along with the drainage pipes, there are roughly 180 miles of roadside ditches in Ocean Pines that need to be kept clean – a herculean task for a small crew of six.

Riner said Public Works' approach to drainage improvements is, "one thing at a time."

"We're a small crew. We have work orders and people call in, and we have

[larger] projects we know we're doing to try to improve other areas," he said. "Any time it's dry and there are leaves in a ditch, the first you do is get in there and blow them all out, try to keep them clean. Everything bottle-necks from the main areas, and one little problem just spoils everybody."

Riner said the biggest issue with drainage is the natural terrain: 8,452 homes can put a lot of stress on a small, coastal area. When the community was built, trees and grass were taken out and roads and homes put in, and that added a lot of hard surfaces to the topography.

As Riner puts it, "The water still has to go somewhere."

Recently, Riner has contributed to meetings focused on drainage improvements with state and local officials. Ocean Pines, for the first time, is pursuing a major State of Maryland grant for a drainage project that could bring \$1.5 million in aid.

Along with money for new infrastructure, Riner said Ocean Pines could use more labor to address all the problems.

"Time is the biggest thing," he said. "We've got just six guys on drainage."

He said the general public can help, simply by keeping their ditches clean.

"If you have a neighbor who rents and doesn't do anything, if you're able to, try and keep [the ditches] somewhat open. Keep everything clear of the pipes," he said. "Some people don't know how much that helps – it only takes one stick to get crossways in a pipe and then it just builds up leaves, and you don't know [how bad the problem is] until it starts raining."

Among the stranger things Riner has seen are people who intentionally block pipes, jamming everything from firewood to basketballs in them. In ditches, especially along Route 90, he's seen everything from Christmas trees piled high to old bicycles.

"There's things that we shouldn't have to continually do, but some people just don't care," he said. "They know, if they blow their leaves in the ditch, we'll eventually have to come get them and they won't have to worry about them. That's one of the biggest things."

Others have tried to put screens over drainage pipes, to try and keep the leaves out.

"When it rains, all that does is just

block everything up," Riner said. "We see that a lot. Mainly, people just need to keep them clear. When it comes to drainage it's fairly simple: water runs downhill and keeping the pipes clear is our biggest thing."

Riner said the job can be gratifying, however, especially when the people recognize all the work his small crew puts in.

"Sometimes people come out and actually thank you and say they appreciate it – while others just stare out the window to make sure you get it done," he said with a laugh. "But, in the past four or five years, we've gotten a lot more 'thanks' than we had in the past."

Clint Parks General Maintenance

In 23 years with Ocean Pines Public Works, Clint Parks has done a little bit of everything, from building and maintenance, to pool care, to keeping records of the community's 83 miles of roads and more than 300 miles of drainage pipes.



Clint Parks

Originally from Gambrills, Maryland, Parks spent summers during

high school working in Ocean City. He graduated from a vocational/technical school in Camp Springs in 1981 with a welding certification and for about 16 years worked as a skilled laborer in Ocean City.

In 1990, Parks bought a lot in Ocean Pines and built his own house. He was long familiar with the community – his mother-in-law, June Gmann, worked for 22 years as a bookkeeper for Boise Cascade and later Ocean Pines, and she helped train many long-time Ocean Pines Finance Department workers, including former controller Art Carmine and current Accounts Payable Supervisor Geraldine Tate.

In 1997, his neighbor mentioned a carpentry position in Ocean Pines that included health care benefits, something he didn't yet have.

Public Works was expanding at the time, because much of the original Boise Cascade infrastructure needed repairs. His first job was to install "a whole new front end and glass display

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heroes

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whole new front end and glass display window for the arts and crafts building,” he said.

Parks’ carpentry experience came in handy, as he worked with then Public Works Director Eddie Miller on “re-vamping and fixing a lot of termite [infested] and rotten stuff that had gotten away from the daily maintenance,” he said. More recently, he helped renovate the Beach Club bathrooms.

Parks also has the responsibility of maintaining Ocean Pines’ five swimming pools. He works with Aquatics Manager Kathleen Cook to open and close the pools each spring and fall, and to keep them clean and running during the busy seasons. The State of Maryland recently used Ocean Pines’ Sports Core Pool as a training model for state inspectors, which Parks credited to lofty standards of safety and cleanliness.

