

Message from the Mayor, October 8, 2020

Coronavirus doesn't need to make
Halloween an even more scary time

I have written more than 20 of these Coronavirus Messages from the Mayor since the pandemic began back in March. Most have begun with a sober look backwards at the latest infection numbers. This time, for an upbeat change of pace, let's look forward.

October for most of us, and especially for children, means Halloween. And I'm happy to report that both state and local health officials say Halloween trick-or-treating is a go... with reasonable precautions.

The NJ Department of Health urges families to plan early to identify safe alternatives to the traditional – and ill-advised – indoor parties and crowded Halloween events.

Those who plan to trick-or-treat should limit their groups to current household members, stay local, and limit the number of houses on their route. Social distancing should be practiced between all who are not in the same household.

Those putting out treats should limit contact with trick-or-treaters coming to the door, wear a mask and wash hands regularly. A good option, according to health officials, would be to place several treats in a bowl where they can be easily accessed. A better option would be to spread a few treats on a tray to avoid hands reaching into a shared bowl.

Creative homeowners might design their own fun delivery systems -- perhaps a plastic pipe taped to the railing on the front steps, or re-purpose a wash line and pulley to deliver treats from a distance.

The NJ Department of Health doesn't outlaw group events, but it does emphasize caution.

Outdoor Trunk or Treat events, when children go car-to-car instead of house-to-house, must be limited in size and must insure social distancing. Costume masks are not adequate by themselves and must be supplemented with face masks.

Parties must comply with crowd limits in effect by Halloween, and must not include activities that require close contact or shared items, such as bobbing for apples. Indoor haunted houses should be avoided due to the likelihood of screaming and crowding in tight places.

Hayrides must limit shared passengers to members of one household or group.

Corn mazes must limit the number of participants and the direction of travel.

The safest options, health experts say, are those that are limited to family members, perhaps including drive-through events, pumpkin carving, family

costume parties or movie nights.

Chatham Township residents continue to see the benefits of careful behavior when it comes to tracking recent coronavirus infections.

The total known positive cases in Chatham Township for the month of September was 11, bringing the confirmed total since March to 178. The total number of deaths in the Township remains at 33, unchanged since the last fatality was reported on June 24.

Most of September's positive cases were recorded in the first half of the month and involved back-to-school parties for high school and college students. Since Mid-September, Chatham Township has experienced only 4 new confirmed cases. Some of the numbers recorded mid-month were originally reported inaccurately here due to a change in the Health Department's tracking format. The total number of known active cases in the Township stands at 3, although health officials emphasize that the actual number is undoubtedly higher and everyone should behave as if anyone they come in contact with could be newly infected or asymptomatic.

Remember to wear your mask and to keep a safe social distance. These simple precautions work. Wash your hands frequently, stay home when feeling ill, and contact your physician if symptoms begin to escalate.

Be careful, exercise good judgment and stay safe.

Michael Kelly,

Chatham Township Mayor