

Some Positive News During COVID Pandemic

by Supervisor Linda Parks, June 2020

2020 has been quite a year so far with its many COVID-related challenges, however there is still much to be thankful for. The Ventura County community has been diligently social distancing and our Public Health Director has been gradually approving reopening businesses and activities, while also watching closely to see that we keep our COVID-19 case numbers low. Ventura County has consistently had far fewer COVID cases than Los Angeles or Orange counties and this has afforded us the ability to enter an accelerated Stage 2 phase of the State's Resilience Roadmap, which includes the opening of barbershops and hair salons. COVID-19 testing sites are available throughout the county, including at the Newbury Park Library at no cost and with no requirements. Other locations can also be found at www.venturacountyrecovers.org

In an effort to assist businesses affected by COVID-19, the Board of Supervisors approved a \$10 million small business assistance program utilizing funding from the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund. I was thankful for my Board's support to prioritize some of the funding for disadvantaged communities, minorities, and women business owners. Our County has also been able to use Recovery funds to assist people who can't pay their rent, provide personal protective equipment to health care workers throughout the county, pay struggling restaurants to provide food delivery to vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities, and provide shelter for 350 people who were living on the streets.

Another good news item is our county has seen a significant decline in air pollution during the COVID-19 shelter-in-place requirements. Dr. Tisopulos, our new head of our County's Air Pollution Control District, noted that the reduction in vehicle trips (which is the number one contributor to air pollution), along with more rain in April and May, led to some of the cleanest air quality we've had in years. Likewise, Ventura County Transportation Commission Executive Director Darren Kettle noted the reduction in traffic as a result of employees working from home shows that we could achieve a 20% reduction in traffic if employees continued to work at home just one day a week once our County fully reopens. When you think how much money it costs to add another lane to the freeway (a new lane is being proposed from Westlake Village to Ventura on the 101 freeway with a price tag between \$575 million to \$2 billion), it behooves us to find ways to continue some form of the work-at-home model to reduce traffic, save money and reduce (instead of increase) air pollution.

This summer the remaining section to Hidden Valley Road will be installed. Thanks to this new bike lane, bicyclists now have a lane to distance themselves from cars, and cars can more safely pass. Our Board agreed to name the bike lanes in honor of Michael Nosco, a military veteran and local resident who passed away in 2009. Jack Nosco, Michael's brother, is a County firefighter and has been a local advocate for bike lanes in Ventura County for many years, and was a long-time supporter of adding bike lanes to Potrero Road. He has used Potrero Road as part of the 80-mile Michael Nosco Memorial Ride that raises funds to provide financial relief to families and individuals confronting life-threatening illnesses. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony planned for November that will be open to the public. Hope to see you there!