“Our pools are 100% safe,” he said. “You’ve got 90-year-old great-grandparents bobbing up and down in the pools with their great grandkids that are infants – 9 and 10 months old. The water quality has got to be correct – it can’t be the YMCA.”

About six years ago, Wells asked Parks to also become the Association’s road inspector. Each year, Parks personally inspects 83 miles of roads, using Maryland state guidelines to compile data. If stretched out in a line, he said Ocean Pines’ roads roughly equal the distance from here to Annapolis.

“I come up with an evaluation of the roads and what needs to be paved per year, on our budget,” he said. “It’s 12 different things that you’re looking at, as you’re traveling each road.”

More recently, Wells assigned Parks to map out Ocean Pines drainage pipes. Parks has yet to cover The Point and Parke communities, but has so far found more than 300 miles of pipeline. That data should help in future drainage improvement projects, he said.

Parks has also contributed across many other areas. He’s worked with Assistant Public Works Director Nobie Violante on bulkhead projects, overseen groundskeeping of Ocean Pines sports fields for the Recreation Department, and even plowed roads during heavy snowstorms.

“There’s not much I haven’t done here,” he said. “I don’t think I’ve ever

carried a gun and driven a police car, but other than that ...”

In his 23 years on the job, Parks said he’s watched the community just about double in size. New pools went in the ground, a new Yacht Club opened, and soon he’ll witness the opening of the new Golf clubhouse.

“Working for Public Works, we work for all of Ocean Pines,” he said. “Any time anybody in any department needs something, they always call Public Works because we can pretty much do anything and everything – and we have.

“We have a pretty good crew, and it’s the only Public Works, I think, in the country that does a whole lot more than just Public Works projects,” he added.

Butch Kennedy Facilities Maintenance

Butch Kennedy grew up on the Western Shore of Maryland and ran a mechanical business there for four decades, specializing in refrigeration and air conditioning. When he was 55, he sold the business and moved to Ocean Pines.



Butch Kennedy

“I found out that I was too young to retire, so there was an advertisement here for a refrigeration man,” he said. “That was about 17 years ago, and I just started taking care of all the mechanical [work]: refrigeration, ice machines, air conditioning, heating, and some plumbing too.”

Kennedy now runs the maintenance department, along with personally making the rounds to fix whatever is needed.

“With Kevin [Goldberg], the electrician, and Ed [Miller], the other carpenter, we kind of have our threesome as the service department,” he said. “I do that and take care of all the tickets and work orders, and then I still do the refrigeration.”

During the last year or so, Kennedy has also used his engineering background to help with new construction projects, including the new Golf building and Police station expansion.

“I’ve always got something going on,” he said. “It’s never slow here.”

In 17 years, Kennedy said he’s “been through three different softwares,” most recently having to learn all about the new Northstar systems.

He refers to himself as an “old school” guy who prefers hands-on work, but he also said technology is vital to doing today’s tasks.

“You’ve gotta have this technology,” he said. “All the young people, this is all they know. It’s an interesting place sometimes.”

Kennedy said the biggest benefit of having a diverse Public Works Department – rather than hire dozens of smaller contractors – is the fast response time.

“The next biggest thing is the cost,” he said. “Unfortunately, in the trades we deal with – electrical, plumbing, refrigeration, air conditioning – there’s not really many educated servicepeople out there. The older ones are, but if you’re looking for somebody young to take over, you’re not going to find it.

“As it is right now, it’s a huge advantage to having a Public Works Department. If we have an issue, we’re there right away. If you call another company, ‘We’ll get there maybe tomorrow or maybe the next day,’” Kennedy added.

He also said most people don’t have a good grasp of how much Public Works does, and that even previous upper management in Ocean Pines “didn’t always know what we did.”

“They didn’t understand the knowledge that we bring here. We’ve been in these trades for a long time and you’re not finding that in today’s life,” he said. “You get a lot better response [from in-house Public Works], and it’s a more honest response.”

To put it simply, they know how the place works.

“We do,” he said. “There’s things here, if you brought in somebody else, they’d have no clue. That’s a huge plus.”

Kennedy said there’s a huge difference between the Public Works Department today and the one he came into, 17 years ago.

“I’ve seen a lot of things here,” he said. “I’ve seen a lot of changes that weren’t so good, and we went back to our old ways. Ocean Pines is a wonderful place, because it has a lot of amenities. It’s a great place to live. You’ve got a great Fire Department and Police Department, and when people come to my house that have never been here they say, ‘I can’t believe how clean it is here.’”

Back when he was living in Ocean Pines only part time, Kennedy remembers coming there once during a heavy snowstorm.

“It snowed bad, and we came off [Route] 90 and there was snow all over [Route] 589, and then as soon as we pulled into Ocean Pines the roads were completely clear. It was amazing, but it’s always been that way,” he said.

“It makes you feel good to be involved in this, and you want to help make the place better and keep it good for the people, because it’s a nice place. It’s not all about the money or anything but just doing your job and keeping it a pleasant place to live. That’s the way I kind of look at it,” he added.

Primary election primarily by mail

By **Victor Fernandes**

Ed Rodier prefers the traditional approach to the election process, where voters stand in line together for the opportunity to affect change within their community and across the country. But tradition goes out the window when voters are stuck indoors at home.

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan has chosen to mail it in - literally - for the statewide primary that was moved from April 28 to June 2 due to the ongoing COVID-19, or coronavirus, pandemic, and now will be held primarily by mail. Hogan unveiled the change in voting format during a news conference in Annapolis last Friday. The new plan impacts nearly 42,000 registered voters in Worcester County, and reportedly more than 4 million voters across the state.

As chairman of the Worcester County Election Commission, Rodier oversees board members who last week reached a consensus in support of voting by mail in an election headlined by the state’s Presidential primary. Former Vice President and United States Senator Joe Biden, of Delaware, has been the lone candidate on the Democratic ballot since last Wednesday, when Sen. Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, withdrew from the race. The primary reportedly also includes nominations for the state’s eight seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The 1st Congressional District includes Worcester County and other counties in the Lower Shore.

please see **mail** on page 9

mail
from page 8

“The traditionalists, and I’m one of them, like face-to-face voting,” Rodier said. “But in today’s time and place, that’s a ridiculous thing to do, to drag all those people out (to vote in person). I wouldn’t say there is anyone (on the board) voting against (casting ballots by mail). Everyone has expressed an opinion, but I think we all recognize the criticality of the times.”

A day for in-person voting remains possible, Rodier said, and it will be held in Worcester County if approved statewide. But county board members are concerned about the health and well-being of voters potentially being compromised during this pandemic.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases approached 8,000 statewide last weekend, according to Maryland’s Department of Health, with 19 in Worcester County. None of the 200-plus statewide deaths are from the county. “Free and fair elections are the very foundation of American democracy, and our ultimate goal must be to do everything possible to ensure the voice of every Marylander is heard in a safe and secure manner,” Gov. Hogan told media members during last week’s news conference.

The majority of the approximately 330 local volunteers used in past elections, Rodier said, are at least 60 years old. Older people are considered especially susceptible to the coronavirus, along with people suffering from pre-existing health conditions.

“We’re not in favor,” Rodier said of in-person voting. “We’re going to

do it if that’s what the ruling is. We’re soldiers. We’re marching on. But I think we would prefer not to have that. It’s just a reduction of the problem. It’s not an elimination of it.” Rodier pointed to issues election officials in Wisconsin faced last week while holding in-person voting. “If you look at the Wisconsin fiasco, where you had people six feet apart and wrapped around the block,” he said, “that didn’t make any sense either.”

The Worcester County Election Commission faces a potential logistical nightmare with in-person voting, he said, because its initial polling sites, Gull Creek Senior Living in Berlin and Worcester County Government Center in Snow Hill, have been deemed off limits since the pandemic arose to

safeguard residents at the nursing home as well as law enforcement and emergency personnel.

“If we have to go face to face (with voting),” Rodier said, “we’d have to start all over again.”

Reports indicate voters could receive ballots in the mail by the end of April. Ballots can be returned in the provided self-addressed stamped envelopes, or dropped into voting boxes that will be monitored daily. Locations in Worcester County remain undetermined, Rodier said, but the Election Commission’s office in Snow Hill likely would be used as one of two sites.

