



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

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Dear Fairfax Community,

I have 3X5 index card thumb tacked to the bulletin board in my kitchen.. It reads: “Assume Benevolence”

I wrote it a long time ago, in pencil in my scribble, on a faded salmon colored card, and it catches my eye every time I walk by. I’ve grown to use it as a cue to pause and reflect upon the difference between what I actually know and what assumptions I make based on what I think I know.

We are entering the 11th week under the Shelter In Place order. There is a tremendous amount of information both Scientific and anecdotal, and great anticipation about what to expect with the June 1st order. There is community wide fear for our own physical and emotional health and financial stability, and that coupled with concern about the survival of our businesses, and what feels like insurmountable unknowns, has brought us to what I consider a tipping point. It is easy to react with anger when we encounter people who disobey the orders and easy to make sweeping judgements about the way we are each choosing to behave even amongst members of the same family and groups of friends and neighbors.

Never before has it been more important to “Assume benevolence”. It opens doors for communication that our judgements slam tight. At this point our choice of words and actions are vital to one another’s wellbeing.

We carefully consider our words when we apply for a job, write college essays, suffer over love letters, and it seems that every single word carries the weight of the world or has the power to completely change the essence of the intended message. We have this kind of power in our choice of words and choice of follow up actions. I have observed over the past weeks that despite having half of our faces covered and our mouths muffled, there is an easier more honest and compassionate exchange of words taking place. I’m noticing it on Zoom calls, in line at the grocery store, or walking past someone downtown. This is the desired trajectory and the path forward depends on each of us treading carefully, considering each of our vulnerabilities.

The tag line which is pervasive in both the local and global response to Covid-19 pandemic is “We are in this together”. If we pause, assume that Fairfax is a puzzle and each piece a unique shape and size only complete if each piece is joined, it is easy to see that we are all equally important in determining the final picture. We are not whole if anyone is left behind for any reason. Fairfax has always been a community that sets a high bar. We are awake, involved and we rise to the occasion. We choose the 7,555 piece puzzle and with impassioned public opinion and active participation we come out with a

complete picture, thankfully it is often not exactly the one on the box top.

We are all suffering from human interaction deficit disorder, but right now the health of our populace depends on each of us working in cooperation. We will not wish this away. If we choose to do as we've always done, we will delay and fracture our ability to put the pieces back together in a new, healthier and more synergistic picture of community.

We will get through this and emerge stronger. In this poignant moment in time we have unprecedented opportunity to bring community together and galvanize us to take action.

Where do you fit in the Fairfax puzzle? Trim, Corner, Middle.... and what does that look like? Please let me know - rgoddard@townoffairfax.org - there is a place for everyone!

Renee Goddard

Mayor of Fairfax