



Report of October 20, 2020

With the #1 Health & Wellness Issue on everyone's minds being the pandemic and what's being done to keep staff & students safe, I'd like to start the report with two items that were sent to me by the Governor's Suffolk County Representative (Theresa Santoro) this past month:

- **The Covid-19 App** – on October 1st, New York State launched “Covid Alert NY”, the official Exposure Notification App created by the Department of Health in partnership with Google & Apple. This is a free smartphone app for anyone 18 yrs or older that lives or works in New York. The app notifies users if they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 and will encourage users to contact their physicians or the State Health Department to get more information about quarantining or testing. According to the State, anyone who downloads the app does not have to worry about being tracked, identified or having their personal information shared. This app got quite a bit of attention in the media, but I would be happy to share the email that was received with anyone who requests it.
- **The PreK-12 Toolkit** – In late September, the New York State Department of Health issued their “PreK to Gr12 Covid-19 Toolkit”, which is a series of flow charts that assists parents with in-person decision making regarding student attendance regarding a number of different scenarios. My thanks to Wendy Natalone for distributing this information to our Board of Managers and I would like to request that our Council Presidents share this “Toolkit” with their individual units.

In addition, **we need to remind our parents that they have an obligation to monitor the activities of their children during non-school hours, in particular when it comes to attending social events** (which unfortunately at this time is not a good idea). This past month, we had one of our High Schools need to shut down for a few days, due to many students testing positive for Covid-19. Contact Tracing determined that these students had attended a “Sweet 16 Party” the previous weekend, necessitating that several dozens of other student's quarantines for two weeks, as well. **This party resulted in 37 positives (28 children & 9 adults)**. The hall hosting this event received \$12,000 in fines which hopefully will send a message to other venues regarding limitations on attendance.

Last month, I mentioned that Mental Health was something that we are going to need to keep a close eye on this school year. Following up on that I recently received some disturbing statistics from the Suffolk County Medical Examiner's Office. **Over the last seven years (from 1/1/14) we have had 35 adolescent (18yrs old & younger) suicides here in Suffolk County**. Due to the fact that these are all isolated incidents that occur throughout all parts of the county and rarely are mentioned in the news, most people are unaware of the number of our children that are so depressed that they are driven to take their own lives. As child advocates, monitoring Suicide Prevention efforts is something that should be a priority for us. We should be encouraging our School Districts to provide training in this matter to all faculty members, so that they are better prepared to spot the signs of someone who may be contemplating such an act. Ironically enough, virtually all school districts have plans in place to respond to mental health needs (providing counselors, etc.) when one of their students tragically passes. The goal here is to have them be more pro-active, where possible. **The “ask” here is that our school districts host workshops on suicide prevention during Superintendent/Teachers Conference Days.**

Respectfully submitted ... Gerry Bringmann