Board members prefer having another location in Ocean Pines or Berlin, Rodier said, “because that’s where the preponderance of the

voters are.” He said election officials could use a fire department, police department or library parking lot.

“Anywhere where there is parking and access to the mailbox would certainly be acceptable,” he said.

Rodier said voter turnout in June could be low with Sanders out of the race. “I’m no prognosticator of the future,” he said, “but it’s almost a foregone conclusion that Joe (Biden) will be the candidate. I have not seen a ballot, but that’s normally the case.”

Yet, conducting an election by mail is the right choice. “All in all,” Rodier said, “it’s probably a really good idea right now.”



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'Compound Group' donates food to first responders

A group of about 40 Ocean Pines residents last week took up a collection to buy family meals from the Yacht Club for local police, fire and EMS personnel.

Organizers said it's their way of showing support for those on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The collective, affectionately known as the "Compound Group," formed about two years ago, according to George Ball.

"It's just about 40 of us in our neighborhood that hangout and socialize at the Yacht Club and do a lot of things together," he said. "We're year-round supporters of the Yacht Club and are all within walking distance, and we all really enjoy it there."

Ball said several members of the Compound Group talked about doing a cookout to send food to local doctors and nurses. When they learned about

*please see **donation** on page 14*

capt. ron
from page 10

still use frozen shiners but will put two on a hook with a squid strip. If you are using frozen shiners hook them through the eyes. Another option is strip bait. This time of year it can be a fillet of a blue fish, sea robin, or flounder belly cut into strips 3-4 inches long. Taper the strip bait so it moves well through the water. Another hot bait is 5" Pearl White Swimming Mullet Gulp dressed with a frozen shiner or live minnow.

What kind of rig should you use? There are many options for rigs but the following are what I prefer. A simple rig of a 4 foot 20 or 30lb. test leader with a three-way swivel at the top to which is attached a 2oz or 3oz bank sinker depending on how fast the tide is moving. At the terminal end use a single wide gap hook dressed with two beads of red or chartreuse. To this hook attach either the smelt, minnow, frozen shiner or strip bait along with a strip of squid or if fishing the Swimming Mullet eliminate the beads. Another option is a plain leader to which is attached a 2oz or 3oz bucktail. Dress this hook preferably with strip bait described earlier. These are attached to a 4ft. 20 or 30lb. test leader with a three-way swivel and 2 or 3oz bank sinker. This time of year, the Chartreuse and the pink work well. I will dress these with frozen shiners and a squid strip.

Where should you fish? In the South bay from Buoy 6-12, From the Rte. 50 bridge along the bulkhead past the Coast Guard Station to the fishing pier, the inlet along the south jetty and on the inlet side of the West O.C. Harbor, The East Channel Buoy 8 to 14 and along the shallows at Bird Island, At Harbor Island along the hard shoal,

along the bulkhead where the townhouses jut out and from the townhouses to the 9th st. fishing pier, In the Thoroughfare, work just above the bend up against the marsh and drift from 4' of water to the drop off at 25' at the bend, and in the North Bay from Buoy Marker #14 at the convention center. Drift inside the channel markers to keep clear of the boat traffic.

Keep well and when this emergency is over, remember to take a kid fishing,
Capt. Ron

