To keep the community updated with timely, essential information, the City is continuing its robust public education and outreach campaign that includes multiple/press releases on our dedicated COVID-19 webpage to educate, inform and provide useful resources to our businesses and residents of all ages.

We continue to record and post video messages from Mayor Goodell as well as proactively update our social media sites and alert the news media of Mission Viejo-centralized news. Along with our essential COVID-19 news, we are also including feel-good stories developing from the crisis, which have been well-received by the community. 🌟
VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

On Tuesday, the City of Mission Viejo in partnership with the Jewish Federation and Family Services of Orange County hosted a virtual International Holocaust Remembrance Day program. This program included an interview with 90-year-old Auschwitz survivor Sam Silberberg and was broadcast live on the City’s YouTube channel and MVTV.

Sam shared his incredible story during the interview moderated by Council Member Ed Sachs and ended the program with a 30-minute live Q & A with the audience. Throughout the program, members from the community were able to call in and email their questions for Sam. The City is thrilled to be able to honor such an important day in history in a special and educational way during these trying times.
PET Pantry To The Rescue

The Mission Viejo Pet Pantry has become a vital pet food resource for our community members facing financial hardships during the pandemic. Since the crisis began, we have seen a significant increase in the number of people needing to relinquish their pets because they are no longer able to afford to properly care for them. We knew this would continue, so we reached out to local pet supply stores for their help during this uncertain time.

Canyon Feed & Tack, which we purchase hay and other rabbit supplies came through. The staff worked directly with Purina to secure a donation of pet food. Our nonprofit organization DAWG received it at the center. Our Pet Pantry volunteers distributed it to local food banks including San Francisco Solano Church in Rancho Santa Margarita. It took many helping, caring hands to ensure our residents can continue to feed their pets. We are happy to help.

In honor of Volunteer Appreciation Week, the Mission Viejo Animal Services staff recorded a video thanking the volunteers for their hard efforts throughout the year. This year, in particular, our volunteers stepped it up by quickly helping us foster animals that were in our care during our temporary closure. Our dedicated professional staff is assisted by about 150 volunteers in providing help socializing and grooming animals, cleaning kennels, walking and exercising dogs, fostering animals and showing adoptable pets to the public. We believe it is vital to show appreciation to these folks who tirelessly dedicate their time and energy every day to the welfare of the homeless animals in our community. In addition to the video, we held a Zoom meeting to thank and give them an update on various topics regarding the shelter. It was great seeing their faces and all agree we cannot wait to get back to “business as usual.” 🌖
METROLINK TRACK CONSTRUCTION ACHIEVES MILESTONE

Construction of the new passing track extending 1.8 miles south from the Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo train station was placed in service this week. The existing track was taken out of service, so it can be shifted to the east to provide adequate spacing for trains to pass and for the construction of a turnback track where Metrolink trains will be held between trips to and from Los Angeles and the Inland Empire.

When complete, the project will enable more reliable train service to the Laguna Niguel/Mission Viejo Metrolink station by reducing the amount of time that trains must wait for other trains to clear the single track ahead. The passing track will also support an additional Metrolink round-trip from Oceanside to Los Angeles and an additional Amtrak Pacific Surfliner round trip between Los Angeles and San Diego. The project is expected to be complete by the end of the year.
National Library Week

This week is National Library Week (NLW) – a time to celebrate the role of libraries in the community. The theme of this year’s NLW was originally “Find your place at the Library,” but in light of COVID-19, it changed to “Find the Library at your place” – a testament to the services libraries provide remotely, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. While we miss seeing our patrons in person, library staff continues to serve and provide resources to support our community during this unprecedented time.

Over the past year, we’ve purchased many additional books in our Overdrive/Libby service to give our patrons more options and cut down wait times for those digital resources. All our online research sources are available 24/7 so residents can continue to do work for school, business, or personal interest while the building is closed.

We have staff answering phones Monday – Friday from 9 am – 5 pm to help answer questions, fix issues with patron accounts, or walk them through using an online resource.

There’s no need for people to worry about overdue books – all due dates are extended while the library is closed, and they’ll have time after we reopen to drop off materials with no late fees and pick up any items on hold.

We’re posting some great virtual activities and resources on our Virtual Activity page and making book recommendations and hosting book club discussions on our Goodreads page. We’re developing a great online community of readers.
Library staff members are also making wellness check calls to community members in vulnerable populations to ensure they are doing OK and to connect them with needed resources. We’re using our 3D printer to make ear guards to reduce the strain of over-ear masks – these are being distributed to local medical professionals.

We have a wonderful online service called Tutor.com that provides free tutoring on a wide range of subjects and even has resources to help parents assist their children with homework. There are also career resources to assist folks looking for a job or to improve skills.

For more information on what the library has to offer remotely, patrons can visit our website or call 949-830-7100, ext. 5101. 🌐