

Community Voice — 5/14/2020

We Must Find Ways to Open More of Hawaii

We are all aware how devastating the current Covid-19 health and economic situation is. Thousands of jobs have been lost, and many businesses will not survive. We are all sequestered.

As we consider how to start opening, we need to look at the personal consequences of our situation beyond Covid-19.

The young people who are quarantined in their homes may be drinking more, eating more, and getting no exercise. The social fabric often found in the workplace is lost. It is a recipe for anxiety and depression which are leading causes of suicide.

Suicide rates go up in times of economic crisis. Couple that with the social isolation and we could have even more suicides.

David Brooks, “In times of stress, making deep connections can help ” Honolulu Star Advertiser, Saturday, 4/4, quotes a study by Samantha Brooks of King’s College London that quarantine produces a range of bad mental health outcomes, including trauma, confusion and anger. He also refers to an article by Tyler Norris of the Well Being Trust that every one-percentage-point of unemployment leads eventually to a 3.5% increase in opioid addiction.

In 2017 Hawaii had [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) reports Hawaii had 227 suicide deaths and 207 opioid deaths. Research in BMJ, a leading medical journal in a study on the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis on suicides showed that suicides by men were 4.2% to 6.4% higher than what would have been expected under earlier trends. Rates were lower for women. France is reporting that that cases of domestic abuse have gone up by about a third.

CNN reports that the New York city Domestic Violence website, NYC Hope, saw website visits double from March 18 to April 5th.

The most susceptible demographic to the virus is the elderly with underlying conditions.

We need to take all of this into consideration when planning to open our community. What we may be saving in Covid-19 lives of the elderly may be lost to suicide and depression in the young.

The undersigned are all kupuna and some with underlying conditions. We feel strongly that we must consider what this sequestration, loss of jobs, and the personal support that jobs offer will do to the future of our children. We elderly can remain sequestered, and we will help each other. We must find ways for life to open again for the rest of the community.

Please consider:

1. Open parks and beaches. People must have places to have a sense of freedom. People will have greater confidence. The fresh air and open skies work wonders. The New York Subway is the greatest conduit for the spread of the virus. Not open air places.
2. Open school racetracks so people can walk around the track.
3. Gradually open the retail businesses that maintain social distancing.
4. Open private clubs and exercise facilities. Open restaurants, and retail businesses.

5. Prepare for testing to be done on the mainland for tourists to begin coming back. Welcome them back.
6. Allow schools to open in the fall. Provide protection wherever needed.
7. Allow summer activities to open for children.
8. Constantly reassess and add more places.

Please consider all these consequences as we make our way through the next few weeks.

Signed,

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