

LOCAL TEEN DOCUMENTING LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

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POP CULTURE, PANDEMICS GO WAY BACK

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FAMILY BOASTS 3 ATHLETIC STARS

PAGE 13

OUR 131ST YEAR

Andover Townsman

Issue No. 25

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Delivery service a slam-dunk for injured basketball star

By BILL BURT
bburt@andovertownsman.com

ANDOVER – It was a throw-away line from her father that sent a bored Alyssa Casey into action.

On the mend from ACL surgery, the Merrimack College basketball player hasn't been able to exercise much since the January procedure. Then came the stay-at-home order due

to the coronavirus crisis, and Casey was feeling even more stuck at her Andover home and out of sorts.

"I said something about needing to do something," said the former Andover High basketball star and 2017-18 Northeast-10 Rookie of the Year. "And my dad said, 'Nobody wants to leave the house. Why don't you pick up and deliver groceries or something?'"

That came in mid-March. It was the push that the junior business major needed.

"I ended up posting something on 'Andover Mums' on Facebook offering my services — that I'd pick up and deliver groceries," Casey said.

"It absolutely took off," she added. "I started to get request after request."

Casey named her new

See DELIVERY, Page 11



Alyssa Casey, 21, of Andover, unloads groceries from her car to a designated spot outside a home in Andover. The Merrimack College student and basketball star, who wears a mask and gloves while shopping, started her own delivery service during the coronavirus crisis.

TIM JEAN/Staff photo

GENEROUS REWARDS

Girl donates 10 pizzas, gets parade for 10th birthday

By GENEVIEVE DiNATALE
gdinatale@andovertownsman.com

Calia LeBranti made the most of turning 10 during a pandemic.

The West Elementary student spent her birthday last Wednesday chatting with friends and family on Zoom, then her family surprised her with a car parade outside their home on Penacook Place.

"We feel like it was a special birthday for her and it was unique," said Calia's mother, Nadine. "And as much as we want to be with our friends and family, we made the best of it."

Eighteen cars drove past the LeBranti's home. Calia's friends held signs outside the windows and one took it to another level, gripping blue streamers while standing up through a sunroof.

And as much as Calia enjoyed the celebration, she also wanted to give back. So, this year she decided to donate most of her birthday money to

See BIRTHDAY, Page 11



In honor of Calia's generosity, friends surprised her with a birthday parade.



CARL RUSSO/Staff photos

Calia LeBranti, 10, of Andover waves to her friends as they drive by. She celebrated her birthday on April 15. On behalf of her birthday she donated some of her birthday money to Lawrence General Hospital. She wanted to help the doctors, nurses, custodians and security personnel who are on the front line fighting Covid-19.

Officials praise residents

Say Andover doing good job 'flattening that curve'

By BILL KIRK
bkirk@eagletribune.com

ANDOVER — Town officials remain cautiously optimistic about limiting the spread of COVID-19, as local public health statistics show the number of cases leveling or remaining somewhat steady.

But that doesn't mean the town is out of the woods. "People around here are doing a good job of

flattening that curve," said Health Director Tom Carbone. "It won't eliminate the virus, but it will slow the spread."

As of late last week, there were around 50 positive cases of coronavirus reported in town. A number of firefighters who had been quarantined after exposure to the virus had all been cleared to return to work.

Meanwhile, there had

See ANDOVER, Page 3

Health leaders give warning of 2nd wave of virus

Professor: It's too soon to start talking about reopening economy

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE
Statehouse Reporter

BOSTON — As the state battles a surge in COVID-19 cases and deaths, experts warn of a second wave of infections if social distancing restrictions are lifted too soon.

This week, the U.S. Centers For Disease Control said the coronavirus may become seasonal and resurface again in the fall, as happened in 2009 with swine flu.

Experts say testing capacity needs to ramp up and caution against rushing to

ease virus control measures. "We're not even at the peak yet in Massachusetts, and the rates of infection are still going up," said Dr. Howard Koh, a professor at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School for Public Health. "So any discussions about reopening the economy can't even begin until we're on the other side of the curve."

Koh, a former assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, said while the current modeling suggests there

See WAVE, Page 11

Friends don't let friends get lonely while distancing

By MIKE LABELLA
Staff Writer

One group of former Andover High School classmates is finding ways to stay connected during the coronavirus crisis, getting together regularly for online chats while they await the end of social distancing so they can resume their frequent family get-togethers.