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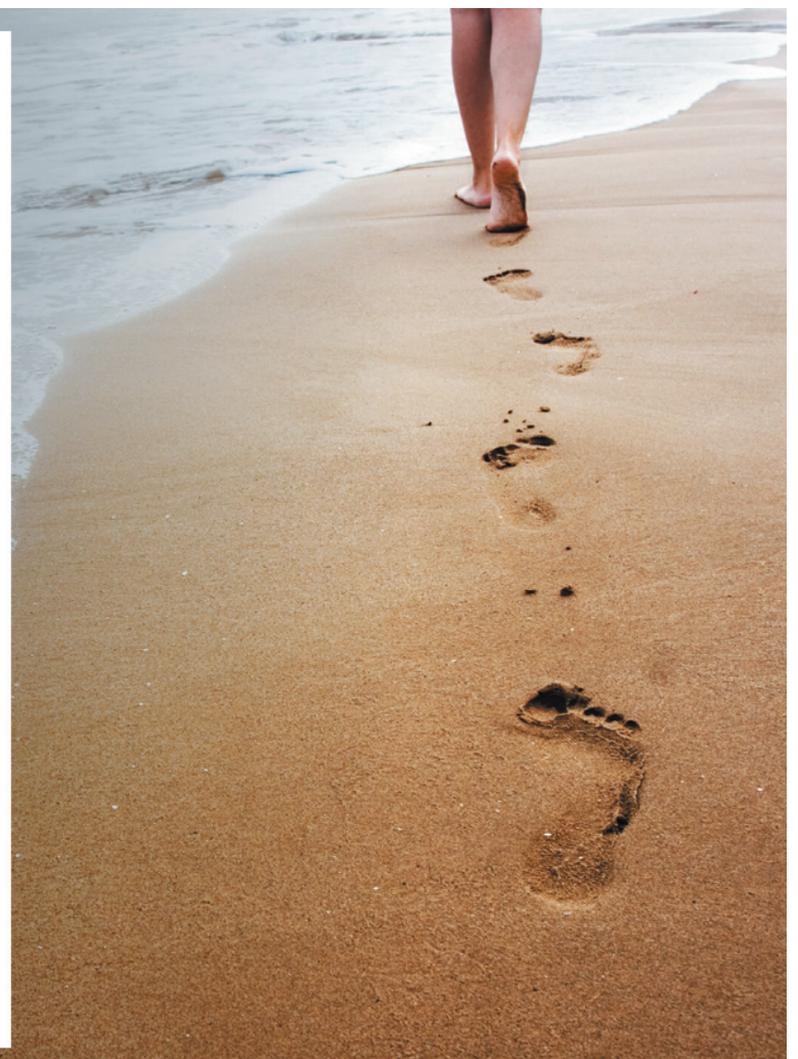
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Amazing benefits to seniors having pets

Pets bring much joy to the lives they touch. So, it should come as no surprise that the 2019-2020 National Pet Owners Survey, which was conducted by the American Pet Products Association, found that about 85 million families in the United States own a pet.

Pets offer companionship and un-

conditional love. While they are fitting for any family, seniors may find that having a pet is especially beneficial. The organization A Place for Mom, which helps match families with senior living residences, says pets provide a comfort system that produces measurable health results. Caring for pets and being around

them can produce a chemical chain reaction in the brain that may help to lower stress hormones while also increasing production of the feel-good hormone serotonin.

This is not the only health benefit pets may provide. A recent study from the Mayo Clinic, which looked at 1,800 people between the ages of 25 and 64 who had healthy hearts, found that almost half owned a dog. Having a dog was likely to spur heart-healthy behaviors, like exercising with the pet, eating well and having ideal blood sugar levels.

Pets also provide emotional support and companionship that can help seniors, including those who may be divorced or widowed, feel more secure and happy. The National Poll on Healthy Aging found that, among respondents who had pets, 88 percent said their pets helped them enjoy life, and 86 percent said their pets made them feel loved. Seniors considering getting a pet can explore the many benefits to doing so.

Reduce pain: A 2012 study published in Pain Magazine found therapy dogs provided “significant reduction in pain and emotional distress for chronic pain patients.”

Feeling of purpose: Caring for an animal not only stimulates physical activity, but it also can give seniors a reason to get up and go, which equates to a feeling

of purpose.

Altered focus: Having a pet can help



seniors focus on something other than physical or mental health issues and preoccupations about loss or aging, according to New York-based psychologist Penny B. Donnenfeld.

Increased physical activity: Pets require care, and that interaction can get seniors moving more than if they didn't have a pet.

Improved health: Ongoing research from Harvard Medical School has found dog owners have lower blood pressure, healthier cholesterol levels and lower risk of heart disease than those who don't own a dog.

Stick to routine: Caring for pets helps seniors maintain a routine. Having structure after retirement can be important to ward off risk of depression. Staying on top of feeding, grooming and other pet needs also can help prevent cognitive decline.

Pets bring many benefits to their owners' lives, and they may be the perfect remedy for seniors looking for a friend and purpose.

