

Rockland Metro Show on the Virus Crisis

with Drs. Cheryl Leichty and Phil Groce



We were honored to be joined this week on WRFR's Metro Show by two MDs, Cheryl Leichty and Phil Groce, to discuss the Covid-19 outbreak.



Cheryl Leichty practices internal medicine at Pen Bay Medical Center and provides consultative services for PBMC in infectious diseases. Phil Groce specializes in

geriatric care and, now semi-retired, works as a back-up physician for nursing homes. We Old School fellows know Phil because he used to do an interview show on WRFR and now has been writing up interviews for The Buzz - see his story in this issue. Cheryl Leichty joined us in response to our request to PBMC for someone to help us understand what our local hospital is doing to prepare and what advice they might have for us. She was extremely helpful.

We learned that the Pen Bay staff is fully engaged in preparing for what could be an overwhelming demand for hospital services by Covid-19 sufferers. If there is widespread infection here in Knox County, and outbreak like that being experienced now in parts of Europe, our hospital will be stressed beyond capacity. This is the reason why we are all working so hard now to slow the spread of the infection, by social distancing, washing hands, etc. It is not just about protecting ourselves, but about protecting our community.

Phil Groce reminded us that he is 80 years old, so among those who are at higher risk of dying from the new virus. Phil is in good health, so less at risk than the patients he cares for in nursing homes. He reminded us that many infirm and elderly die from the flu each year, and that the numbers were much higher before flu vaccines were available. There is no vaccine available now or on the near horizon for Covid-19.

While severe illness and even death from Covid-19 among children and otherwise healthy young adults are not unknown, this is rare. The disease is killing old people, especially those who have health problems already, and also those in middle age who have compromised immune systems.

Indeed, the fact that younger people can carry the disease, and spread it, without having any symptoms at all, is the main reason that the new virus is spreading so quickly. Phil wrote us this morning: "I learned this am that a study in Italy has shown most who have the infection are totally asymptomatic, and also infectious." Some studies have put this number at 85%. This is good news as well as bad, of course.

Next week on the Metro show we will be joined by Dave Miramont, our State Senator. We will be talking about the economic effects of the outbreak, and what our government is doing to help citizens whose jobs and businesses are affected. Tune in on 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 Camden, from 5 to 6 pm on Wednesday.

Fire Up the Crematoria

by Joe Steinberger

There can be no life without death. Yet the longer we live, it seems, the more we fear death. Why fear what is inevitable, especially when we have lived a long and full life? We must die to make room for others to live, and to fulfill our destiny.

Perhaps out of the current virus crisis, as our panic over the spread turns to the reality of our infection, and we either die or we don't, those of us who remain will have gained some perspective on life that rises above the me, me, me materialism that is the truly dangerous infection of our times.

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Down Main Street with Phil Groce Who is, is

Some time ago, I went to Staples to get some cards done, and the person who waited on me, Carly Langhery, was so nice and helpful, but what struck me the most was her forthrightness with what I felt was honesty at depth. I decided to interview her for 'Down Main Street' to hear her story. I thought she had something to teach. I asked her where she came from and where she went to school.

"I grew up and went to vocational school in PA where I was trained as a pastry chef. I loved it." I asked her why she isn't doing that now. "It's just that I can't do it as a job. I make crazy birthday cakes for my kids, and creations like that. As a hobby, I love it. Not as a job."

I asked her, Who are you? "I am who I am, not learned, but I love to learn, and in my job, I learn a lot from the people who come in. I grew up on a farm and dealt with animals, not people, but I'm not shy; and neither is my mother. When I came up here, I worked at Montswag Restaurant when it was a biker bar—now it's all fancy—and I left that job after someone was thrown out a window. Then to Dunkin Donuts, Walmart, and 7 years ago I started work here loading and unloading trucks. Manual labor. Then I moved to the register, then to the tech desk, then to the Copy Center. Actually, the formal name is the Print and Marketing Center.

"Three years ago, I had our son, and I wasn't thinking of coming back, but the general manager called me to see if would take on the job as supervisor of Print and Marketing. Believe me, if it had been anyone other than him asking me, I would never have come." What does your husband do?

"He's very happy being a stay-at-home dad. He had 2 children from previous relationships. We are lucky to have an affordable mortgage and a home of our own." Are you able to live on what you are making? Do you look at others and maybe want what they have? "We're happy with each other and what we have. We have good clothing and food on the table. Maybe we don't go on expensive vacations, but we're happy. . . It's been a lot worse." Tell me about that.