Residents Todd and Christine Murray, along with Christine's close friend and neighbor Bridget Mason, recently even managed to share a happy hour while maintaining social

See FRIENDS, Page 11



From left, Andover residents Todd and Christine Murray, along with Bridget Mason, get together for a happy hour while maintaining social distancing.

SEAN MURPHY/Staff photo

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ANDOVER

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been no cases reported among municipal or school employees.

Town Manager Andrew Flanagan said residents are paying attention to directives put out by state and local officials, using social distancing and wearing face masks in public places. He said a spate of warm weather brought out a few people who weren't complying with the 6-foot social distancing at parks and playgrounds, but those issues have been resolved.

"It's a tiny piece in a global issue, but everybody here gets it that community spread is very real, and so they are taking necessary precautions," he said. "The residents are very engaged with us."

School Superintendent Sheldon Berman said the crisis, as disruptive and deadly as it is, has had some positive impacts. In particular, he said, teachers have stepped up to the challenge of what he called "remote learning," which isn't online learning, per se, but uses a blend of technology, from videoconferencing to telephone calls, to keep in touch with students and to keep them on the right path.

"If there is a silver lining, it's two-fold," said Berman, who spends his days jumping from one virtual meeting or conference call to another. "Our staff will be highly capable of integrating technology going forward."

Second, he said, is the spirit of teamwork that has prevailed in the past five weeks.

"The collaboration that we've experienced has been extraordinary," he said, noting that teachers are working in teams, planning as groups, sharing information and responsibilities.

"If somebody becomes ill, somebody else will come in behind them," he said.

"It's a tiny piece in a global issue, but everybody here gets it that community spread is very real, and so they are taking necessary precautions."

Town Manager Andrew Flanagan

Another positive aspect of the crisis is that parents have become much stronger and more necessary partners in teaching.

"Because we are sharing the work with parents, they have a much larger role," Berman said. "We have asked teachers to provide learning targets for parents, so they can make those targets clear to students."

But it hasn't been easy, Berman said. The situation even required impact bargaining with the teachers union which resulted in a memorandum of understanding that was agreed to by the School Committee last Thursday.

"This was a big lift for us," he said.

Making matters worse, according to school and town officials, is that the economic shutdown is likely to have a serious impact on the town budget.

In particular, said Flanagan, local revenue from the hotel/motel tax, along with the meals tax, will be way down, while revenue from the state in the form of the sales tax will also be off, likely meaning less local aid.

Some communities are already announcing layoffs and furloughs for town and school employees as the crisis cuts into town coffers.

Neither Flanagan nor Berman foresee problems in the current fiscal year, which ends June 30. The real impact will be for fiscal year 2021, which starts July 1, 2020.

"The economy has been severely disrupted," Berman said. "But we won't know until mid-May. I assume it isn't going to be generous budget." Flanagan agreed.

"I think we are in good position through June 30 mainly because we were conservative with our revenue estimates," he said.

"We implemented a spending freeze to mitigate any expected revenue shortfall" this year. "Regarding next year, we are in a holding pattern. I'm looking at the reality that state aid, in the best case, will be level-funded, but it could be reduced."

Selectman Alex Vispoli said the preliminary 2021 budget, reviewed by selectmen in February, will have to be reduced.

"Revenues will take a large hit," he said, adding that the budget currently calls for a 4.6 percent tax hike — a number he had hoped would be lower.

"We set a limit of 3.6 percent," Vispoli said, referring to budget talks last summer. But with the coronavirus throwing a monkey wrench into budget planning, it's anybody's guess what might happen next.

As it is, both the town elections and Town Meeting have been postponed indefinitely. Until those two events can happen, the town really is in a holding pattern.

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Communities work to track path of COVID-19 virus

By BILL KIRK
Staff Writer

With about 600 people testing positive for the coronavirus in Lawrence and a dozen or more dying because of it, the city could be considered the hot-spot of the Merrimack Valley.

As such, officials are taking no chances.

In addition to declaring a state of emergency, Mayor Dan Rivera and Acting Inspectional Services Director Mike Armano have embraced a robust program of tracking and tracing people who are either suffering from the disease, or who have been exposed to it.

Armano says he has as many as 15 people, including the city nurse, public school nurses and even building inspectors, calling "every person who is positive" for the disease.

