

Coronavirus threat alters local lives

Residents working at home, 'reprioritizing'

By Gordon Weeks

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Keri Davidson, a member of the Shelton School District Board of Directors, is working for her pharmaceutical company at home. With schools closing statewide due to the coronavirus threat, both her daughters are also home.

"My husband is a pharmacist, so he is working his normal schedule and taking extra cleaning precautions at work," Davidson said. "My daughters and I are staying positive and coming up with some routines at home so that they can continue to do some learning while I am on work teleconferences and keeping up with school board business by email or phone.

"We are also having some fun, taking hikes and bike rides in the sunshine and offering to help our older neighbors in any way that we safely can. We have seen many neighbors out on a walk and it helps to not feel so isolated during this time we are all at home. Safety for everyone and their families is so important right now. All our actions have an impact."

Davidson is among the Mason County residents who shared how their lives have changed with the spread of the coronavirus.

For Shelton accountant Cheryl Wil-

liams, the crisis has "taught us as a family what we really need and more importantly, what's not vital."

"My husband prepared our household for this," she said. "But loss of habits will be bad: I don't have to get ready for work at H&R Block because I'm on a self-imposed quarantine. (Daughter) A.B. has no school. I'm planning a lot of scavenger hunts and walks to fill up the time."

The crisis has "brought us closer as a family," Williams said. "We have time that we didn't have before. We get to hunker down, and together we'll benefit as a family and be better prepared."

Williams offered this piece of advice: "Be your best human self right now."

Karen DeWitt, director of safety and security for the Shelton School District, was attending daily emergency meetings with the state Department of Health. Now she's working from home, participating in meetings through online video conferencing platform Zoom.

"My trip to Panama during spring break was canceled," she said. "I continue to run first thing in the morning at home and get outside as much as possible, walk the dog. I am only in close contact with my husband for the most part. I have stopped to see my son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter briefly. I found myself washing my hands before picking up my granddaughter. I continue to wash my

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Shortly after noon Monday, traffic is extremely light on West Railroad Avenue in downtown Shelton. Journal photo by Michael Heinbach

Lives: Some residents worry about elderly individuals

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hands and sanitize.”

Linda Frizzell, who creates graphics for the *Shelton-Mason County Journal*, said the largest impact on her life is the isolation of her 89-year-old mother at Maple Glen Assisted Living in Shelton. Her mother has dementia.

“They have locked down the facility, as well they should, so I can’t visit her,” Frizzell said. “Her poor hearing prevents her from using the phone, so I have no way to reach her. Residents are being asked to stay in their rooms.”

When Frizzell last saw her mother on Sunday, “I explained to her what was going on and she was her usual good sport about things. ‘If I get it I get it,’ she said with a shrug.”

Frizzell added, “Maple Glen is going to let me slip notes to my mom so I’ll be able to keep her in the loop. At least until she forgets it again.”

CHOICE High School Principal Stacey Anderson said her first concern is for her students after her school was closed on Friday.

“Many of them rely on school for support, food and other services beyond their academics,” she said. “In addition, we are very worried about how this will impact graduation for our seniors.”

Anderson said the crisis made her realize she is an extrovert.

“I have had to scale back my social interactions, and find other ways to connect with friends and family,” she said. “We have prepared ourselves with food and supplies, so we are pretty comfortable with spending time at home, and I am very grateful for the ability to get outside and enjoy this beautiful region in which we live.”

Anderson said she is spending her time following the news, reading, working around the house and reaching out to friends and family, especially older people, some with compromised immune systems.

“So far I feel that everyone is doing the best they can to support one another,” Anderson said. “It is great to see our community come together.”

Kathy Geist, outreach and transit planner for Mason Transit Authority, is still working in public, “practicing good hygiene and social distancing

COVID-19 resources

- Washington State Department of Health: www.doh.wa.gov/emergencies/coronavirus
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/
- Mason County Public Health: www.co.mason.wa.us/health/index.php

Additional information

- Mason County Public Health encourages people with mild symptoms to stay at home and rest.
- People who are severely ill or at risk for severe illness, such as those with respiratory illness or COPD, are encouraged to stay home and contact a health provider.
- People who are sick should wear protective masks when seeking medical treatment.
- Public Health officials urge those who are not sick not to wear masks to keep from depleting the supply.
- Mason County Public Health asks residents to have a contingency plan in place in case additional prevention strategies are put in place to adjust work and home routines for possible changes to prevention strategies.

Compiled by reporter Michael Heinbach

when possible,” she said. Her two sons work at Alderbrook Resort & Spa in Union, which is closed, but both are continuing to be paid. Her husband is one of the captains of the Lady Alderbrook scenic cruise vessel.

“We are lucky,” Geist said.

“I am extremely worried about others, our elderly neighbors — our sons keep reminding us that we are considered ‘older’ as well — family and my co-workers who are still serving the public,” she said.

Geist added, “I tear up at the thought of not being able to hold and squeeze our 7-month-old grandson for a while ... I wonder if this will change the very nature in which we greet each other in the future. If so, I am really going to miss hugging people. (The) silver lining (is) slowing down, taking stock, reprioritizing and appreciating what we still have is a good thing.”