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## **COVID-19: The New Abnormal Emerges Out of an Abundance of Closures and Other Changes**

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Entire public school districts in New Canaan, Wilton and Westport announced on Wednesday that they are immediately closing, and remote learning starts Friday in New Canaan. Senior centers in Greenwich and Stamford also announced closings.

Donations of clothing (but not food) to Person-to-Person and in-kind donations to the Domestic Violence Crisis Center are now being refused. Avon Theatre in Stamford announced its anti-coronavirus measures and the Stamford Symphony has cancelled its March 21 and 22 performances.

That's the new abnormal in Darien and surrounding communities as various organizations, institutions and agencies batten down the hatches and shut doors to the public in anticipation of COVID-19 breaking out here, too.

- Update, 6:47 p.m. — **Weston Public Schools are also closing**, Westport News reports.
- Update, 6:53 p.m. — **New Canaan Library is closed** until March 26; **Westport Library is closing** until Monday, March 16; **Wilton Library is closing** until further notice.

### **School Districts Closed**

"New Canaan Public Schools will close Thursday, district officials said, and starting Friday students will continue learning remotely for two weeks," [NewCanaanite.com reports](https://NewCanaanite.com).

NewCanaanite.com also reported:

- New Canaan's emergency management director, Mike Handler, said in a town-wide communication that officials have no information that New Canaanite who tested positive for it had direct contact with a student or school personnel.
- "However, thorough contact tracing will take several days to complete," Handler said. "What we do know is that COVID-19 is present in our community and our objective is to slow down the viral spread."
- New Canaan Library cancelled its programming for March, and town officials said they've closed Lapham Community Center—New Canaan's senior center—as a precautionary measure. The New Canaan Historical Society closed Wednesday for at least two weeks.

**In Westport**, the interim superintendent of schools announced [in a 1:14 p.m. email](#) to parents: "We have just learned that a number of Westport parents and Westport Public School students, in schools throughout our district, were in contact with an individual presumed to be positive with coronavirus.

"Based upon discussions with and at the direction of Mr. Mark Cooper, Director of Health for the Westport Weston Health District, the Westport School District will be closed until further notice following today's regularly scheduled dismissal."

**In Wilton**, a man in town [tested positive for COVID-19](#) days ago, the first one in Connecticut, and may be the one referred to in an announcement issued Wednesday.

"We have been notified that parents of one or more Wilton Public School students have had direct contact with a potentially presumptive positive COVID-19 patient," the announcement on the school district's home page says.

"Out of an abundance of caution," the Wilton's health director has ordered the immediate closure of all

Wilton public schools, closure of the town community center and all sports and other activities involving public school students. All of it "until further notice."

"Parents should immediately make arrangements to pick up their children from after-school care at the WPS and the Comstock Community Center," the announcement said. "Please have children stay home, check temperature two times per day, and call your personal physician if there is a fever, cough and difficulty breathing."

## **Senior Centers**

**Darien Senior Center remains open**, but is working under the advice of Darien Health Director David Knauf and town and state authorities, Director Elizabeth Paris said on Tuesday.

"**Greenwich** First Selectman Fred Camillo announced in a release Wednesday around 5 p.m. that the Greenwich Senior Center/Arts Center at 299 Greenwich Ave. will be closed to the public, until further notice," [GreenwichFreePress.com](https://www.greenwichfreepress.com) reported.

The senior lunch program and all activities at the center are ending for the foreseeable future, the report said.

"**The Stamford Senior Center**, out of an abundance of caution, will temporarily suspend all programs and activities effective March 12, 2020," the organization said in an news release early Wednesday morning.

### ***The announcement gave this reasoning:***

"No cases of COVID-19 have been reported at the Senior Center, nor is there an outbreak in the City of Stamford at this time. However, the Center's members, given their age, are among those individuals identified by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other agencies as being at the highest risk from this virus.

"The CDC advises that older adults over 60, and those with underlying health issues such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes or compromised immune systems, should avoid being around others who are sick, avoid crowds as much as possible and, should there be an outbreak in the community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce the risk of exposure."