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Guess Who?

I am a singer born in Utah on April 12, 1987. In school I was bullied for being hyperactive, but don't panic. Later that trait would suit my career as a lead singer of a pop rock band that is highly successful today.

Answer: Brandon Urie

Common warning signs of arthritis

Arthritis has name recognition, even among people who are not suffering from it. But despite that recognition, arthritis is not as well understood as one might think.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, arthritis is not a single disease, but rather an informal way of referring to joint pain or joint disease. In fact, the term arthritis is so wide-ranging that it actually refers to more than 100 types of conditions.

Despite that complexity, arthritis often produces four important warning signs, regardless of which type of arthritis a person may have.

1. Pain. The Arthritis Foundation notes that arthritis-related pain may be constant or intermittent. One common misconception about arthritis pain is that it only occurs during or shortly after a body is at rest. However, arthritis-related pain can occur while the body is at rest and is not always triggered by an activity that incorporates a part of the body affected by arthritis. In addition, pain from arthritis can be isolated to one area of the body or affect various parts of the body.

2. Swelling. Skin over the joints af-



ected by arthritis may become red and swollen. This skin also may feel warm to the touch. The Arthritis Foundation advises anyone who experiences this swelling for three days or longer or more than three times per month to contact a physician.

3. Stiffness. This warning sign is, along with pain, the one that is most often associated with arthritis, even by people who do not suffer from the condition. Stiffness when waking up in the morning or after long periods of being sedentary, such as sitting at a desk during the workday or taking a long car ride, can be symptomatic of arthritis, especially if the stiffness lasts an hour or longer.

4. Difficulty moving a joint. The Arthritis Foundation notes that people should not experience difficulty moving, such as when getting out of bed. People who experience such difficulty may have arthritis.

People who recognize any of these warning signs should report them to their physicians immediately. Be as specific as possible when describing these symptoms, as specificity can help physicians design the most effective course of treatment.

Tracing your genealogy

The internet has put more information into our hands than generations past may have ever believed possible. One of the more unique ways the internet has opened doors is by providing a relatively easy way for men and women to trace their family histories. Once difficult to gather, information with regard to genealogy is now just a click away.

Tracing one's genealogy has become a popular pastime and one that is much more manageable thanks to the bevy of family tree and family lineage websites. Such sites work by gathering some key information, including the names and birthdays of certain relatives. The sites then use this data to create a more complete picture of family relations. On the popular genealogy site Ancestry.com, for example, suggestions pop up with a potential relative's name or further information about a loved one, which can then populate the family tree even further.

In addition to knowing just who is in a family, tracing genealogy also can present a bigger picture of relatives' occupations and military history, and may even

shed light on their travel histories. Family tree sites can be enhanced by uploading images, census data, immigration records, and even more documents that would be otherwise buried in photo albums or memory keepsakes.

Taking family genealogy, a step further, many people are opting to couple their family history quests with DNA testing. Companies such as 23andMe can use a saliva sample to help pinpoint potential geographic roots. These findings can include an estimate on ethnicity, going as far as breaking down the percentage of ethnicity from certain regions of the world. Further testing may include the ability to learn about other relatives who are linked through these DNA matches.

Family genealogy websites can provide fascinating windows into our family histories. People who are unsure of their ethnicity, those who were adopted, or anyone who is just curious about how their families began can find a wealth of interesting information in relatively little time.

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Investing in volatile markets

Presented by **Mark E. Engberg**, CFP

Periods of volatility, like the one we are in now, can often be a wake-up call for investors to make sure their portfolio is adequately diversified based on goals and risk tolerance. While every investor is different, those who are focused on long-term goals shouldn't let short-term movement sway their decisions, while investors who are nearing or in retirement may need to add defensive assets, such as cash or U.S. Treasury securities, for stability. No matter your situation, it's important to stay true to your financial plan and make decisions based on your personal goals and timetable, regardless of market volatility.

Navigating through rocky markets can be tough, but following practiced and proven investing principles might help you stay the course. Here are a few to consider:

Diversify your portfolio

Portfolios that are highly concentrated in just a few securities can be very risky. Having money spread across different asset classes (or types of investments such as stocks, bonds and cash equivalents) is important because each can respond to the market differently. It's not always the case, but when one is up, the others can be down. Deciding on the right mix can help cushion the blow during volatile markets. Here are a few quick questions to ask yourself:

-Does your portfolio's success depend too heavily on the performance of any single investment?

