

Amid Cancelations and Talk of Closures in Town, Darien Senior Center Events Continue

Author : David Gurliacci

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Darien Senior Center remains open and as of now plans to stay open and hold events, Senior Programs Director Elizabeth Paris says, although she adds that the program is following directives from local and state authorities.

Darien Library announced today (Tuesday) that its events have been cancelled, and Darien Public Schools are opening two hours late on Wednesday as teachers prepare for the possibility they'll be doing some teaching online if schools are closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Health authorities have said the novel coronavirus spreading across the world and the country is particularly dangerous for elderly people — those over age 60 — and those with certain health conditions.

"We're following everything the CDC [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] suggests, and we're following everything the state suggests," Paris said. The Senior Center is also getting direction from First Selectman Jayme Stevenson and Health Director David Knauf, she said.

Gov. Ned Lamont recently asked nursing homes to not accept visitors, other than family members for dying residents.

Page said participants in Senior Center events, unlike many nursing home residents, "are able to make decisions and self-determine how they want to act, so we're leaving the decision up to people themselves."

The Senior Center has "sanitation stations everywhere" and just had an education program for seniors with Knauf discussing COVID-19.

The Senior Center, located in Mather Community Center in the Town Hall complex at 2 Renshaw Road, does have one restriction in connection with the COVID-19 outbreak, Paris said: It's limiting events to 100 people. A number of events at the center have had 120 and up to 150 participants, she said, but that won't be happening for the foreseeable future.

Another organization where elderly people gather in town, the Darien Men's Association, is still [announcing upcoming events](#) in its regular speaker series on its website. On Wednesday morning, March 11, Dr. Daniel Ksepka of the Bruce Museum [will speak on](#) "the discovery, reconstruction and computer modeling of flight style in *Pelagornis sandersi*, an extinct bird he described in 2014."

What the CDC Says Now

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of early Tuesday afternoon, has [this advice](#) on its website for older people on COVID-19 prevention:

"If you are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 because of your age or because you have a serious long-term health problem, it is extra important for you to take actions to reduce your risk of getting sick with the disease. [...]"

"[Avoid crowds](#) as much as possible."

The "Avoid crowds" link leads to this further advice on the website, under the heading "Get Ready for COVID-19 Now": "Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick."

That web page also states: "If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, take extra measures to put distance between yourself and other people to further reduce your risk of being exposed to this new virus. — Stay home as much as possible."