



# Town of Hilton Head Island **TOWN MANAGER UPDATE**

**An Update from Interim Town Manager Josh Gruber  
2/9/2021**

Good afternoon Hilton Head Islanders and Guests,

Here's an update on what's happening around Town:

## **South Carolinians Aged 65 and Older Can Schedule COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments**

The window is now open for any South Carolina resident aged 65 or older, regardless of health status or preexisting conditions, to schedule an appointment to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Residents will be asked to provide a driver's license or other form of ID at their appointment that confirms their age and, therefore, their eligibility to receive vaccine.

Eligible persons can use the vaccine locator map ([scdhec.gov/vaxlocator](https://scdhec.gov/vaxlocator)) on the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's website to find a hospital or pharmacy accepting COVID-19 vaccine appointments. People can also call [DHEC's COVID-19 Vaccine Information Line](tel:1-866-365-8110) at 1-866-365-8110 for help finding vaccine providers and their contact information to schedule an appointment. Vaccine supply is limited, so providers ask for your patience as they secure and distribute the vaccine.

In the meantime, please continue to follow the necessary precautions to protect yourself and others: Wear a face mask, stay six feet away from others, avoid crowds, and get tested often.

## **Keeping Up With COVID-19 Cases**

[scdhec.gov/COVID19](https://scdhec.gov/COVID19)

The most up-to-date information on COVID-19 cases in our community and across the state can be found on DHEC's website. DHEC provides extensive reporting on county-level information, demographics and more about coronavirus cases. The website is updated between 1 p.m.-3 p.m. weekdays and 11 a.m.-1 p.m. weekends. Additionally, you can visit the Town's **COVID-19 Hub Page** ([hiltonheadislandsc.gov/COVID19](https://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/COVID19)). It includes links to information DHEC has compiled about COVID-19 cases, vaccines, the state's vaccine distribution plan, and the vaccine locator map. You can also find information on community resources.

## **COVID-19 Drive-thru Testing**

Free COVID-19 testing is available 8 a.m. to noon at Hilton Head Hospital (25 Hospital Center Blvd. on Hilton Head Island) and Coastal Carolina Hospital (1000 Medical Center Drive in Hardeeville). No appointment or doctor referral is needed. For more information, visit [hiltonheadregional.com](https://hiltonheadregional.com).



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### **Temporary Closure of the Adventure Playground and Water Feature at Lowcountry Celebration Park Scheduled for February 9-11**

The Adventure Playground and water feature at the Lowcountry Celebration Park on Pope Avenue will be closed temporarily from today through Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup>.

During this period, the contractor for the park will be completing some work required by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. Thus, it is necessary to limit public access and pedestrian traffic in this area of the park while work is underway. We anticipate that these areas of the park will re-open on Friday, February 12.

### **New Fire Hydrants Installed to Offer Greater Protection in Hilton Head Island Neighborhoods**

With the installation of 10 new fire hydrants and associated water main upgrades over the last two years, residents in some Hilton Head Island neighborhoods have better protection for their homes in case of fire.

We partnered with the Hilton Head Public Service District (PSD) three years ago to install fire hydrants in various areas of the Island to reduce the distances between existing homes and the fire hydrants. In some areas, homes are farther away from hydrants than the local fire code recommends, and this increases the time it takes for firefighters to connect their hose to the hydrant and establish a sustained water supply.

Property owners and members of the Town's Gullah Geechee Land & Cultural Preservation Task Force expressed concerns about this. Our goal was to address and resolve this issue through our Joint Fire Hydrant and Fire Line Installation Program with the PSD. We're happy to report that the project is nearly complete.

The Town and PSD each budgeted \$50,000 annually over the past three years toward the purchase and installation of the hydrants and associated upsizing of several water mains necessary for hydrant placement. Although the Town and PSD share the costs for installing the hydrants and water mains, the PSD owns and maintains them as part of its potable water distribution system. The PSD has approximately 1,550 hydrants in its system.

New fire hydrants have been placed primarily in Gullah neighborhoods on the north end of the Island including Murray Avenue, Pinefield and Mackerel roads, Aiken Place, Cobia Court, Alice Perry and Horse Sugar roads, Christopher Drive, Sunday Ford Drive, Mustang Lane and Red Tip View, and Bligen Lane. Some existing structures in these areas were identified as being more than 900 to 1,000 feet away from the nearest fire hydrant.



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We're now targeting additional hydrants at School Road, Indian Pipe Lane, Evelina Road, and Orage Lane. The joint program does not cover hydrants for new developments or new units. Those costs are borne by the development.

### **Free Federal and State Income Tax Return Virtual and Curbside Preparation Now Available for Qualifying Taxpayers**

It's tax time. Once again, Lowcountry Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program will offer free tax help to persons generally earning \$66,000 annually or less, differently-abled persons, persons 60 and older, and limited English-speaking persons. In collaboration with the [Beaufort County Human Services Alliance](#) and [United Way of the Lowcountry, Inc.](#), free tax preparation is available to those who qualify through a combination of a secure teleconferencing web portal and by telephone.

Due to current social distancing guidelines, health and safety precautions are in place at all locations. Curbside service is available to offer clients COVID-safe tax preparation. Clients will sign in at the site and return to their car until they are called. They will meet briefly with a volunteer through a plexiglass partition who will upload documents to a secure IRS portal.

A local VITA volunteer tax preparer will be in contact within 24-48 hours to review and finalize the returns.

The nearest locations in our community where VITA volunteers will be providing help are:

- Deep Well Project, 80 Capital Drive, Hilton Head Island  
4 p.m. – 6 p.m., Tuesday's & Thursday's (opens February 16)
- Bluffton Library, 120 Palmetto Way, Bluffton  
11 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday's (opens February 22)

To volunteer or obtain more information, contact Program Coordinator Theresa Jackson at [lowcountryvitacoalition@gmail.com](mailto:lowcountryvitacoalition@gmail.com), visit [www.vitalowcountry.org](http://www.vitalowcountry.org) or call 843-321-9071.

### **Individual Income Tax Season Opens February 12**

The South Carolina Department of Revenue (SCDOR) will begin accepting Individual Income Tax returns for tax year 2020 on February 12, 2021, consistent with the date **announced by the IRS**. According to the **IRS**, the February 12 start date "allows the IRS time to do additional programming and testing of IRS systems following the December 27



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tax law changes." The SCDOR adopts the IRS date since South Carolina Income Tax returns use information from federal returns.

### **Culture HHI's Featured Artist of the Month**

Local Artist Tony Burns is Culture HHI's Featured Artist of the Month. Tony is a self-taught artist who began painting as a personal challenge. But what started as a hobby has blown up in his face into a part time job. From local galleries to art shows to paint parties to live paintings, and now enough commission work to fill a calendar year and he is just getting started and scratching the surface. Check out his feature at <https://culturehhi.org/portfolio/artist-of-the-month-february-2021/> . If you have suggestions of other local artists that we should consider for a feature, please email our Office of Cultural Affairs at [jennm@hiltonheadislandsc.gov](mailto:jennm@hiltonheadislandsc.gov).

### **Celebrating Gullah History**

Hilton Head Island's monthlong Gullah Celebration, hosted by the Native Island Business and Community Affairs Association, is underway with both virtual and in-person events. The celebration showcases the rich cultural heritage of the Gullah people and their history on Hilton Head Island. This year's Celebration events include the "Arts Ob We People Annual Art Exhibition and Sale", "Taste of Gullah", and the Gullah Gospel Music Series! For more details on all the events happening throughout the month, visit [www.gullahcelebration.com](http://www.gullahcelebration.com).