Good afternoon, Pinecrest. This is our update for August 28th.

Again, this week we continue to watch a positive trend. Numbers are dramatically down, yet we are still above where we were at our peak in April in all categories. Medical experts tell us that we will have another surge this fall. The stronger we come out of this one, the softer the next one will be. Their biggest concern is what is going to happen with the schools, first the colleges that are opening now, then K-12 schools, when they open later this fall. The first few weeks of September are going to be important to watch.

Miami-Dade County has decided to go back to the previous rules allowing restaurants to open for indoor dining as long as occupancy does not exceed 50%. This will begin on Monday. While the medical experts agreed that reopening restaurants is safe under the previous rules set forth in May, they advised that it be done after Labor Day; not before. This may represent a problem because there will be a spike after Labor Day as there has been after each holiday since March, and now we won’t be able to tell how much is attributed to the holiday or how much is attributed to the recent change. The medical experts are urging decision makers not to make any more changes until we see how the disease reacts in mid-September. We must resist that urge to stop now. It is hard but we must finish this job. You do not want this virus.

Testing is down again this week. Not because there is a lack of tests, but because demand is down. Please remember that most people that spread the disease have no symptoms at all. So, if you have been in close contact with a person who has the disease, go get tested. They are easy, inexpensive and now coming back faster than ever. In fact, the median time to get a test back is now one day, the best we’ve ever had. While the CDC has changed its recommendations on testing by not asking asymptomatic
people to get tests, our medical experts have recommended that we ignore that guidance and test as many people as possible, particularly asymptomatic people. Now is the time where we can begin to suffocate this disease with testing and tracing. If you are contacted by a tracer, please answer their questions honestly.

The Numbers

This week, the incidents of the disease have continued to drop.

Symptoms: Hospital Emergency Rooms report that the number of people exhibiting COVID or flu symptoms, like cough, fever and shortness of breath, continue to decline.

Infection Rate: The numbers are going down. When measuring the rate of infection, we have a goal of keeping the percent of positive cases out of total tests under 10% on average over a two-week period. This week we have reached 9.5. That is good news but we should not consider relaxing any more of our current rules until the average positivity rate goes under 5% every day for two weeks, which could come in the next few weeks.

Cases: This week, just like last several weeks, most of the cases are still affecting people in the age group between 18 and 34 years old. The median age is 43. Most people are reporting getting the disease at home, work and at social gatherings as simple as visiting family and friends or going to a party.

Hospitalizations: The numbers are going down. At the April peak, we had 710 COVID-19 patients in the hospitals. By early June, we had managed this number down to 546 patients, 23% less than the April peak. Since that time, the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital has peaked at 2,302, over 320% higher than our April peak. This week we reached 894. This is 60% less than the July peak, but still 126% of the April peak. We still have a long way to go to get there but we are getting there.

Utilization: When we measure hospital capacity, we look at beds, ICU beds and ventilators. We should stay below a 70% utilization rate. This week, 12% of regular beds are being utilized, 24% of ICU beds are being utilized, and 22% of ventilators are being utilized. All numbers are down from last week.

Deaths: Average deaths per day over the last month are still rising. Most of the deaths are people over 60. Deaths will continue to rise until perhaps mid-September mainly because there is a delay of up to 6 weeks in reporting them.
Contact Tracing/Test Results: This should be our main focus at this point, and it is getting better each week. We are at about 600 testers where we need 800. Tracers are contacting a higher percentage of the people testing positive. The data they are collecting says most people are getting it at home or from work. Many people that are being contacted are not responding. If contacted, please respond honestly. The data is confidential. Test results countywide are coming back in less than three days on average. Testing for the disease and the antibodies continues at the Pinecrest Municipal Center. Test results for the swab test are coming back in 48 hours and antibody results are coming back in about 30 minutes.

The Future: All is going in the right direction, but we must finish the job. Wear a mask. If congregating outdoors, do so at more than 6 feet apart when at all possible. For this fall and the months that follow, we need to guard against the spikes that will inevitably occur. For now, we are in a wait and see pattern, looking to see what happens over the Labor Day weekend and as schools open. We need to keep doing what we are doing. Now is a good time to focus on forming those good routines that will enable us to get through the next stretch as physically and mentally healthy as possible.

We at the Village of Pinecrest are here to help us get through this crisis. If you need to contact me, please do so at 305-606-2364 or jcorradino@pinecrest-fl.gov. Or contact our staff (manager@pinecrest-fl.gov) and Village Council (council@pinecrest-fl.gov). Each and every one of us is working hard every day as a unified team.