



Pa'auilo Mauka Kalopa Community Association

Photo courtesy of Karl Backus

Monthly News & Updates

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April 2020 Newsletter



Shopping in the Time of Coronavirus

By Joe Clarkson, PMKCA President

I hope the following notes can help others work through the kinds of changes we are being forced to take to combat the epidemic. I don't know whether the actions I describe here are too much or too little in the way of personal protection, but I know that I would rather err on the side of excess safety in these uncertain times. Nobody wants to get Covid-19 or give it to others. Good luck to us all.

Covid-19 Journal - How I Went to the Post Office

My wife Karen and I are in our 70s and are in one of the higher risk demographic groups for those who might get Covid-19. The fatality rate for our demographic in China was on the order of 8% of confirmed cases and even though the elderly comprise the vast majority of those who die from regular seasonal influenza, Covid-19 is about ten times more deadly than the flu for elderly folks like us. This is a disease that no one wants to get, but it is especially dangerous for our kupuna.

My wife and I started self-isolating at home on March 13th. After nearly two weeks without interacting with any other people except a few folks also walking along the country roads of Pa'auilo Mauka (briefly and from across the road), we were pretty sure we didn't have the virus.

Not having Covid-19 is a status we might be able to maintain by not leaving our small farm in Pa'auilo Mauka, but since there is no home delivery of mail for the vast majority of those living in our mauka neighborhoods, we need to go to the post office to get medicines and other essentials sent by mail. (And why

don't we get home delivery, anyway?)

I decided to ask the postmaster at Honoka'a post office whether it would be possible for the elderly to get packages placed in the outdoor lockers so that they could get the mail later in the evening without coming near anyone else. The postmaster explained that since only 50 outdoor lockers were available and since there were over 2,000 people using the post office boxes, it would be impossible to fairly allocate locker space even if it were possible to manage the hundreds of requests that would come in. I was reassured by being told that now only two people are allowed in the lobby waiting line at any one time, but even so, getting packages would require some exposure to other people, any one of whom could be asymptomatic and infectious.

I felt fortunate to have the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to make the trip with minimal risk. I had a few N95 masks in the shop (usually used while sanding and grinding), eye protection and nitrile gloves, (usually used to keep paint and horse hoof treatment liquids off my hands).

I drove to the post office lot, put on my PPE and went to the box to get my yellow cards. When I went in the lobby, no one else was there. While I waited for the clerk to get the packages, two other patrons arrived, neither of whom were wearing masks, but they stayed by the marks on the lobby floor, which were six feet apart and well away from me.

After getting my packages and mail back to my car, I drove home still wearing PPE. I got out of the car, took the mail to an outdoor work table, opened everything, dumped the inner contents in a clean basket without touching them and threw the envelopes and boxes in the rubbish. After leaving my mask and eye protection on the table and shoes outside the door, I immediately went inside and took off all my clothes with my still-gloved hands and put them in the washing machine before taking off my nitrile gloves and tossing them in the rubbish. After taking a shower, I got dressed, put on more gloves and washed my goggles with soapy water, put the mask in the oven at 160F and then disposed of the gloves. Whew!

An hour later, I took the mask out of the oven but kept it separate from unused masks. I wiped down all the touched surfaces of the car the next day. You may be wondering why I put my mask in the oven? A recent study at Stanford University confirmed that "N95 masks can be sterilized and reused with no loss of filtration efficiency by leaving (them) in an oven for 30 mins at 158F". We have only a few masks and need to conserve all of them in case one of us gets sick. I hope that plenty of masks will continue to be made available for our health care workers and that everyone will soon be able to wear masks at all times when they are out in public. We need masks!

Covid-19 Journal – How I Went to the Store

One of the places people come in close contact with others is at the grocery store. Some stores, like Foodland, are creating special shopping hours for the elderly so that they can separate themselves from the crowd a bit more. The Malama Market in downtown Honoka'a is part of the Foodland family of stores, but while they are not offering a similar program just now they are restricting the number of customers in the store to only ten people. Folks who wait in line to go in the store stay six feet apart with no difficulty.

PMKCA will soon be recruiting volunteers who are willing to do home delivery for our kupuna, but our effort is just now getting off the ground. Malama Market will allow volunteers to charge the groceries they purchase to another person's credit card if a permission form allowing the charges is placed on file at the store. This will help volunteer shoppers, but getting the forms to the store makes organization somewhat more difficult.

Ideally, no one should have to go into a grocery store at all, but this would require store staff to pull ordered items from the shelf, package the groceries for delivery and somehow get it to the customer without making close contact. Fortunately, there is one store in Honoka'a willing to do just that.

Yesterday I called up the folks at the Honoka'a Country Market and ordered some staples from a list they had previously texted to me. They took my credit card information, asked me what kind of car I would be driving, assembled the order, and by the time I made the 15-minute trip to the store in my car, they had the order ready. I pulled into the parking lot, popped the trunk, and after about 90 seconds a clerk came out with the order and placed it into the trunk. I never had to get out of the car. After driving home, I found the items to be exactly as ordered. It was a real relief to be able to get some food supplies so effortlessly and safely.

Next Meetings

Here's a lineup of the next few PMKCA meetings:

Thu, Apr 9, 2020 7PM PMKCA Board of Directors Meeting
(Videoconferencing via Zoom)

Thu, Jul 9, 2020 7PM PMKCA Board of Directors Meeting
Hawaiian Vanilla Co (TBD)

Sat, Jul 25, 2020 11AM PMKCA Annual Potluck Picnic and
General Meeting. Kalopa State Park (TBD)

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