



March 15, 2020

Dear GUFFS community,

We are in the midst of a first-in-our-lifetime experience. The leadership of the GUFFS District has the health, safety and learning of our student body in mind, but we are also poised to serve as an important point of contact for our entire community - students, parents, families, residents without children in our school, and all other community members. And at this time where social distancing is recommended to pause further spread of the novel coronavirus (now known as SARS-CoV-2), it is all the more important to strengthen our social connectedness and work to promote our collective health and well-being.

The nation's public health officials have published [clear updated recommendations on how to prevent the spread of this virus](#) and a [complete list of symptoms associated with COVID-19](#) (the illness associated with the SARS-CoV-2 infection). Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions — like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example — appear to be at [higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness](#). Public health officials also predict that, with testing increasing across the nation, infections and diagnoses will increase significantly over the coming weeks.

This is a moment for our community to work together to provide those neighbors who are most vulnerable and those who will become infected, ill, or who otherwise self-quarantine with quality-of-life and other life-saving supports. That means coordinating efforts to assist those facing food insecurity, providing prepared meals to those who are ill or isolated, running errands on behalf of our elder or infirmed neighbors, assisting families who are now unable to go to work because young children are at home and providing other forms of tangible support.

This also means checking in. Please call your neighbors and loved ones frequently. During this moment of unprecedented community stress, we need to connect with each other more than ever. And while most of us have endless information access from the web or other news media, we have to look out for our neighbors who don't have this access or who might want to locally connect instead.

If anyone in the community has public health-related questions, you can reach out to GUFFS Nurse, Melissa DeFonce, at 845-494-1758 or mdefonce@gufs.org, or our Board Trustee, Jocelyn Apicello, at 845-514-6543 or japicello@gufs.org. Likewise, if anyone in the community is in need of tangible or emotional support, or knows someone who is isolated, we urge you to communicate. The Philipstown Behavioral Health Hub, located at 5 Stone Street in Cold Spring, is also available to connect GUFFS students and families to needed resources around mental health issues. Please visit www.philipstownhub.org for more information.

We will send out additional communications as information unfolds. Please stay safe and healthy, but also stay in touch. Together our community is stronger.