"We started about 10 days ago," he said. "We did the initial triage, and we are still doing that. When you have a big public emergency, your resources are

stretched. ... People who normally wouldn't make these calls are now making calls. Usually, just the public health nurse could do it. Both clerks, inspectors — everybody has stepped up."

In Haverhill, tracking and tracing has been going on since the pandemic began, according to Public Health Nurse Mary Connolly.

And in Methuen, up to a dozen people are making calls, keeping track. The same kind of work is going on in Andover and North Andover.

Bill Buckley, who heads up inspectional services in Methuen, including public nurses, said his staff is "straight out."

"This is unprecedented," he said.

He notes that sometimes things get emotional on the phone.

"These are difficult calls to make," he said. "In most cases, people are either very sick, or scared that they've been diagnosed, or worried about being treated as a contact. I am so proud of the

work our health agent and public nurse have done, with assistance from of every one of our school nurses."

In Andover, Health Director Tom Carbone said his team includes two public health nurses and two school nurses.

During the initial stages of the outbreak, the state was requiring the nurses to touch base with all the active cases and all the contacts every day.

"Now, they said we don't need to contact everybody every day," Carbone said. "We don't need to make 200 phone calls a day."

Because of the heavy workload and because additional data is being sought about victims, Gov. Charlie Baker announced a plan last week to hire 1,000 people to do what he called "enhanced contact tracing."

By identifying coronavirus victims and their contacts and then isolating, quarantining and testing them so they don't pass it along to others, the state has a much better chance of beating the virus.



Julie Ireland Childs
College Counselor



College Update for High School Students THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS IS CHANGING

- SAT has cancelled the June 6th test date
- SAT will likely be taken online (at home) in the fall
- ACT has added 2 new test dates: June 20th and July 25th
- ACT will be offering a practice at-home test as early as August
- PSAT for 10th and 11th graders will be available sometime in October
- Seniors, consider deferring your college acceptance
- Seniors, consider an "at home" Gap Year experience
- Financial Aid packages are negotiable for seniors

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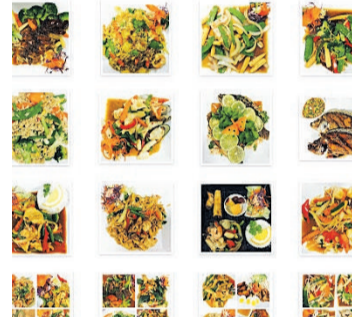
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Townspeople

CELEBRATING WITH CALIA



A friend makes the best use of a sunroof as he videos the parade organized for Calia LeBranti's birthday.

ANDOVER — Calia LeBranti was honored for her 10th birthday — and her generosity — Wednesday, April 15, by family, friends and neighbors who organized a socially distant parade for her.

Calia wanted to help with the fight against coronavirus, specifically by doing something for the doctors, nurses, custodians and security personnel who are on the front lines. So her family inquired with Lawrence General Hospital to see how she could do so.

Pizza please, the family was told.

Calia donated her birthday money and the family bought 10 pizzas to be delivered to LGH.

The surprised workers had something for Calia, too: They sang her a robust rendition of "Happy Birthday" to show their gratitude for her gesture.

(Check out the video at andovertownsm.com.)



Calia's dad, Rich LeBranti, gives the birthday parade a big thumbs-up.



Calia's, mother and father, Rich and Nedine LeBranti, and her sister, Elisia, 11, enjoy the birthday parade.



A friend holds a poster made of sparkles, flowers and hearts as she passes by Calia LeBranti's house.



Jada Dela Cruz, 12, left, and her sister J'lynn Perry, 18, wish Calia a happy birthday from afar.