"I was homeless in PA." Homeless? "Yes, during my senior year, my dad threw me out of the house, because I told him I was bisexual." How did you live? "I could get a free breakfast at school, and also free lunch, and at lunch I would load up as much as I could to take with me; and that would be supper for me. Mostly, I couch-surfed at night, occasionally I slept outside. I found that I could take a nap at a table at Denny's, if I bought a cup of coffee. I knew one of the waitresses, but they would only allow me 3 hours. It was always a challenge. But I graduated, and then I was able to come up here to live with my uncle in Woolwich." Are you straight now, since you are married and living with your husband?

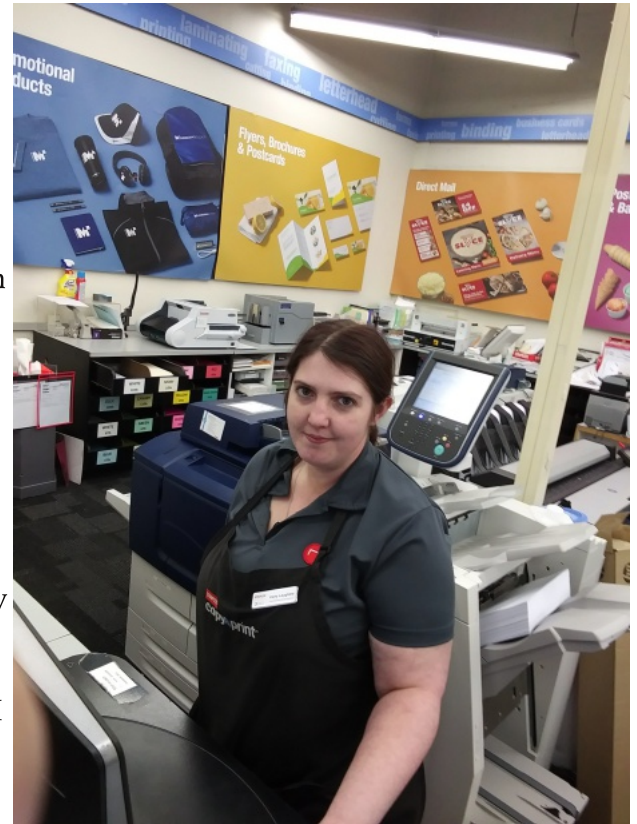
"We are polyamorous, having the capacity to feel romantic love with more than one person. We had a long-term girlfriend living with us. She also helped with the kids. Believe me, I do not want to be the one at home doing all that. My husband and I got married because it was best for the kids, in many ways." Any problems being polyamorous? "No, but we had a challenge from an ex-someone, and a therapist from the State visited us, and he said that we were giving good care to the children, even more care than most people give. He couldn't see a problem."

What you are saying is important. Thank you for revealing it, and thank goodness you are able to live how you want to live in Maine. Do you feel at all isolated? "Definitely not. There are polyam people around." But how do you connect? "It's a bit spread out here in Maine, but we connect through Facebook. Our lives are going well, and as far as work is concerned, they're great with it." How about with your father?

"Mom's fine with it, and we talk every day by phone. Not fine with my father. They came up when we got married, but he was cold and distant. I don't fit into that picture." She rolled up her sleeve and showed me a tattoo on her arm: a black sheep. We both laughed, but it made me sad, as she was telling me how her father seemed to feel. How can any parent withhold love from a child?

Tell me what you do here at Staples. "I supervise four others at the Center." Doesn't Walmart hurt Staples? "We do well. Surprisingly, 80% of what we do, we do for the small businesses around. I had to learn how to do all this stuff, and now I supervise, too. I have to know who is best at dealing with people and who is best at production. For me, it is important that the customers know that the job they want us to do IS important to me. Often the customer is upset, in a hurry, maybe for a baby shower, or a wedding, or a presentation, or job application. They settle right down once they see that we can help. We have a good crew.

"This Copy Center is my other home, and I love it. I'm at my best here."



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I am 75. From what I have read, my chance of eventually becoming infected with the Covid-19 virus is close to 100%, and my chance of dying from it is on the order of 10%. Yes, I wash my hands and keep my distance, and try to help slow the advance, but I want to live now, while I am alive, and not spend my limited time on this earth - limited as it is, with or without this new disease - in fear and hiding.

I have told my wife, who is younger and less at risk, that I would rather die in my bed at home than in the hallway of an overcrowded hospital surrounded by overwhelmed doctors and nurses who cannot do much to help me. And if I die, please call my friend Walker Hutchins and ask him to put me in a body bag and take me directly to be cremated. If anyone wants to remember me, they can get together after the crisis has passed. That will be for her and for them. It will be all the same to me.

What matters to me now is to stay alive while I can do so in dignity, and to be useful. Those of us who are old, those of us who are most at risk, owe it to our friends and families to be examples of courage, to have the respect for life that allows us to live in them, and allows them to carry on in the faith which we leave behind.

