

Helping Your Neighbors Locally with the Coronavirus

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*This article was published this morning in the Tri-City Herald. They lifted the paywall to make it freely available.
<https://www.tri-cityherald.com/news/local/article241175781.html>*

McClatchy has also freed me to offer it for use anywhere. I am offering it to you for free use as you see fit. My goal is to be a resource and an asset to you so we can help save lives.

You can use this in whole or part, with or without attribution. You can copy and print or post what you need, or read these on the air.

You can adapt this to your community by searching on the keywords “food banks in <your town>” and adding that list to the article.

It has no commercial interest and is basic health science, personal hygiene, and common sense. I hope to help as many people as we can. These are just a collection of the best ideas I could find.

Share Freely. Contact me anytime if you have any questions or requests.

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How to Help Locally with Coronavirus Preparations

Paul Krupin, Special to the <Herald>

Coronavirus concerns are on everyone’s mind. One of the most important questions that looms large is how we can help each other. How can we each make a difference?

Many people have a robust front-line support system who we can rely on for help and who we can provide assistance to. This includes our families, friends, neighbors, the clubs, and religious groups we participate in, and the local community organizations.

However, there are other people who do not have a support network and who will need help during the coming times. Identifying those who need help and getting them the right help will be particularly important.

Here are some ideas on what you can do to help.

Organize Local Support Groups

Start local. Get a notebook and start taking notes. Create a local neighborhood support circle or network and write down the names of people, their addresses, how many people live in the residence, phone numbers, email, social media. If they don’t want to provide the information, fine., but keep tabs on them. Speed up preparations while people are healthy.

Call on seniors, people who live alone, families with elderly or small children, or people with learning or physical disabilities. Exchange contact information and ask them how they are doing and what they need.

Pay attention and stay aware of people's situation. Ask people if they want to help and how they prefer to communicate.

Form small teams and share skills, capabilities and resources that are in short supply with other teams.

Adopt a Neighbor

Look for vulnerable people. Check on people regularly. Stay aware of their situation. Ask them if anything has changed. Ask them what they need.

Check on people in their homes. Help them with everyday tasks that are beyond their capabilities. Let others know what you learn. Think about the people close to home, on your block, in your neighborhood.

Make contact now especially with people who are in a high-risk category, may be in need, and do not have a healthy caregiver. Know how many people are there and what their situation is. Offer to assist with normal day to day tasks that become difficult if someone gets sick. Like moving garbage pails to the curb and grabbing the mail.

It need not be complex care. It will be helpful to pair people up and create a buddy system. Consider cooking extra food and bringing pre-cooked meals for families in which everyone or the main caregivers are sick. Practice doorway and porch delivery.

Volunteer

Local community organizations, businesses, and care organizations are heightening their capabilities to serve the public safely. There are organizations that provide support to the elderly and those with disabilities, to the homeless, to young people, as well as those with anxiety and mental illnesses, who have disabilities, learning difficulties or a number of other issues. There are businesses and facilities that offer support for sickness, recovery and rehabilitation.

Reach out and link with these organizations. Go visit and ask the food banks, retirement homes, children's, women's and veterans living centers and find out what they are doing and what they need.

Many organizations are looking for volunteers, especially students and young people, to help provide additional capabilities over the next four to six months.

If the staff gets sick, many businesses and care companies in particular will be actively seeking people to take the place of care workers.

If you are healthy, send them an email, contact them through their websites or social media pages, or call them and offer them help. Let them know what sort of skills you have or capabilities you can provide.

Donate to the food banks, homes, shelters

There are several food banks in the area. They will accept canned goods and unopened packaged goods not yet expired. They will also welcome financial donations and put them to good work.

If you have extra supplies at home consider building a care package. Things in short supply include:

hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, soaps, rags, tissues, paper towels, toilet paper, sponges, mops, plastic or latex gloves, buckets, soaps, laundry detergent, disinfectant aspirin, Tylenol, immune system supplements,

If you have extra new bottles of cold medicines these will also be provided to those in need.

Look in the phone book or on organization websites to see the best way to donate or contact them to get involved.

Some of the organizations are instituting procedures for remote drop off of donations and drive through pickup of care packages. Pay attention to new procedures to reduce the risk of face to face exposure.

Get Involved in Local Organizations and Networks

If you are a member and participate in an existing organization or social network, get involved.

Many organizations have donate/volunteer or care package request buttons to their website and social media pages.

Do what you can and work with your organization's leaders and team coordinators. Identify your skills and make yourself available.

Home Delivery/Store Pickups

Most of the major local grocery stores and chains in offer online shopping with both in-store pick up and home delivery options. Instacart (www.Instacart.com) and Rosies App (www.RosiesApp.com) have websites that can be searched by location to identify the participating stores in the local area.

If you know of a home-bound, less than capable, self-quarantined person or family, volunteer to go and pick up their purchases and deliver it to them. Use your phone to make porch and doorway deliveries to reduce the risk of face to face exposure.

Deep Clean and Disinfection Everywhere

Businesses should study their workplaces in detail and shut down all common free food sharing locations. At least temporarily, shut down your popcorn machines, coffee service, donuts, cookies, candy, - anything that people can touch and contaminate.

As an extra precaution, clean anything that people can touch frequently. Disinfect often-touched surfaces such as counters, chairs, phones, door handles, keypads, tv remote controls, kitchen and stovetops, desks, restroom surfaces, etc.

Place a spray bottle and disposable paper wipes with disinfectant in your car. If you are out and about, wear gloves and wash commonly touched surfaces (doorbells, door handles, railings) before and after you touch them.

Get in this habit: Clean. Touch. Clean Again. Everything. Everywhere. Every time. Everyone.

If you touch it, leave it cleaner than before you touched it. If we all do this, we can make a difference.

Bag anything that is used for disinfection in a plastic bag and dispose of it carefully so no one else can come in contact with it.

Get Outside

Event and school cancellations and travel restrictions are going to drive people inside. One of the best ways to destress and increase social distancing is to get outside.

So bundle up and head to the park. Take a walk. Go for a hike.

Help the people you can help the most.

About the Author

Paul Krupin is a retired environmental specialist and attorney with 27 years of experience with numerous federal government agencies and another 20 years in industry. He was trained as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), nuclear emergency management team member, wilderness first aid responder, and was a county civil defense director in Idaho. He writes a weekly outdoor/ lifestyle/ environment column for the Tri-City Herald in Kennewick Washington (owned by McClatchy). He can be reached at pjkrupin@gmail.com.