



CHEBEAGUE ISLAND *Maine*

October 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

Enter autumn --the beautiful light, changing colors and the back-to-school energy. This year, it is also a marker that we made it through the Summer of COVID-19. I appreciate the way islanders give so much of themselves. We can celebrate that we made it through the Summer with a global pandemic without an outbreak of Covid-19 nor any direct loss of life to the island community. Thank you so much to our community for stepping up to the day to day challenges of living with a virus. Think about what was required from each individual, and then think of all the systems, changes, sacrifices and adjustments to island life that we have made since March. We assessed early how easy this highly contagious virus could spread here. Given our geography, our infrastructure, the average age of our population and the fact that nearly all transportation and commerce goes through a single point - CTC boat - we had many risk factors facing us. But we made it through the summer season. No one knows what the fall and winter will bring, but we know we can do this together.

In mid-August, five months into the pandemic, a survey to the community revealed that the majority of respondents felt well-informed about the pandemic, were following CDC guidelines and believed that on the whole, Chebeague was doing a good job facing the pandemic. (For a complete report, [click here](#).) The majority of respondents young and old, from near and far - wanted to trust and be trusted to do the right thing (and not confront our neighbors directly about the CDC and state mandates.) If you look at the Summer as a whole - we did in fact do the right thing to stay safe and protect one another.

It was a tough time between March and Memorial Day. We were moving fast, trying our best to interpret and localize the travel, testing and quarantining requirements laid out at the federal and state levels. The CTC, Post Office, Rescue, the Church, Food Pantry, Commons, the Store -- all organizations for that matter -- had to change the most basic ways of operating. We stumbled. The toughest part of the survey results unveiled the tension and hurt feelings between year-round and seasonal residents regarding the transition to Summer. I hope that we all find ways to reach out and mend relationships. Let's recreate as well as find new ways to make the island community close, kind and special.

Moving forward into the colder weather and cold and flu season especially -- we need to collect our strength. We must move together and do everything we can to stay healthy and fight against COVID-19. Vigilance to wearing masks (and washing them frequently), socially distancing (in new ways as we move indoors), disinfecting surfaces, and staying home when you feel sick is essential. The CDC recommends getting a flu shot. This is an immediate action everyone can take now (over the age of 6 months). To that end, the Island Council is holding its annual flu shot clinic next Wednesday, October 7th ([click here](#) for info). Please, also remember, the Chebeague COVID Testing Team (CCTT) is set up to provide free, COVID-19

testing and public health education about the virus -- they can be [reached 24/7](#) with their volunteer island medical team.

Maine is doing a relatively exemplary job if you track key metrics --especially with per capita testing availability and low daily positivity rates. According to Johns Hopkins University, data shows Maine is one of the few states to [have flattened the curve](#) with our low positivity rate. But things can change, and quickly. We are still in a State of Emergency and there is no vaccine yet, no cure and honestly, no end in sight. One of our big threats is the fatigue and anxiety COVID-19 brings on. There is a toll on our mental health and real effects of physical and emotional isolation. Please reach out to your friends, family and loved ones - and ask for help yourself when you need it. Humor is a wonderful balm too. It has never been so important to stay connected. We cannot say it enough, *we are all in this together*.

The Board of Selectmen is currently searching for a new Town Administrator. Some people are asking why I am leaving. Did something happen? No, I have always planned on retiring and collecting my Social Security at age 70. I will be 70 years old on the 19th of this month. I did have thoughts of trying to stay on for one more year until June 2021, but the events of 2020 have taken a toll. Everyone has their own COVID story, but my partner Nick and I were separated for almost three months with only telephone calls to keep us connected. It was clear to me that I had to stay on Chebeague Island for the duration of the Stay Healthy at Home mandate and beyond, but now we just want to be together in one place. As I have said, we made it through the summer and there are systems in place to guard against the virus. I'm confident that Chebeague Island people will persevere.

Thank you for all of your support and remember to be kind to one another,

Marjorie E. Stratton
Town Administrator
Chebeague Island