

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Friday, June 19, 2020

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Brad Harris - Business Manager, Volusia County Economic Development

Ray Manchester - Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Holly Smith - Communications Manager/Government Liaison, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Kevin Captain - Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Captain, Director of Volusia County Community Information, for Volusia County government. Today, you'll hear from Mr. Brad Harris, who is the Business Manager for Volusia County Economic Development; Ray Manchester, the Director of Volusia County Beach Safety, and Holly Smith, the Communications Manager and Government Liaison for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

But first, we'd like to discuss the importance of continuing to follow CDC guidelines. The county continues to advocate for the three primary protective measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These are: wash your hands often and thoroughly; maintain a physical distance of at least six feet or more, and wear a mask when out in public.

We are strongly urging businesses to ask their staff and their customers to wear masks. And we're reminding anyone who's out and about in public to wear a mask, as it's highly encouraged. This is especially important when you can't maintain that 6 foot distance, so, for example, when you're out grocery shopping or in other public areas or spaces when a six foot distance cannot be easily achieved.

We know it may be a little uncomfortable, or some may even feel embarrassed with it, but each time you wear your mask, you could be saving a life. We appreciate those who are already carrying out this practice, and we'd like to see it more. So, remember, your mask protects others and theirs protects you. And in a few minutes, you'll hear where both businesses and residents can get masks. At the last Volusia County Council meeting this last Tuesday, our Council members approved a \$1 million dollar grant from

the CARES fund towards additional personal protective equipment for businesses that will be distributed throughout the county using the Volusia County Chamber Alliance.

And now, with more about this, I'll bring up Brad Harris, the Business Manager for Volusia County Economic Development. Brad?

Brad Harris - Business Manager, Volusia County Economic Development

Thank you Kevin. The Personal Protective Equipment Distribution Assistance Program will provide Volusia County businesses with personal protective equipment kits that will include items such as gloves, masks, hand sanitizers, disposable wipes and infrared thermometers. These are items that are very important in terms of maintaining the safety of our businesses and the customers that attend those businesses. So, these kits will be available to our businesses free of charge. And, this program, as Kevin said, is made available through the funding through the CARES Act, and as approved by our County Council. But, these kits will be assembled by the members of the Chamber Alliance. And, as they are assembled, there will be distribution events that occur both in June and July.

The Chamber members, just so that you know who they are, is the Ormond Beach Chamber, or the members of the Alliance, the Ormond Beach Chamber, the Holly Hill Chamber, Daytona Beach Chamber, the Southeast Volusia Chamber, the DeLand Chamber and the West Volusia Chamber. They are giving their time to put these kits together, to make them available to our businesses.

So, the kits would include the things that I mentioned. There will be at least two times where they will be made available, and perhaps more, but the availability of these items is still being discussed. There will be times and locations announced. They will be announced on the Volusia Chamber Alliance website, which is volusiachamberalliance.com. They should be available, the information about when and where these will be available, should be next week sometime. But, you can find it there, you can find it on the chambers', the individual chambers' newsletters. You'll also find the information on the social media platforms that our chambers are using to communicate the information.

So, these kits that will include the items I spoke of, each business can get up to two of those on the days where they are made available, and there will be locations both on the east and west Volusia, east and west sides of Volusia. Businesses do not have to go to a location that is in their community. For instance,

if you are in Daytona Beach, as a business and you are able to get to an event that is in DeLand, there is no problem with going to DeLand to pick up your kits.

Again, free of charge; available on dates that will be announced soon, at locations that also will be announced soon, through the Volusia Chamber Alliance. So, that's the program. That's its availability. There is still some TBD there, but again, that's still another step we're taking in making business safer, as we relaunch and reopen in this Corona virus environment. Kevin; nope, Ray.

Ray Manchester - Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Thank you Brad. Ray Manchester, Volusia County Beach Safety. That being said, we are going into a busy weekend with Father's Day, so a few quick reminders for that. We do, since we are in summer, we do have our typical summer thunderstorms so beware of that, especially the lightening. When we do see lightening, we do clear the beach, so please heed the lifeguards when it comes to that and you have to stay away from the water.

Also, we are in the middle of turtle season. With turtle season we need to make sure that we are not harassing any turtles or any nests, and no lights at night. So, if you are walking around at night, try to avoid any bright lights on the beach.

Also, in this COVID-19 environment we are always reminding everyone to park in front of a post; either one of the conservation posts or one of the blue markers, with your vehicles. And, also maintain your social distancing on the beach, in groups of less than 50 people.

All that being said, be safe, check the surf conditions, we might be flying a red flag, swim in front of a lifeguard and put on your sunscreen. Thank you. Holly?

Holly Smith - Communications Manager/Government Liaison, Florida Department of Health in Volusia County

Holly Smith, Communications Manager for the Florida Department of Health here in Volusia County. This afternoon I'd like to provide some of the most recent data that the Health Department has been watching, and I am going to begin with today's statistics as of early this morning.