-Are your holdings especially concentrated on a single industry, sector or country?

-Are you less diversified than you think because different funds in your portfolio hold many of the same securities?

Determine your risk profile

Investing involves taking risks, and you have to be honest about how much risk you're willing to take with your money. Determining your risk tolerance informs how you should diversify your investment portfolio between stocks, bonds and cash equivalents. Higher potential rewards generally come from higher risks. Start with some simple questions:

-Do you need your portfolio to generate income now or in the near future?

-Can you tolerate fluctuations in the value of your investments, financially and emotionally?

Take the long view

In times of dramatic market volatility, each fluctuation may seem disastrous. However, emotional reactions to short-term market conditions can put you at risk for further financial loss. Markets typically go up and down, and even bear markets historically have been relatively short. According to the Schwab Center for Financial Research, the longest bear market was a little less than three years (915 days), and it was followed by a nearly five-year bull run.

Timing the market's ups and downs is nearly impossible – instead, focus on staying diversified, know your risk tolerance and stick to your plan during tough times. For long-term investors, which are most of us, the strategy should be time in the market rather than timing the market.

Remember to use periods of market volatility to make sure your investments are diversified and take your risk tolerance into account. Finally, if you don't have a financial plan, now is a good time to create one.

Mark E. Engberg, CFP® is a Charles Schwab Independent Branch Leader, located in Rehoboth Beach, DE. Mark is an Eastern Shore native and has 20 years of experience helping clients achieve their financial goals. He can be reached at 302-260-8731 or www.schwab.com/rehobothbeach.

Investing involves risk including loss of principal. Diversification strategies do not ensure a profit and do not protect against losses in declining markets.

The information here is for general informational purposes only and should not be considered an individualized recommendation or personalized investment advice. The type of securities and investment strategies mentioned may not be suitable for everyone. Each investor needs to review an investment strategy for his or her own particular situation before making any investment decision.

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Flags for Heroes to honor veterans, those affected by COVID-19

Along with honoring local veterans, the annual Flags for Heroes display this year will also highlight those on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A dedication ceremony planned for May 16 was canceled, but the patriotic display of several hundred flags in the field between Route 589 and the Worcester County Veterans Memorial at Ocean Pines will still go up as planned.

"We decided that we want to go ahead with the project, because we feel people need it at this very difficult and scary time," Worcester County Veterans Memorial Foundation President Marie Gilmore said. "It seems to me that this project is a perfect opportunity to thank and honor the medical professionals, police, EMTs, firefighters and teachers in our community."

Each year, flags are placed in honor of local heroes, including servicemen and women, first responders, teachers, family members, doctors and hospital workers, or anyone who has been an

inspiration.

Flag sponsorships are \$50, and flags will be on display from Armed Forces Day, May 16, through Flag Day on June 14.

Gilmore said volunteers would place the flags while following the rules of social distancing.

The project is co-sponsored by Rotary Club of Ocean City/Berlin and Worcester County Veterans Memorial Foundation.

"We hope this will be a positive reminder that, even in such an unprecedented and frightening time, there are so many people in our community who inspire us each day," Gilmore said.

For sponsorship forms, visit www.opvets.org/events/flags-for-heroes-2020. The Memorial Foundation is also seeking corporate sponsors, with sponsorship levels ranging from \$250 to \$2,000.

For more information, contact Cliff Berg at 302-540-2127 or email cliff0917@aol.com.

donation

from page 11

restrictions on delivering food to hospitals, Ocean Pines Board member Tom Janasek suggested instead sending Yacht Club family meals to members of the Ocean Pines Police and Fire/EMS departments.

First responders received food deliveries last Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and Ball said that would continue through this week.

"They're out there every day with this virus that's going on, so we thought it was a good idea to show our support," he said.

Ocean Pines Police Chief David Massey said the gesture has been great for morale, especially during this challenging time.

"We really appreciate the contribution," Massey said. "The first responders put themselves in harm's way, and we appreciate the all support that we get from the community."

