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July 9, 2020

Hollywood Reporter
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Hit, TV Races to
Bring Back Live
Sports

Fierce Video
The cable
comeback? Survey
suggests 51% 'not at
all frustrated'

New York Times
Virus-Tracing Apps
Are Rife With
Problems.
Governments Are
Rushing to Fix
Them.

USA Today
How the NBA bubble
has taken shape in
Disney World

Recode

A virtual event conducted by Armstrong raised nearly \$9,000 for local food banks and pantries, and involved more than 250 participants who ran, walked or biked from any location they selected. The Breaking Bread Virtual 5K Run and Walk was held from May 20 to May 31. It marked the 10th anniversary of Breaking Bread, the company's initiative to help feed those in need in the communities it serves. "We knew we really needed to help our food banks at a time like this," said Greg Rhoton, Armstrong community marketing and local programming manager. "While we couldn't gather to walk or run together, the important part was that our community still connected and supported the event."

Breaking Bread was started by Armstrong on March 8, 2010. Funds raised during the annual campaigns are distributed to local feeding programs throughout the Armstrong service areas in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York, West Virginia, Maryland and Kentucky. Finisher's medals were sent to participant's homes so they could celebrate their accomplishment and share their support of the Breaking Bread program, Rhoton said.

Armstrong, based in Butler, Pa., provides high-speed Internet with enhanced Wi-Fi, advanced television powered by EXP, and telephone services to residential and commercial customers. The company is America's 11th largest cable television provider, according to SNL Kagan. – **Youngstown (OH) Business Journal**

Blue Ridge Communications has reopened its local offices in Lehighton and Lansford.

The hidden trackers in your phone, explained

**Newsmax
Trump Campaign:
Univision Is a 'Leftist
Propaganda
Machine'**

**Politico
YouTube runs
Trump, Biden
campaign ads
alongside videos
from white
supremacists and
Russian media**

**Harrisburg Patriot-
News
Getting tested for
coronavirus in Pa. is
becoming more
difficult amid wave
of new infections**

**Philadelphia Inquirer
Joe Biden and Mike
Pence are visiting 4
key areas in
Pennsylvania.
Here's why they're
so important.**

**The Hill
State and local
officials beg
Congress to send
more election funds
ahead of November**

Like all businesses, COVID-19 has forced Blue Ridge to implement additional safety procedures that are designed to help protect its customers and its employees. Customers will notice that things look a little different, and to help protect everyone, the following changes have occurred:

- Plexiglas has been added to all of its retail counters.
- To comply with social distancing standards, they've applied floor decals 6 feet apart on the floor, and will be restricting the number of visitors that can be in the lobby at one time.
- Customers and employees are required to wear masks while in the office.
- When equipment is returned, customers will be asked to place it in a designated location of the office to help prevent unnecessary handling.
- Blue Ridge will be frequently wiping down surfaces and other high-traffic areas.
- Blue Ridge has changed its colors and brightened its stores with a fresh coat of paint.
- Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, closed from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for lunch and closing; 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, and closed on Sunday. – ***Lehighon Times News***

Geisinger has been awarded \$978,935 from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provide telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Geisinger will use the award to purchase telemedicine carts, tablet computers, and telemedicine peripherals such as hand-held cameras and stethoscopes.

The number of daily telehealth visits has skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with Geisinger providers conducting twice as many visits daily as the monthly total pre-COVID. Geisinger offers telehealth visits for primary care appointments and 72 specialties. "Telehealth technology has allowed Geisinger providers to connect with patients while minimizing physical contact during the COVID-19 pandemic," said David Fletcher, Geisinger's associate vice president for telehealth. "This ensures that our patients can maintain routine healthcare appointments, manage chronic conditions, and stay healthier overall even while staying at home."

Not all patients have access to technology that allows them to connect, or even desire to engage in a telemed appointment. "If a patient doesn't have access to technology or would rather not use it, we schedule them for an in-person visit at the next available time," said David Fletcher, Geisinger associate vice president for telehealth.

The FCC last month announced a total of \$29.41 million in funding for health care providers in urban and rural areas to provide telehealth services during the pandemic. To date, the FCC's COVID-19 Telehealth Program, which was authorized by the CARES Act, has approved 514 funding applications in 46 states plus Washington, D.C. for a total of \$189.27 million in funding. "Telehealth is proving to be an invaluable resource to treat patients during the coronavirus pandemic," said FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. "It promotes social distancing, protects the safety of health care professionals and patients, and frees up space in health care facilities for those who need it most. Implementing telehealth services, such as remote monitoring, will ensure critical care for Pennsylvania residents, particularly in rural areas of the state."

