

Neighbors helping neighbors ... from a distance of 6 feet



Amy Johansson

By Lisa Reisman

BRANFORD — Late Sunday night, Amy Johansson heard about an elderly couple in the Branford Walmart parking lot asking people to shop for them. A young woman finally said yes. They gave her a list and cash.

"They were worried about going inside the store and being around others who could potentially infect them," Johansson, a Branford resident said. "And then I thought, how many people in my neighborhood

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are in the same situation?"

She posted an appeal on Facebook for local residents willing to volunteer to shop or do errands for those who are elderly or have compromised immune systems.

"It's really anybody who needs help right now," she said. "Anyone who doesn't qualify for Meals on Wheels and finds themselves without a paycheck for the foreseeable future, or has a child or pet that needs supplies."

The plan is to have volunteers, working in teams of two, help those who need

assistance in their own neighborhoods, while practicing social distancing by greeting them from at least 6 feet away, or delivering products to their doors.

She's also asked schoolkids to make cards or draw pictures for residents in nursing homes who can no longer receive visitors, with the art work dropped off in her mail box at 117 Pine Orchard Road in Branford.

"Not only will this help teach kids to help others, but I hope it puts a smile on the residents' faces," she said.

By Monday, 30 people had volunteered.

"In times like these, people really do want to help," Johansson said. "These are anxious times, and it's totally understandable for people to be focused on keeping themselves and their loved ones safe.

"But we're all in this together, so let's be smart, but also be compassionate.



Peter Hvizdak / Hearst Connecticut Media

Amy Johansson, founder and president of the non-profit Smile Anyway, has a new mission, Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Above she is seen working on an event for Smile Anyway on the Branford Green last summer.

The only way we're going to get through this is together."

To volunteer, call Amy Johansson at 917-359-5231,

email her at amyjohansson@smileanywaybranford.org, or message her on Facebook at Amy Johansson.