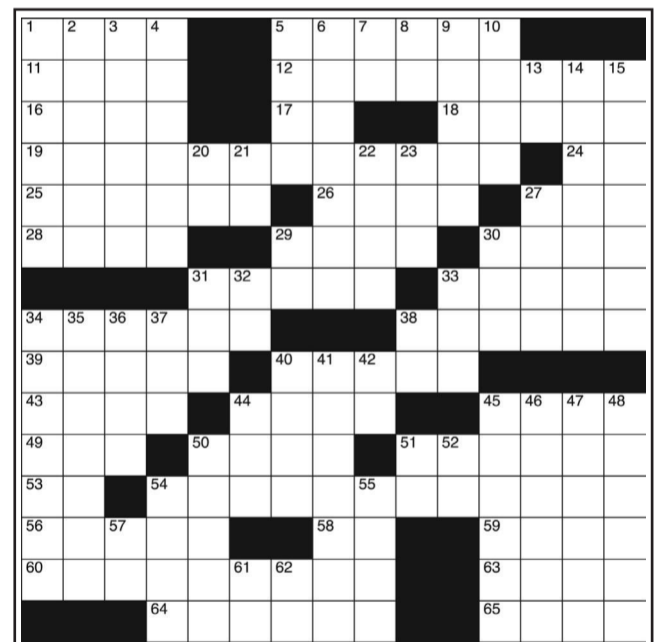


Kelly Parsons and her 15 month-old baby, Evelyn, are neighbors of the LeBranti family in Andover.



Calia waves to her friends as they drive by.

Staff photos by Carl Russo



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Curved symmetrical structure
- 5. One's partner in marriage
- 11. Male admirer
- 12. Spend in a period of dormancy
- 16. Popular Easter meal
- 17. Doc
- 18. Bearing a heavy load
- 19. Gratitude
- 24. The Mount Rushmore State
- 25. Driving
- 26. Girl
- 27. British thermal unit
- 28. Makes a mistake
- 29. A defined length of time
- 30. Lions do it
- 31. Large quantities
- 33. Become less intense
- 34. Famed peninsula
- 38. Emerges

Solution in Classified Section

- 39. Rare Hawaiian geese
- 40. Dance style
- 43. Drove
- 44. Measures speed of an engine (abbr.)
- 45. Yankee hero Bucky
- 49. Midway between west and northwest
- 50. Monetary unit of Samoa
- 51. Makes clothing
- 53. Spielberg's alien
- 54. Agreeable to the taste
- 56. Injury treatment protocol
- 58. Cools your house
- 59. Imaginary line
- 60. New convert
- 63. Some do it to their windows
- 64. Wore away
- 65. Work units