Thrust into providing more telehealth services because of COVID-19, health systems across the board were forced to increase their telehealth abilities--by increasing staff training, investing in equipment, and ensuring customer acceptance. Those efforts may have solidified telehealth as a standard going forward. "We believe telehealth will continue to be a routine part of care beyond the immediate crisis period," added Fletcher. "Each of our clinical departments are planning for the portion of their medical visits that they anticipate completing virtually going forward – all more than they did before the pandemic." – ***NorthcentralPA.com***

Officials and donors involved in an ambitious plan to provide free broadband access to students in Chicago's poorest neighborhoods hope that the public-private partnership can be a model for efforts to address digital equity issues elsewhere in the U.S. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced the Chicago Connected project, which aims to provide free broadband internet for 100,000 children in the city's largest school district for four years, on June 25. The \$50 million plan has been funded by philanthropic donations, the Chicago public school system and city funds.

Ken Griffin, the chief executive of investment firm Citadel LLC, who contributed \$7.5 million, said the program could serve as a template for other cities facing similar issues with student internet access. "The hope is that by helping to support these entrepreneurs of social change, we're able to create role models that are copied across the country," he said. Other donations came from Crown Family Philanthropies, which contributed \$5 million, former President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama, and the Pritzker Traubert Foundation, among others.

Jennie Bennett, Chicago's chief financial officer, said private involvement has been critical to the success of the program, which she hopes can eventually be expanded to address the city's digital divide more broadly. "We need to build permanent infrastructure to really change the trajectory of the livelihoods of our residents. I think this program is a perfect example of that, but you can't do it alone. You need help," she said.

Chicago Connected will begin contacting households that can benefit from the program this week before supplying wired broadband connections through RCN Corp. and Comcast Corp. Eligibility is determined by a range of factors, including whether households receive meal subsidies, while programs instituted by Chicago Public Schools after the pandemic's outbreak have already supplied children with equipment such as computers and Wi-Fi hot spots.

The initiative was spurred by an April study by nonprofit advocacy group Kids First Chicago, which found that in some areas of the city, such as West Englewood, 46% of children under the age of 18 don't have access to broadband at home. Other districts, largely in the city's less-affluent south and west sides, had similar levels of access. The issue overwhelmingly affects Black and Latinx minorities, the report found. Even those figures don't properly illustrate the scale of the issue on the ground, said Daniel Anello, the group's chief executive. "The truth is, if you go block-to-block, there are areas where 80% of the households aren't connected, just based on the poverty conditions that are there," he said.

Digital equity has long been an issue across U.S. cities. In New York City, for instance, around 40% of households don't have both home and mobile broadband access, and 18% lack either, according to a digital equity plan released in January by the Mayor's office. Similar findings have been reported in Los Angeles, Houston and elsewhere. Studies show that internet access is linked closely with socioeconomic factors such as poverty and racial demographics. In Detroit, researchers at the University of Michigan found in 2019 that up to 70% of school-age children in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods can't access the internet at home.

Last year, one out of every five students across the U.S. didn't have access to a reliable connection, according to EducationSuperHighway, a nonprofit. The [switch to remote learning](#), which depends on children using videoconferencing and streaming services, has exacerbated the divide during the coronavirus pandemic. "Being the father of children who are in school, realizing that we were about to pivot to remote learning, you immediately realize that for 100,000 kids in Chicago, not only is Covid-19 a health crisis but an education crisis," Mr. Griffin said.

Internet access is now an essential part of a successful education, said Janice Jackson, chief executive of Chicago Public Schools, which is funding the last

two years of the program. Fall plans for remote learning are still being determined, she said. While Chicago Connected is focused on CPS, the third-largest school district in the country, Dr. Jackson also said that initiatives such as this could be expanded on a national level, given the wide-ranging nature of digital divides. "I'm hoping that the federal government and others are going to be taking this up and looking at legislation and other programming that will help us do this. Not just in high-need areas, or large urban cities like Chicago, but I'm also concerned about what's happening in some of our rural areas throughout the country," she said.

Lawmakers say there is bipartisan support for addressing the problem of [unequal access to broadband](#). Citadel's Mr. Griffin said that he hopes they are taking note of what is happening in the Windy City. "I do hope that in DC, people go, 'you know what, what they're doing in Chicago right here, right now, we need to make sure happens in Detroit for this fall.' I hope that people in the halls of Congress are thinking about this as a necessary initiative for our country to address the important issue of educational equality, access and opportunity for the school year," he said. — *Wall Street Journal*

President Donald Trump's re-election campaign is suing Pennsylvania to force changes in how the state collects and counts mail-in ballots. The lawsuit raises some concerns worthy of review, but the lawsuit should not intimidate officials against moving forward with an even more robust mail-in voting process. The Trump campaign maintains that mail-in voting procedures were accompanied by illegal changes, including allowing voters to drop off completed ballots at collection sites outside of county elections offices such as community college campuses, fairgrounds, retirement homes and parks. This is a more than fair point. We cannot go to such lengths to make voting "convenient" that we compromise the franchise.

