MAYOR'S MESSAGE *December 3, 2020*

I am very happy to report that our socially-distanced Holiday Parade on November 27 was a huge success! Not only did the parade put smiles on many faces, it also allowed the children of our community to see Santa Claus and other festive characters in person, and it reminded them that the Christmas season is one of happiness and joy.

Moments prior to the start of the parade, Santa and I made a quick stop at Excursion Park to light the City's Christmas tree. Even though the tree lighting was brief and rather impromptu, it allowed us to officially launch Sea Isle's 2020 holiday season; and now that the tree is lit, families have one more place for holiday photo-ops.

As we are all aware, a number of perennial events and activities were cancelled this year; and unfortunately, we won't be having many of the familiar winter happenings we are all accustomed to either, including the public events that take place during Sea Isle's Polar Bear Weekend in mid-February. That being said, we still anticipate that President's Weekend (which is also Valentine's Day Weekend) will be very enjoyable here in Sea Isle City, thanks to the local businesses that will be open and ready to greet customers in a safe and welcoming manner.

A huge attraction that brings thousands of people to town each Polar Bear Weekend is the Mike's Seafood Polar Bear Run-Walk for Autism, which benefits special service schools, autism support groups, and families with special needs children. Because they are greatly concerned about public safety and doing the right thing, several weeks ago the event's organizers, Mike and Jeannie Monichetti, announced that they have cancelled their 2021 Run-Walk. However, in its place the Monichettis will host a "Polar Bear Around the World in 80 Days" fundraiser, which is already turning out to be a lot of fun. During this new event, for every $10 that is donated, Mike's intrepid polar bear will advance one mile on his journey around the globe. You can follow the polar bear on Facebook as he visits famous cities and completes his worthwhile goal, and you can make a donation at https://www.polarbearrunwalkforautism.com/home. We applaud Mike and Jeannie's hard work and dedication, and we hope everyone will support this worthy cause.

In an effort to keep the holidays "jolly and bright" here in Sea Isle City, our Recreation Office is hosting several events that will add cheer to the season, including a "Selfie Scavenger Hunt" on Friday night, our annual Santa's Calling Program on December 9, Sea Isle's 2020 Holiday Lighting Contest on December 10, a Holiday Pet Costume Contest that starts on December 7, and an Ugly Sweater Contest that begins the week before Christmas. To learn more about these events, see the special section of this E-Newsletter or phone the Recreation Office at 609-263-0050.

Another holiday event that I am always happy to mention is our annual Toy and Food Drive, which benefits families in need. My thanks go to all of the individuals and groups that have made donations to this year's drive so far, and I also want to thank in advance those who still plan to make a donation. This is our 28th annual Toy and Food Drive, and over the years we have helped many, many families enjoy the holiday season – thanks to people like you!

As I mentioned before, there are a variety of infrastructure improvements taking place throughout our community, including repaving efforts that will greatly smooth the surface of many of our streets. Once again, I want to thank everyone for their patience during this process and remind all motorists and pedestrians to use caution while traveling around town.

Now more than ever, it is extremely important that all of us here in Sea Isle City – and around the nation – look out for one another and take steps that will keep our neighbors safe during this pandemic, including following all directives from the CDC and Governor Murphy's office. It's up to each of us to do our part and show others how much we care for their safety.

In addition to practicing social distancing, wearing masks and following all guidelines related to gatherings, if you are looking for ways to show kindness and generosity, please consider shopping locally. Following this very challenging year, Sea Isle City's business owners need your support to help them through the holiday season – and to help ensure that they can return in 2021. And, since it seems that these difficult times will continue a little while longer, I encourage everyone to support our businesses with your patronage. Never before has the phrase "shop local" been so important!

We have two "Shout Outs" this week. The first goes to Matt "The Hat" DiNote, who is bicycling from California to Sea Isle City to raise money and awareness for autism. Matt is known for wearing a stylish plaid fedora, and he is making this impressive journey in honor of his younger brother Mikey, who has autism and Down syndrome. You can follow Matt on his Facebook page and make a donation to his fundraiser by visiting https://www.gofundme.com/f/matt-the-travelin-hat-bike-tour-for-eden-autism. Keep peddling, Matt – we are all proud of you and we look forward to seeing you on Sea Isle's 65th Street Beach soon!

The second "Shout Out" goes to Bryan Schwartz and Allison Verville, who became engaged to be married during our Holiday Parade on November 27. Congratulations Bryan and Allison!

Smile…You're in Sea Isle!

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Mayor Leonard C. Desiderio