Says Christina Crain, Executive Director of the Stamford Senior Center: "The safety and well - being of our members is our #1 priority. While we recognize that many of the seniors we serve count on the Senior Center for vital socialization, exercise, and a nutritious affordable meal, we are following the guidelines of the CDC, World Health Organization and the Governor's Office. We believe it prudent to close at this time to avoid any possible exposure at the Center to any of our members and staff."

Like Darien, Stamford has a meal program for seniors. Darien's is run out of the Senior Center. In Stamford a program is run out of Stamford Government Center, and that remains open, the announcement said.

**Person-to-Person**

On Tuesday, the charitable organization said it is **remaining open** and still accepting food donations.

*From the announcement:*

"Amid ongoing concerns about coronavirus, Person-to-Person is taking steps to ensure that local residents have the support they may need. Concerned that the local impact may create a strain on the workforce and disproportionately impact low-wage and service workers, Person-to-Person is prepared to offer resources to individuals who may be affected.

"While the overall impact remains to be seen, Person-to-Person understands that with many area residents already living paycheck-to-paycheck, even the slightest reduction in income can create a financial crisis for the household. In the event that businesses may need to reduce staffing or hours, or a parent needs to miss work to care for a child should their school close, the services that Person-to-Person provides can help bridge the gap.

"With locations and food pantries in Darien, Norwalk and Stamford, Person-to-Person also provides casework services that can connect people to additional resources when appropriate. They served nearly 25,000 residents of lower Fairfield County in 2019.

"Individuals in need of assistance can reach P2P by calling 203-655-0048 or visiting [p2phelps.org](https://p2phelps.org). Residents can also call 211 to be referred to other local services or to reach the State of Connecticut's coronavirus resource line."

**In a separate announcement emailed Wednesday**, P2P said it expects to be helping more people affected by the Coronavirus outbreak and asked for donations to help with that:

"We pledge to keep families fed during the coming weeks. We are preparing for a potential increase in the number of people we serve, and any possible disruptions to our food supply, by working with our community partners to ensure that our pantries can continue to provide essentials. Our team is dedicated to making the best possible decisions for the health and safety of our clients, volunteers, staff, and donors - this is our top priority.

"Many of you have reached out to ask how you can help. We need your support now more than ever and are so appreciative of your offers of financial or food contributions, and especially for your genuine concern for the well-being of those we serve. Please see below for ways that you can help."

The email said food donations and money would be welcome, but not clothing, for now:

<https://darienite.com> Director of the DVCC, said in an email Wednesday:

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"Out of an abundance of caution, DVCC is suspending weekly support groups and not accepting physical donations until further notice.

"We are still available 24/7 through our hotline, 888-774-2900. While there has been no case of Coronavirus connected to DVCC, we are taking proactive measures to help ensure everyone safety. As the situation relating to COVID-19 continues to evolve, we will continue to provide updates as they become available."

Adam also said: "Our staff has begun implementing the DVCC's emergency preparedness procedures, and will activate a COVID-19 response plan as necessary."

### **Stamford Symphony**

**On Tuesday, the symphony announced that its next concert is cancelled:** "Russell Jones, president and CEO, has announced that the concerts on March 21 and 22, 2020 will be cancelled. Stamford Symphony puts the utmost priority on the health and safety of all its audience, musicians and staff. Over the past weeks, the Symphony has been continually monitoring the evolving situation regarding COVID-19 (coronavirus) [...]

"Russell Jones said: 'Out of an abundance of caution, we want to proactively manage the health risk to the general public in Fairfield County, Connecticut. By cancelling the concerts now, we are able to plan to reschedule the concerts for a later date this spring.'"

### **Avon Theatre**

**The nonprofit movie theater in downtown Stamford is remaining open,** but pointed out in a Tuesday announcement that the COVID-19 pandemic is "a constantly changing situation" and that theater management is monitoring information and recommendations from local, state and federal authorities (a standard element in these announcements). The announcement also said:

"The Avon has not altered its program schedule to date, but, as you know, this is a constantly changing situation. We will, of course, heed the advice of health and government authorities. In the interim, our cleaning service and our employees are vigilantly wiping down surfaces and thoroughly cleaning our facilities with the recommended products and ensuring the availability of cleaning solutions for the use of our patrons.

"We have clearly instructed our valued staff not to come to work with any signs of illness and we respectfully ask our patrons to comply with this directive, as well."