The campaign is also demanding security envelopes for ballots and poll watchers who monitor collection sites. Democratic leaders view the lawsuit as a strategy to further paint mail-in voting as inherently fraudulent, but that doesn't address the substantive problems that have become evident. The issues raised in the lawsuit should be reviewed to ensure the integrity of the election, but state officials should also make use of the time before the November presidential election to better prepare for what will likely be a huge number of requests for mail-in ballots

The primary election was the first in which voters could opt for a mail-in ballot with no restrictions, and the option proved extremely popular. Out of the 2.8 million votes cast, more than 1.4 million came by way of mail-in ballots. Still, there were issues. Many county offices were overwhelmed by both the number of requests and the time needed to count them. Some took more than a week to complete the counting process. Some voters received the wrong ballot; others never received one at all, despite completing the application process.

Multiple voting rights groups in the state have called on Pennsylvania to address these concerns before the presidential election in November. Groups supporting mail-in voting, like Common Cause and Make the Road PA, are pushing for the mailing of a ballot to every registered voter, rather than making them apply for one. Advocates are also calling for mail-in ballots to be counted as they are sent in, rather than forcing officials to wait until Election Day to begin the count.

Such practices are already the norm in several other states. Colorado, which recently set a record for primary turnout in its state, employs a "universal" vote-by-mail system, where all registered voters receive a ballot. Voters can mail their ballots in or drop them off at designated voting centers, and the majority choose to do so instead of voting in person. Ballots are counted as they are received.

Pennsylvania needs to catch up. It's evident that mail-in ballots will be a popular and necessary option for state voters this fall. Lawmakers must listen

to their constituents and learn from best practices of other states. – ***Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorial**

I guess it's no surprise that Pennsylvania going "green" during a pandemic would result in people, too many people, thinking, 'Well, guess the pandemic's over.' Green, after all, means go, right? Like waving a green flag in an auto race. Drivers don't just speed up a bit. They floor it. Even in the turns. So, that happened. As counties started turning in early June, people floored their new-found freedom and COVID-19 cases climbed.

Not everywhere. But in lots of places, including Dauphin County, Philly and the southeast and especially [Pittsburgh and the southwest](#). Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald said his county went from zero cases a-day in mid-June to 200 a-day in early July. Statewide, cases jumped by the thousands, even as the whole state went "green."

Speculation rose that spikes came from big crowds during weeks of Black Lives Matter protests following George Floyd's May 25 killing in Minneapolis. Makes sense, given all we heard about the danger of crowds; and given that health experts, including top doc [Anthony Fauci](#), expressed concern that protests would spread disease. But our state Health Department says nope; very few cases are from protests. "Recent spikes are more linked to younger people going to restaurants and bars," says department spokesman Nate Wardle, "and people not wearing masks."

This can lead to thinking that the stay-out-of-crowds order is hokum (from the early 20th Century, origin unknown, meaning, for some reason, nonsense). Or that the lying leftist media, in partnership with Democratic mayors, is covering up the truth about protests. Except there's data from the respected non-partisan National Bureau of Economic Research showing ["no evidence" that urban protests reignited cases](#). The bureau said that's because most protesters were younger and less vulnerable to the disease, because protests were outside and because urban areas with protests saw increased social distancing among the greater population. In short, more people were mitigating at that time than not.

Still, as in everything coronavirus related, who knows? All we know is cases rose in Pennsylvania forcing a new state order to wear masks all the time. And this, predictably, caused more stirs among the live-free-or-die crowd (which sounds a little too literal these days), as well as renewed charges that Gov. Tom Wolf is a tyrant. On the same day of the new mask order, July 1, the state Supreme Court said the legislature could not end Wolf's emergency declaration, as it tried to do.

[Republican legislative leaders slammed the ruling](#) as giving Wolf "king status." Then a handful of GOP lawmakers – including Lebanon County's Russ Diamond and York County's Mike Jones -- condemned the ruling *and* the "mask mandate." In a joint statement, they pledged to work to see "the governor's edicts evaporate, just like COVID-19 by all indications is on a trajectory to do so."

I like their optimism about the disease. I'd like it more if any of them had a medical degree. It's understandable why many are angry and/or confused by governments' handing of this whole mess. From all crowds are bad to some crowds are no problem. From Wolf's order to stay out of crowds to [Wolf walking in a crowd of protesters](#). From the [World Health Organization](#) saying the disease spreads through direct contact with respiratory droplets, to a large group of scientists saying that might be wrong, that the source of infection can linger in the air.

From [U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams](#) saying in March "stop buying masks...they are NOT effective," to Wolf and others ordering masks for everybody everywhere. (Who knows? Maybe if we'd masked since March, we'd be better off today. As is, Wolf says masks could be mandatory until

there's a vaccine.) If there's a bright spot in our "green" world, it's that our state is better off than many others.

On a case-per-capita basis, we're somewhere in the middle of states. On a deaths-per-capita basis, despite being the fifth most populous state, we rank 10th. Going forward? Anybody's guess. There's hope, sure. For fewer restrictions and more normalcy. For an end of the tedium of "the new normal." But the fact is nobody knows what's next.

Even as cases climb, it's hard to imagine any political will to return to a statewide lockdown. But flareups forcing a return to restrictions on a local or regional level can make what comes after "green" worse than what was hoped for. – **John Baer's column in *Harrisburg Patriot-News***

