

Subject: Gathering together again

Dear Skokie Valley Family,

With the good news that COVID-19 cases are on the decline in our area and our move to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois plan this past weekend, we are sharing with you our plans to begin gathering again in person. We are following the guidance of the OU and the CRC to wait 2 weeks after Illinois opens up to monitor if there is a spike in COVID-19 cases. If there is no such spike, we will carefully and joyously begin gathering again on June 14th.

We owe tremendous hakarat hatov to our Reopening Committee and Medical Advisory Committee for their efforts over the last many weeks. They are working hard on plans for our unique community with guidance from local health officials, Jewish communal leaders and national health and religious leadership.

Throughout this process, we have sought to make decisions that reflect our community's fundamental values of pikuach nefesh -- preserving life, chessed -- reaching out in kindness, tefillah betzibur -- communal prayer, and serving as a beit kneset -- a house of gathering. We will hold fast to these values as we move forward.

In this first phase, all Skokie Valley activities will be taking place **outdoors**. This is the safest and most inclusive way for faith communities to gather right now. We will closely monitor the cases in our area and our institutional capacity so that we can safely move inside per the guidance of our Medical committee.

While so many people yearn to come together in person, we also recognize that some may prefer to stay in their homes. We will continue to use all of the tools we have to make a wide range of classes, tefillah and activities available for those who prefer not to gather in person. All members should consult with trusted medical professionals about their personal safety and gathering in groups outdoors at this stage. And we strongly urge if you are over 65 or have an underlying medical condition to consult your physician before attending.

Below are some of the ways that we will rejoin as a community in the coming weeks:

**Mincha/Maariv:** Beginning on June 14 mincha/maariv will take place outdoors in the Skokie Valley parking lot. We will gather Sunday - Friday night, ensuring that there is at least one minyan each day of the halachik week for men and women who wish to daven together. Priority will be given for those saying kaddish. To participate in our outdoor tefillah, you must be a member of Skokie Valley and register here <https://www.svaj.org/form/outdoor-tefillah-attendance.html>. Those who have not registered will not be allowed to join our tefillot.

When registering, you will receive more detailed information on our safety protocols. This tefillah will be streamed on zoom, and those saying kaddish who do not wish to participate in person may recite a full kaddish on zoom along with the physical outdoor minyan.

**Tot Shabbat in the Park on June 20:** Sign up, location and information to come.

**Pastoral visits:** Rav Ari is available to visit individuals in homes or hospitals, following the protocol of each individual facility and with proper PPE for all. Contact [ravari@svaj.org](mailto:ravari@svaj.org) for more information.

**Take a walk with the rabbi!** Rav Ari misses you! Sign up here for a time for a safe walk around the neighborhood together. <https://calendly.com/rav-ari/check-in-with-rav-ari>

**Pirkei Avot in the Park: beginning Shabbat afternoon June 20**

Open to all ages

Social distancing will be enforced

Each household must bring a blanket or towel to sit a minimum of six feet away from others.

Register here for time, location and instructions:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bMoc\\_G0MEPNWtv5rKMIYHYzc9vODerNPT7c7L5U124g/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bMoc_G0MEPNWtv5rKMIYHYzc9vODerNPT7c7L5U124g/edit#gid=0)

These are the first phases of our reopening plans. Plans to offer additional tefillot, activities and moving indoors are in the works as well, and are contingent on an improving situation on the ground and our community safely implementing the above.

Please note: Our plans are subject to change based on updated information from the health department and current events so keep reading your emails and announcements. We thank you for your patience and understanding in these ever changing times.

We are so looking forward to beginning this exciting process in a safe and inclusive way.

*Reopening Committee: David Rubin, Rachel Stein, Doug Klein, Peter Price, Sarah Gryka, Noam Stadlan, Tammy Pretekin, Allan Burstyn, Paula Landau, Alexander Brown, Rav Ari Hart, Debbie Eisenstein-*

*Advisory Committee: Dr. Avery Hart, Dr. Ben Katz, Dr. Dan Eisenstein, Dr. Karen Zimmerman, Elie Hale RN- Medical*

*Rabbi Ari Hart*

*Debbie Eisenstein - President*