The current crisis is not only a chance for some of us to show that faith, but a chance for our country, and the world, to escape, at least for a bit and a time, from the downward spiral of greed and corruption that is overtaking us. It is a chance to rethink the endless wars that are destroying hope for so many, and to turn our resources to helping people instead of shooting at them. It is a chance to rethink the focus on status and superiority that has poisoned our American dream of equality and opportunity for all, and to learn to share a good life that is within our means and within the tolerance of our planet.

The proposals now coming out of Washington and Augusta for direct and equal aid to everyone, give me hope that the crisis is pushing us toward less partisanship and a fairer America.

Here in Rockland we have been doing a great job of encouraging and supporting each other. The City Council, the City Manager and City staff are doing all they can to help. Local businesses are doing their best to cope. Many local restaurants have turned immediately to offering take-out and delivery service. Grocery stores and other retailers offering essential goods and services have stayed open and worked hard to keep up. Our local media, the Courier-Gazette and Pen Bay Pilot are doing a fine and generous job. Local organizations and individuals are stepping up to help in many ways. Our mail continues to be delivered. All of this requires people to take some risk, but without their risk we would all be at greater risk.

Some of us can, and should, hunker down at home. Others of us are on the front lines, being careful, but doing our best to keep our community alive. And all of us, whatever our role and whatever our fate, must have courage, and keep the faith.



Some Suggestions from Judy Pasqualge

SOCIAL DISTANCE NOW to lessen the number of cases. Stay 3-6 feet away from others, don't shake hands, avoid groups in enclosed places. **Businesses:** provide hand wipes at the door. **ASSUME** that many people are now asymptomatic carriers, including oneself. Take all precautions at home and plan for if a family member gets sick.

Immediate suggestions: City councils could set up funds, especially to target those who don't have/lose income; start a data base of those most in need, or who might become so.

Neighborhoods/streets are starting to assemble contact info on residents; when this started on my street, the sense of relief was huge. Are there town/county volunteer groups to shop, walk dogs? We need suggestions on how to support local businesses, many of which are now closed, and may be for awhile. The information from other countries is clear: Don't allow healthy businesses to go down.

Express appreciation to the people still out there and working, who really are on the front line; and have a thought for those unknown State workers, and Governor Mills and Infectious Diseases head Dr. Shah.

Sources:

Maine info (24/7): 211maine.org; ph.: 211; text: 898211; email: info@211maine.org.

Pen Bay Pilot (penbaypilot.com) has extensive updates, and a list of restaurants for pick-up/delivery.

Rockland Public Library has staff there for phone calls, on anything (207.594.0310), thanks.

Maine People's Alliance has set up a help network; you can: give money to a new fund; call for help with follow-up by a volunteer; volunteer yourself; call if you feel sick (mainerstogether.com).

For national stats: politico.com/interactives/2020/coronavirus-testing-by-state-chart-of-new-cases.

As I check the net for news about here and abroad, our commonality is clear, even if places are at different points in the pandemic. There are great live updates. IWe are all helped by wishing others well, wherever they are.

For comprehensiveness: Al Jazeera (aljazeera.com; also has a live News Hour show). The Guardian (UK, the guardian.com/uk) is especially good for UK, US, Europe and Australia. The New York Times now has free virus coverage. The Intercept (theintercept.com) has very good in-depth articles. On TV: PBS, channel 10: Deutsche Wella (Germany) news at 4:30; BBC World at 5:00/World America at 5.:30.

Lastly, it is time for our country to stop sanctions on humanitarian goods to countries that have governments it doesn't like such as Iran and Venezuela.

A Letter from Paris

In France, as in much of the world, we now spend most of the time in our homes, except for the few who work in necessary functions that cannot be done remotely. Even some "necessary" employees choose to stay home in order to take care of children out of school or loved ones in need. Hospitals and medical services are very stretched, particularly in areas with many cases, such as around Paris. We are told to resort to them only for a case of severe symptoms.

We fill out and sign a government form that must be carried anytime one is outside the home, with a \$150 fine if one does not have proper reasons. Solo exercise near the home is allowed, as is walking of pets, so I can walk or jog each day.

Food and other necessary stores only allow 10 or less people inside at a time; lines outside maintain at least 5-6 feet between those waiting. This is the new paradigm. In another time it would be an overreaction of government. Now it is all worth doing to preserve as many lives as possible and rebuild a civil society afterwards.

Paul Chartrand

Help at The Buzz & WRFR

We are all volunteers. Email gowrfr@gmail.com.

COVID-19 Information, from Chuck Gifford

For a national overview of the situation:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

For the state of the State:
<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>

If you know anyone who has a child who needs food, encourage them to contact Kathy Blais at RSU13 to sign up, 596.6620.

For info about local organisations, public & private, that can assist in these troubled times, visit <https://tinyurl.com/rockland-resources>

Be kind & stay safe.

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