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Dear Residents,

Firstly, thank you for continuing strict social distancing measures and wearing a face covering in public to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. These measures are working to slow the number of new cases within our communities. The Bernards Township Health Department (BTHD) continues their effective public health actions including tracking new cases, contact tracing close contacts of those infected, and investigating outbreaks and rates of infection within our jurisdiction.

Some of our residents have experienced loss of friends, family members, and colleagues. Our sympathy goes out to them. Many are still fighting the effects of the virus at home and in healthcare settings. We have the power to help them by preventing further spread of COVID-19.

We all want to get back to our usual work and play routines. Unfortunately, we are not at the point where the transmission of the virus has slowed down enough to return to business as usual. Many have asked what “reopening” will look like. Even when done in phases, reopening will increase the risk of COVID-19 spread and there is currently no way to safeguard against that risk. Every one person with the disease will spread it to two or three other individuals on average. We must work together to keep that number as low as possible. A well-tested and effective vaccine will be able to accomplish this when it’s available.

In the meantime, our only defense is staying six-feet apart and covering our mouth and nose when in public. Face coverings help shield others from the spread of COVID-19. People who have COVID-19 may be asymptomatic and wearing a face covering can help prevent the spread to one another. Self-isolating when sick or waiting for test results, washing our hands with soap and water, using alcohol based hand-sanitizer, and disinfecting commonly used surfaces often can help yourself and others. It takes great effort and patience to reduce the transmission rate of the virus through these methods. The good news is that **you have the power** to make these changes and make a difference.

To help us help you, keep track of where you have been and who you have seen recently. A quick note in your calendar will help with contact tracing so if you get sick it is easy to recall your recent visits. Develop a “household plan” which everyone can agree upon. Discuss the *do’s and don’ts* under your roof. Who will you let come over once quarantine is complete? What and when will you clean? Where will you go for leisure activities? Be sure everyone feels safe and comfortable.

At sunrise on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> *Executive Order 133* from Governor Murphy will take effect. State parks and golf courses will be opened at the discretion of county governments. As the Governor stated, “This should not serve as an open invitation to rush back to normalcy and break the necessary social distancing measures”. As the days get warmer, having access to our vital green spaces will serve as an outlet for members of the community to get fresh air and physical exercise. As you continue to enjoy the outdoors, keep in mind the above preventative measures and tips for your family. We have been doing an incredible job abiding by these measures thus far. ***Continue to keep your heads up, staying alert and keeping in line with current guidelines.*** Stay well and thank you for your continued cooperation in keeping you, your family and community safe from COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Lucy A. Forgione, MS, MCHES  
Health Officer/Director of Health

**The Bernards Township Health Department is the Contractual Health Agency serving:**  
Bernards Township - Bernardsville Borough - Chester Borough - Long Hill Township - Mendham Borough - Peapack and Gladstone Borough