Ball said the idea to host a big cookout to help local doctors and nurses, as well as first responders, is still on the table.

"After all this mess is cleared up, we may put something together and all hold a cookout so they can grab something and go," he said. "We appreciate everything our nurses and doctors and first responders are doing for us, and we want everyone to stay healthy."

Until then, Ball said he and the rest of the Compound Group would continue to support the Ocean Pines Yacht Club, which is open for delivery and carryout each Wednesday through Sunday. He thanked Matt Ortt and Ralph DeAngelus who run the Yacht Club, as well as restaurant staff, for helping the group in their efforts to give back.

"We love what the Yacht Club are doing and think it's a great idea, but we're also ready for them to get back to normal operations," he said. "We'll get through this – sooner than later, hopefully."

Janasek added a note about the giving nature of the Compound Group.

"These are some of the most generous people in the Pines," he said. "They've given jobs to some laid-off employees and they are the primary reason the Yacht Club can open in the winter."

Delivery and carryout orders at the Ocean Pines Yacht Club are taken beginning at 3:30 p.m. each Wednesday through Sunday by calling 410-641-7501, or ordering online at <http://toasttab.com/ocean-pines-yacht-club>. A special menu for delivery and carryout service is available at www.opyachtclub.com/restaurant-menu.

family
from page 3

ever, which speaks volumes about someone who's as meticulous about managing money as I am. It's still early in this ongoing situation, so nerves haven't reached a critical stage.

But it's a difficult position for all of us to be in, to see the savings you have built up over the years slowly dwindle away because there isn't any job-related income coming in, and much-

needed employment pay still hasn't arrived. So, we wait like everyone else.

Then there's the truly personal side of this pandemic. I have family and close friends who live in and around the coronavirus hotspots in the New York City area. My parents are in their 70s, and they have pre-existing health conditions that frighten and worry me every time they leave home to purchase food at the grocery store and medicine at the pharmacy.

Thankfully, they have been able to dodge the virus so far. I have a close friend who contracted the coronavirus, and spent two weeks wondering if he passed it on to his wife and two kids. Thankfully, he's feeling better. A lifelong friend was tested for the virus after falling ill. Thankfully, he tested negative. Then there's all of us here at home waiting for the stay-at-home order to be lifted.

We all feel well. But every cough or sniffle that we often attribute to allergies or simply feeling tired and run down has us pondering the worst, even if just for a moment. You have a lot of

time to let your mind wander when you're stuck inside for most of each day.

Still, we also have plenty of time to reconnect as a family. We have enjoyed more movie nights in the past few weeks than we have in the past several years because our individual lives have taken us from all under one roof to new jobs, homes and schools in three separate states. We celebrated our son's 24th birthday last week with a cake from one of the few ice cream shops still open.

We also have enjoyed a moment or two here and there outside to remember what we have been missing these past few weeks. My family and I moved to Worcester County to, among other reasons, enjoy everything the beautiful Eastern Shore has to offer.

But these aren't normal days around the Eastern Shore. These past few weeks have seemed like one extremely long day with no immediate end in sight. But my family knows we're not alone. That makes this unprecedented time in our lives a bit easier to handle.



Tides for Ocean City Inlet			
Day	High /Low	Tide Time	Sunrise Sunset
Th 16	High	3:55 AM	6:22 AM
	Low	10:16 AM	7:38 PM
	High	4:25 PM	
	Low	10:13 PM	
F 17	High	4:58 AM	6:21 AM
	Low	11:12 AM	7:39 PM
	High	5:21 PM	
	Low	11:13 PM	
Sa 18	High	5:49 AM	6:19 AM
	Low	11:58 AM	7:40 PM
	High	6:07 PM	
Su 19	Low	12:06 AM	6:18 AM
	High	6:32 AM	7:41 PM
	Low	12:35 PM	
	High	6:47 PM	
M 20	Low	12:51 AM	6:17 AM
	High	7:10 AM	7:42 PM
	Low	1:09 PM	
	High	7:25 PM	
Tu 21	Low	1:31 AM	6:15 AM
	High	7:48 AM	7:43 PM
	Low	1:42 PM	
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W 22	Low	2:09 AM	6:14 AM
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