CLUES DOWN

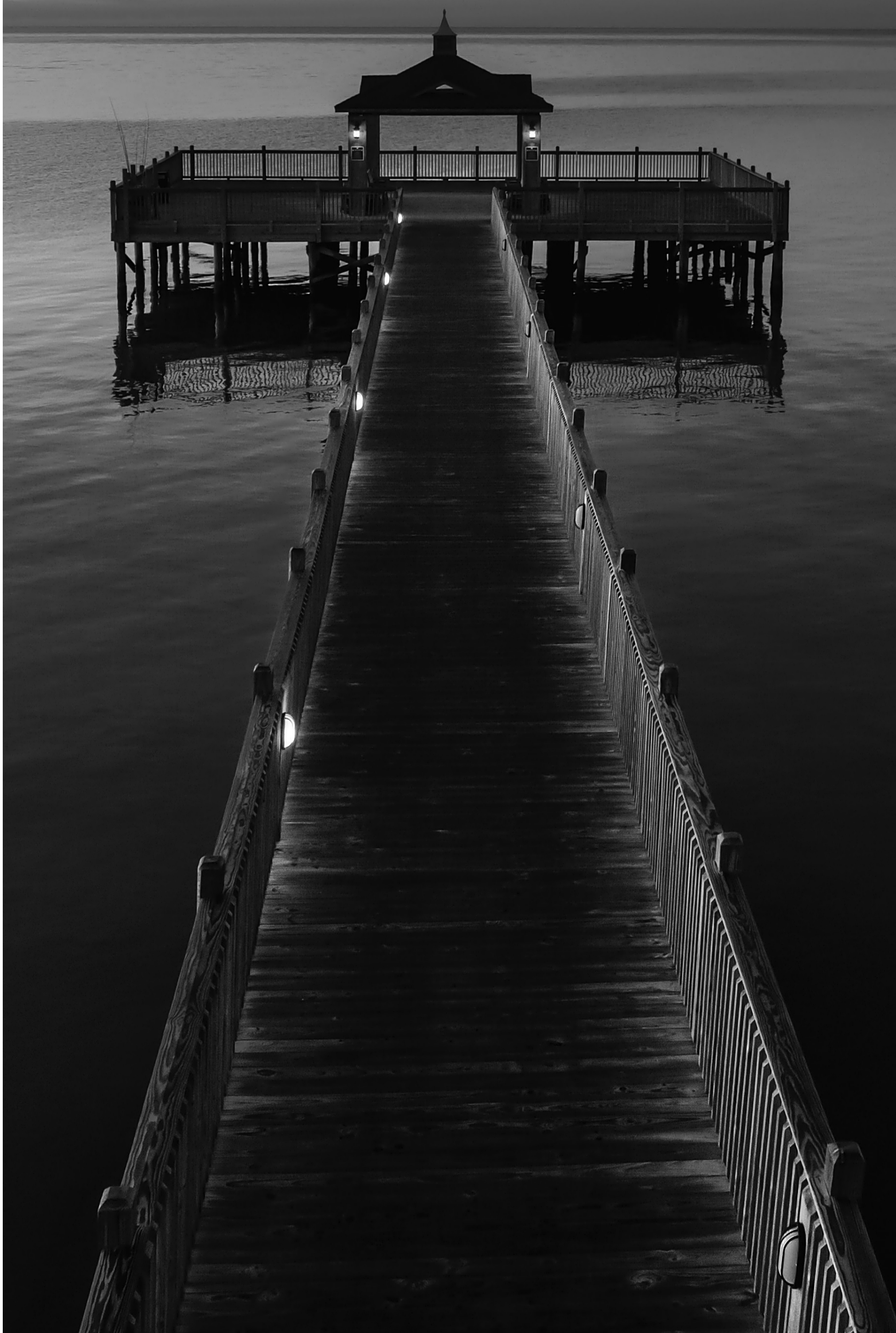
- 1. Remove body tissue
- 2. Harvester
- 3. Roadside living quarters
- 4. Excessive self-confidence
- 5. Lapp
- 6. Bicycled
- 7. Entrance to a passage
- 8. Western U.S. state
- 9. Grain towers
- 10. "Westworld" actress — Rachel Wood
- 13. Commercial
- 14. One who left a will
- 15. Makes it through
- 20. Within (prefix)
- 21. Sea patrol (abbr.)
- 22. Cigarettes (slang)
- 23. A doctrine
- 27. Constrictor snakes
- 29. Atomic #73
- 30. Baseball stat
- 31. Female sibling
- 32. A soft gray metal (abbr.)
- 33. Southern constellation
- 34. Belgian city
- 35. Go in again
- 36. In a different, more positive way
- 37. A place for sleeping
- 38. Blood type
- 40. Syrian news agency (abbr.)
- 41. A salt or ester of acetic acid
- 42. Milliheny
- 44. Populous Israeli city — Aviv
- 45. Widen
- 46. Magical potion
- 47. Acknowledging
- 48. Private romantic rendezvous
- 50. Cavalry sword
- 51. Terabyte
- 52. Artificial intelligence
- 54. Bullfighting maneuver
- 55. Breezed through
- 57. Santa says it three times
- 61. ___ and behold
- 62. 36 inches (abbr.)



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Doctors fear sick are forgoing needed treatment

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE
Statehouse reporter

BOSTON -- People who need medical help are putting off going to the doctor amid the COVID-19 outbreak over fears of contracting the virus, health officials say.

Emergency rooms are swamped with COVID-19 patients, and many doctors offices have cancelled check-ups and other routine visits as health care facilities limit public access to avoid further spread of the respiratory illness.

But health officials worry the precautions, coupled with public fear, are keeping people who need help from seeking it.

The Massachusetts Medical Society, which represents the state's physicians, is urging people not to forgo necessary health care treatment.

"Even during this unprecedented public health crisis, patients should not be afraid to seek care from their physician and health care team when needed, especially in urgent situations," said Dr. Maryanne Bombaugh, the society's president. "It is more important than ever for our patients to be as healthy as possible, and forgoing appropriate and timely care from their physician could prove dangerous."

The group says safeguards are in place to protect patients, and most doctors are still reachable by phone, or via tele-health and in-person visits.

Massachusetts is in the midst of a surge of COVID-19 infections, with more than 38,077 cases as of Sunday and 1,706 deaths.

Gov. Charlie Baker says the state prepared to juggle COVID-19 patients and normal emergency room visits. He told reporters last week that his administration's efforts to expand hospital capacity by setting up regional field hospitals and

canceled non-elective surgeries "make it possible to do both."