The state is reporting 1,117 total cases of COVID-19 here in Volusia County. That's an increase of 60 cases since yesterday, and looking at the trend of new cases over the past 14 days, there has been a significant increase in recent days.

In Volusia County we have been watching the number of new cases, along with the positivity rate that you have heard so much about so much about. Those two things give us a better picture, and until the last few days we have pointed out that the increase in testing was the primary reason for the increase in the cases. The numbers of the last few days are NOT only a result of increased testing.

Since last Friday, our 14 day positivity rate has increased to a little more than 3%, however if you look at just the last three days, that positivity rate is a little more than 8%. And, again, not only are we seeing the increase in positive cases of COVID-19, but that daily positivity rate is increasing.

So, that is not the only noticeable trend in the data, the majority of the new cases that we are recording are not associated with a facility, such as a correctional institution or a long-term care facility. Over the past two weeks, we've seen a large increase in positive cases in people age 20 – 34. In fact, 40% of the new cases from the past 14 days are in that age range. Again, 40% of the people are age 20 – 34, that are in our new cases over the past 14 days. In other words, younger people are testing positive for COVID-19 here in Volusia County.

We continue to report COVID-19 related deaths in Volusia County. As of today, the state has reported 53 deaths, 34 of those deaths were residents or staff of long-term care facilities here in Volusia County. And, there is one more data point that is important for our residents and our visitors to understand. About one third of the people who are testing positive here in Volusia County, do not have symptoms. These asymptomatic COVID positive people can be spreading the virus to others without even knowing that they are sick. These symptomatic spreaders only find out if they have COVID by getting tested. So, if you are looking to get tested, you can find that information on the Volusia County website. The address is Volusia.org/coronavirus, and then click on Testing Information.

There is an opportunity for anyone to get tested next week. The Health Department is partnering with the City of Daytona Beach to offer COVID testing. Testing will be at the corner of Jean Street and Orange Avenue. That is the site of the former DMV office in Daytona Beach if you are familiar with that. The site will be open Wednesday and Thursday. Health Department nurses will be testing from 9:00 in the morning until 1:00 in the afternoon, or while supplies last and the weather permits. Again, anyone can get tested at that site. This is a nasal swab test. You do not have to have symptoms to get tested. You do

not have to live in Daytona Beach. But, if you want to get through the line faster, you should probably preregister. To do that, please call the Health Department at (386) 274-0500 and select “#” for Corona virus information. And again, that is (386) 274-0500 and select “#” for Corona virus information. That registration call center is open from 8:00 to 5:00, seven days a week.

The Health Department has cloth face coverings available to anyone. Kevin, you might have seen him wearing his earlier, I will ask him to step up and show you what it looks like. It’s plain white, and the Health Department has been giving these out over the past week and a half. We’ve actually distributed 130,000 to vulnerable populations around the county. Thank you Kevin. And, we are also going to be giving them out at our Health Department locations in Daytona Beach, DeLand and Orange City. They are also going to be distributed at the community testing site next week in Daytona Beach.

If you would like to get one of these cloth face coverings, please visit one of the Health Department locations in these cities. Offices are on: South Keech Street in Daytona Beach; Holsonback Drive in Daytona Beach; Rich Avenue in DeLand, and Harley Strickland Boulevard in Orange City.

In closing, I’d like to tell everyone, that everyone plays a role in preventing a role in spreading COVID-19. That means that everyone can do their part by: washing their hands or using hand sanitizer, wearing a face covering in public, and by social distancing. As we head into another weekend, please keep those measures in mind. Thank you. Kevin?

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Holly. That was very good information. As we close, today we recognize Juneteenth, to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. Today’s celebrations focus on education, history, self-improvement, culture, and pride. We come together to listen and learn and to reflect on the struggles of so many individuals in their fight for freedom. Today is also a good reminder of the need for all of us, no matter our race or religion or gender, to join together, to continue perpetuating acts of love and kindness in our community, and throughout the world, and here in Volusia County.

With that, we will take any questions from the media.

Question 1: Hutch Breneman, with WESH TV. You at the beginning were talking about the County's recommendation of facemasks. I am wondering if there has been any consideration or discussing, discussions, on mandatory facemasks in Volusia County, in light of Orange County just enacting this, and states around the country have just enacted this recently. Where does the County stand on that?

Answer 1: Thank you Hutch, that's a good question. In our view, at this time, that is difficult to enforce. Our objective is voluntary compliance with getting people to wear their face masks, and we feel the most effective approach to make that happen is by continuing to hammer home the point to wear the mask. It's not all about regulation; it's more about our community taking care of itself and others, for our health and for our economy.

We just had a panel discussion this morning and we discussed this in depth. We had three local area physicians with the medical society, with Halifax Health, and with AdventHealth, and all three physicians unequivocally agreed that wearing a face mask does, without a doubt, prevent the spread of disease, COVID-19. That's why we're emphasizing its importance. And, all County officials, several times a day, collaborate with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and other partners.

With that we will close this afternoon's conference. Take care, stay safe and help your neighbors.