

New Yorkers Respond to COVID 19 in "Big Apple" Ways



New York City's usually bustling streets have been eerily quiet during the COVID-19 Pandemic. However every evening at 7, thousands of New Yorkers open their windows to cheer and bang and toot their appreciation for healthcare workers and others on the front lines.

Ariana is only 8 years old, but she brings real big apple spirit to the ritual along with a metal pot and spoon.

Ariana: It's really loud. Sometimes, I have to keep it down because I don't want to go deaf.

Adam Phillips: Why are you doing this?

Ariana: Well, actually I am doing this to celebrate the workers, for this Coronavirus. The health workers that are helping and making sure that all of it goes okay. In my house there's a lot of noise and it's also good to make more noise and say 'Hey we're here! We're gonna fight this! We're not gonna just stand by and make the workers do all the work. We're also going to do this, if we're not going out we're helping at home and not touching our faces. And I think, that is a great idea.

Nothing is more New York than a cocktail party. In-person cocktail parties are also shelved during the crisis. But, MaryAnne has devised her own COVID-19 era cocktail party for her closest neighbors in her TONY central park west apartment building.

MaryAnne: Well at 5:30 everyday my two neighbors on my floor and I open our doors and we sit in chairs in our doorways, we're far away from each other but we're close enough to hear each other speak so that we're still in our apartments. We have drink in hand, and we talk for an hour, an hour and a half. And we talk about nice things – how beautiful it was outside and the cherry blossoms. It's a little bit ironic, here we're going through this terrible time when everything is dark and gloomy. People are sick and dying. And yet, nature is so gorgeous this year.

MaryAnne says that personal connections between building residents is unusual in Manhattan

MaryAnne: Right well we've never said more than hello to each other before and we've lived here for many decades. But it doesn't matter because at least it's human contact. We've all said that if anybody needs anything we'll help each other – which is also very nice. I think that, yes, everyone respects each other's space, but everyone is also helpful to everyone else which is what makes New York so special.

Nothing says NEW YORK like the Empire State Building. Every evening at 9, it blasts out Alicia Keyes iconic "Empire State of Mind" over the radio. While the music plays, and every hour on the hour, building management projects what it calls a rainbow sparkle on the building's upper façade. It features the official colors of the Big Apple's first responders and other heroes in this desperate moment. At other times, the Empire State Building's upper façade is bathed in a pulsating red light, like a heartbeat. Anthony E Malkin is the CEO of the Empire State Realty Trust which owns and manages the landmark. He says this display is a Big Apple shout out to all first responders, both in New York and around the nation.

Anthony Malkin: It's just another example of how we connect with people and how important it is to them that they recognize that we're thinking of them and that the whole city has them on our minds.

Adam Phillips: As New Yorkers and others know, the coronavirus epidemic will be a fact of life for a while. But New Yorkers also know that while the threat endures, folks in the Big apple will always create new, only in New York ways to respond.

Adam Phillips: VOA News, NEW YORK.