

Cops fight kids' homebound blues with virtual competition

Online social media challenges posted each Monday

BY SCOTT YUNKER
THE COAST STAR

SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS — As residents continue to self-quarantine due to the

coronavirus, the Spring Lake Heights Police Department is staying connected with the borough's youngest members online, with the

launch of a weekly social media competition on Monday.

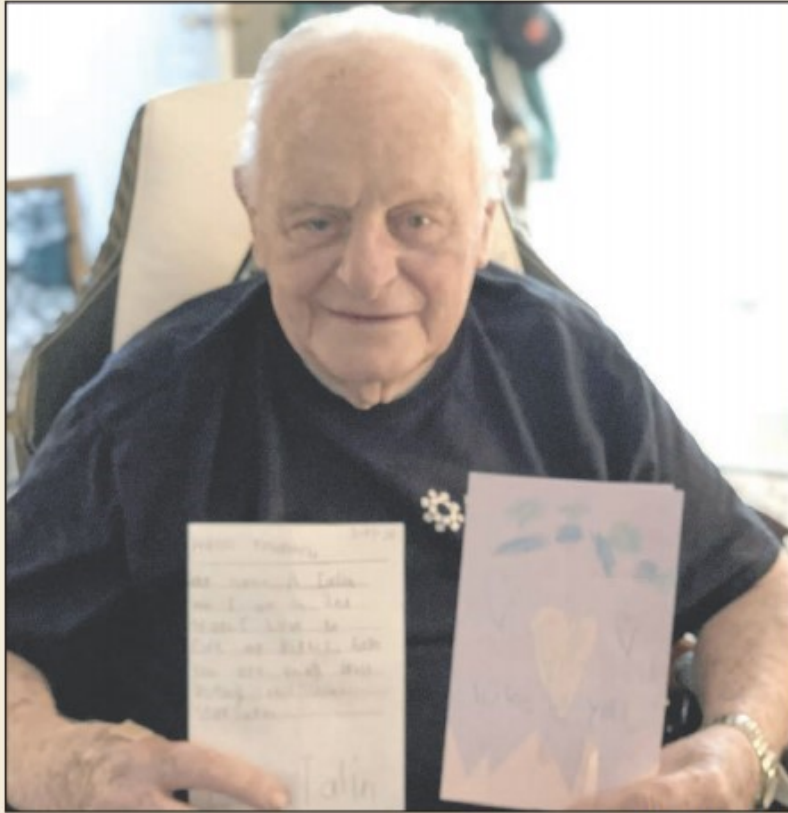
"Numerous officers within our department are fortunate to live in town and have our children attend SLH School," the police department stated on its Facebook page. "Often you will see us at morning drop-off and pick up. We walk the halls, have lunch in the cafeteria and teach the L.E.A.D. [Law Enforcement Against Drugs] program. We genuinely miss the daily interaction we have with the students.

"That is why we are happy to announce the SLHPD Virtual Contest! This week-

ly contest allows students a chance to win gift cards to local businesses in town," the department statement continued. "The purpose of this contest is simple ... to further engage with the students and keep [our] relationship Heights Strong."

Sgt. Mike Matunas introduced the department's first challenge in a video uploaded to the Spring Lake Heights Police Department's Facebook page [@slhpolice] on Monday morning.

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COURTESY OF THE ARBORS AT SPRING LAKE

EVERYONE LOVES A LETTER

Ray Fredericks and his 18 neighbors at The Arbors at Spring Lake received letters written by nearby Spring Lake Heights students also quarantined at home. Story on page 27



SCOTT YUNKER THE COAST STAR

Sgt. Mike Matunas asked kids to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar in a video posted to the Spring Lake Heights Police Department's Facebook page on Monday. In the coming weeks, the department will hold regular 'virtual challenges' for kids stuck at home.

SLHPD reaches out to students

COMPETITION

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"The contest is going to involve trying to guess the correct amount of jelly beans in the jar," Sgt. Matunas says in the video, revealing a decorated glass jar "about the size of a large Dunkin' Donuts iced coffee cup."

The student with the closest answer posted in the video's comments section by 3 p.m. Monday will be awarded a \$20 gift card to borough restaurant Benny's Pizza on Friday, April 3.

Chief of Police Ed Gunnell has asked his officers to remain in touch with the borough community and its children, according to Sgt. Matunas, who cooked up the SLHPD Virtual Contest with Ptl. Connor Bokop.

The virtual contest will be held for another three weeks minimum, Sgt. Matunas said. Families with children interested in participating should visit the department's Facebook page on Monday mornings for more information on that week's game.

To support local businesses, the Spring Lake Police Association will purchase a gift card to a Spring Lake Heights restaurant for each week's prize.

However, at least one business has donated a prize to the SLHPD Virtual Contest: According to Sgt. Matunas, manager Don Corcione reached out to offer a future party for 12 children at The Lanes at Sea Girt bowling alley.

"We genuinely miss the interaction we have with the kids and the students," Sgt. Matunas said. "[But] the situation has changed. We're just trying to keep up with that change right now."

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