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Nanticoke Senior Center, supporting our community senior population

By Terry Carson
 Executive Director, Western Sussex Chamber of Commerce

COVID-19 has affected all of us but the vulnerable senior population has been hit the hardest. The Nanticoke Senior Center closed on March 17, due to the virus and this left a huge void in our community especially for the Nanticoke Senior Centers' membership.

During pre-pandemic times the Nanticoke Senior Center opened at 7 a.m. The center offered breakfast, exercise opportunities, transportation to banks, shopping and doctors' appointments, computer access, recreation, entertainment, celebrations and daily affordable lunches. There were also 500 meals delivered to homebound seniors each week.

After March 17 and the onset of COVID-19, the senior center had limited staff working from 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Homebound meal preparations and delivery continued every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Members of the community, Senior Center staff and the Seaford Police Department made sure homebound meals were still delivered to seniors.

The Nanticoke Senior Center staff made sure all phone calls were answered and homebound meal prep continued. The Senior Center DART bus and van continued to visit our community to make sure our seniors were getting the food, medicine and the supplies they needed.

The staff also made treat bags which were delivered as a check-in opportunity for members. In the spring of 2020, a curbside program started every

Wednesday from 11:30-12:30 where members could pick up drive-through lunches. Outdoor opportunities were offered during the summer months to include concerts. Activities such as line dance instruction were offered outside on the lawn and exercise classes went virtual on Facebook Live twice a week.

Lora Schuler, president of the Senior Center Board said, "Working with the Senior Center for over 20 years has been one of my most rewarding experiences and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve this mission. During my tenure there have been many challenges but none like the ones this pandemic has presented. The flexibility, resilience and the hearts of the Nanticoke Senior Center staff and Board have been in overdrive and the mission of the Center has stayed in focus. The homebound meal program has been a priority to help at-risk seniors and we have strictly adhered to the protocol to move through the stages as mandated by the state of Delaware. We are delighted to be open with limitations now and look forward to the future when the Center can resume to full capacity."

On Sept. 8, the Senior Center opened with restrictions. The gym is open in the morning and afternoon with deep cleaning in the middle of the day. The building is open for activities and support every day with a limited number member capacity. Scheduled movies, exercise classes and line dancing are available to members at the center now.

Brenda Givens, director of Operations, said, "It is so refreshing to see people in our building again, COV-



ID-19 has affected us in so many ways, but we as the staff of the Nanticoke Senior Center are here to provide our members with safe ways to continue with their life and important socialization."

On July 1, the Senior Center started their membership drive. At the present time, the Nanticoke Senior Center provides support and service to 750 members. That number is down approximately 300 memberships from

last year. The center has introduced a new Seniorship Program. This program takes donations for seniors who need help with membership costs.

Schuler thanks the staff, board members and community for their dedication and support. A special thanks to our loyal members for their patience and understanding during this time.

If you would like more information about the Nanticoke Senior Center or information about how you can help please contact the Senior Center at 302-629-4939 or brenda.givens@nanticokecenter.com.

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 8866 Riverside Dr., Seaford, DE 19973
302.875.5595
www.thesmithfirm.org
 Also seeing clients at our Rehoboth Office

214 E. Front St., Laurel, DE 19956 **302.875.8300**
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