The Baker administration has also expanded remote access to physicians by requiring insurers to cover medically necessary telehealth services. The state has also partnered with Boston-based Buoy Health to make the company's online symptom-checking tool available to Massachusetts residents, free of charge.

Physicians groups say telehealth is meant as a guide, and those with serious medical conditions shouldn't put off seeking treatment.

Meanwhile, health care advocates say cancer patients and others with serious ailments are not getting adequate access to treatment.

Fifty percent of cancer patients and survivors reported some impact to their health care due to the pandemic, according to a recent poll by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. At least 13% of cancer patients in treatment have had care delayed, the survey found.

"The health effects of this pandemic stretch well beyond those diagnosed and suffering from COVID-19 and are having an acute and adverse impact on cancer patients, many of whom can't afford treatment delays," Lisa Lacasse, the society's president, said in a statement.

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Current reality mirrors pop culture history

By WILL BROADDUS
Staff Writer

We have been here before, if only in our imaginations.

As strange as it seems to be living in a moment when the streets are empty and people are wary of one other, such scenes have been conjured by writers and artists for centuries.

That means anyone who wants to look closer at what's going on, but through the safe filter of fiction, has a range of options.

A recent — and highly realistic — film to watch is “Contagion” from 2011, which was created in consultation with health experts and reflected contemporary experiences with epidemics such as SARS.

On a purely sensational level, the movie “World War Z” from 2013 depicts a zombie apocalypse in which a shrinking band of survivors tries to outrun a plague that turns people into flesh-eating ghouls. These are not the sluggish, foot-dragging zombies of George Romero’s classic “Night of the Living Dead” from 1968, but a ravenous onslaught, devouring everyone in its path.

If comedy is not too hard to take, the film “Osmosis Jones” from 2001 gives a vivid explanation of how our bodies fight infection. If that sounds like a dull documentary, the drama inside the body is animated and features the voices of Chris Rock and Laurence Fishburne, respectively, as a white cell and an invading virus named Thrax.

Going back a few decades, viewers can find “The Andromeda Strain,” one of the most popular films and books from the 1970s, about a deadly virus from outer space that comes to earth in the American Southwest. The early scenes, where men in hazmat suits enter a town where there are only two survivors, are unforgettable.

Another film from that era, 1971’s “Omega Man” with Charlton Heston, features a scientist who had worked on a viral agent that



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Many people have been watching the 2011 thriller “Contagion,” which contains several parallels to the current situation. Pictured here is Jude Law as Alan Krumwiede.

escaped and killed everyone — or almost everyone — on the planet except himself. By day, he searches for survivors, while at night, he battles a group of mutants called “The Family,” which is out to kill him.

Post-apocalyptic settings have also been featured in recent novels, such as “Station Eleven” by Emily St. John Mandel, which came out in 2014. The plot follows a troupe of actors who are trying to save civilization by performing for what’s left of the world’s population, after a virus has killed millions.

There are also new novels about epidemics that are making their way to market, including “The End of October” by Lawrence Wright and “The City We Became” by N.K. Jemisin, both of which were begun before COVID-19 had been named.

But while readers wait for those, they may want

to consider some books that have been around for centuries.

One is Giovanni Boccaccio’s “The Decameron,” which was written shortly

after the arrival of the Black Death in Italy in 1348 and serves as a user’s manual for sheltering in place.

After detailing the horrors and breakdown he saw in

Florence, where thousands were killed by bubonic plague, Boccaccio introduces us to 10 young men and women who flee the city for a villa, where they take turns

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telling stories.

Salem’s Nathaniel Hawthorne contributed to this genre with the story “Lady Eleanor’s Mantle,” which he published in “Twice-Told Tales” in 1842. Like much of Hawthorne’s fiction, the story is set in Colonial times and focuses on a wealthy woman who comes to Massachusetts from England wearing a beautiful mantle. The garment was laced with smallpox virus by the woman who created it, unleashing an epidemic on American shores.

“There is no other fear so horrible and unhumanizing as that which makes man dread to breathe Heaven’s vital air, lest it be poison, or to grasp the hand of a brother or friend, lest the gripe of the pestilence should touch him,” Hawthorne writes.

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High: 54° Low: 40°	High: 45° Low: 33°	High: 60° Low: 36°	High: 48° Low: 37°	High: 51° Low: 34°	High: 55° Low: 39°	High: 56° Low: 43°

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