

New year, same health crisis

Wantagh, Seaford ring in new year amid persistent pandemic

Derek Futterman | January 7, 2021 | Long Island Herald

Reacting to the steady increase in cases of Covid-19 in the area since Thanksgiving, State Sen. John Brooks is urging constituents of the 8th District, which encompasses Wantagh and Seaford, to continue to follow the coronavirus guidelines they've come to know by heart.

Despite the promising distribution of vaccines, Brooks asserted that people "can't kid [themselves] and think we beat [the virus] until we really have beaten it." To do that, he added, "The mask has got to be a part of your regular attire each day."

Mary Ellen Laurain, a spokeswoman for the Nassau County Department of Health, echoed Brooks's sentiments, and attributed the ever-rising case count to people moving indoors in colder weather and being unable to resist their desire to gather with family members and friends. While Laurain also emphasized the importance of continued social distancing and mask wearing to inhibit the transmission of the virus, she acknowledged that humans are "social creatures," and suggested that they exhibit their congeniality in other ways.

"We tell people to check on your neighbors by [giving] them a call and [seeing] if they need anything," Laurain said. "It is hard, especially when it gets cold outside, [but hopefully] they can see that there is light at the end of the tunnel."

There were 541 more cases of Covid-19 in Wantagh and Seaford on Monday than there were on Dec. 28. Moreover, Nassau County's positivity rate for Covid-19 had increased to just over 8 percent since Christmas, and as of press time there were 656 hospitalizations.

Though the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have proven effective, their rollout has gone slower than expected. "I think the objective now is to accelerate... to a rate of a million people getting the vaccine a day," Brooks said. "It's probably going to be well into April or later when some of us have the opportunity to get the vaccinations."

Asked what else he sees in the new year, he added, among other suggestions, "We have to upgrade technology in our school systems so we can effectively use distance learning."

Laurain said she believed that following coronavirus protocols, combined with the distribution and administration of the vaccines, were signs that the county is "rounding the corner" in the battle against the disease. "You want to all be together next year – listen to us and stay home so that we can all be together next year," she said. "Be patient. This is a serious disease. People are losing their lives."

"One of the frightening things with this virus," Brooks added, "is its ability to change and attack different segments of our society. It's almost like this virus has a mind of its own and finds a way to attack us in different ways. We have got to do a better job listening to the scientists and the experts."

He added, "It's not over yet. Working together, plus the vaccine, will put us in a position where the environment needs to be."

Just when a "new normal" can be reached, Laurain said, is up to us. "We hope that enough people will get vaccinated and that we can return to some normalcy," she said. "I can't put a finger on when that will be, but that is the goal."