



Report of March 15, 2021

As always, the #1 Health & Wellness Issue is the pandemic. While there have been some major/positive developments over the past month, we are not close to being out of the woods just yet and extreme caution still needs to be taken.

- **Adult Vaccinations** – Johnson & Johnson has received emergency approval on their “one & done” vaccine and has announced a partnership with Merck to expediate production. Based on the addition of this third major supplier, more vaccination sites have been opened (including some local pharmacies like CVS), eligibility is starting to be expanded (President Biden is calling for all adults to be eligible for vaccination no later than May 1st) and restrictions are slowly starting to be lifted (after April 1st, domestic visitors to New York State will no longer need to quarantine, restaurants can now open to a greater capacity, etc.).
- **Children’s Vaccines** – There are currently no vaccinations available for those under 16 years old (a correction from last month’s report which said 18). A recent report indicated that it will probably be several more months before such a vaccine is approved and ready for mass distribution. In all probability we are looking at the first quarter of 2022. There is a possibility that an adolescent vaccine (12-15 yr. old) may be made available later this year, but that is still not 100% certain depending on the results of the clinical trials still being conducted.
- **Effect on Our Schools** – Based on the aforementioned, there is no reason that all teachers, administrators and support staff shouldn’t be fully vaccinated prior to September, which should make 2021-22 significantly better than the current school year. Also, since most High School Juniors & Seniors will have access to vaccinations, there should be fewer of the “super spreader social events” that we have experienced this past year. However, based on the progress of the development of the adolescent/children’s vaccines, we are most likely looking at the 2022-23 school year before things are pretty much “back to normal.”
- **Substance Abuse Issues** – A coalition of groups that provide addiction services on Long Island will receive about \$5.7 million dollars in federal funding it was announced last week. The money is coming via the state Office of Addiction Services & Supports to administer prevention, treatment and recovery programs from the federal government’s State Opioid Response Grant. This is great news as there has been an uptick in adolescent drug use since the start of the pandemic, a year ago this month.
- **Legalization of Recreational Marijuana** – While we received assurances from our State Senators & Assembly members representing Suffolk County in Albany that they would vote against the legalization of recreational marijuana, the passage of this legislation is still a very distinct possibility, as opposition is not quite as strong in other parts of the state and it appears that our lawmakers in the State Capitol are on the verge of making an agreement on legalization and could vote on this issue as early as this coming week. Unfortunately, the holdup has been not so much opposition to legalization, but how to allocate the tax revenue generated by marijuana sales.

Should anyone have any questions regarding this month’s report, please don’t hesitate to contact me via email at: gerardbringmann@gmail.com

Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann

