

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Friday, June 5, 2020

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Patricia Boswell – Administrator, Florida Department of Health

Lindsay Cashio – Spokeswoman, AdventHealth

Dr. Margaret Crossman – Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Mike Chitwood – Volusia County Sheriff

Derrick Henry - Mayor, City of Daytona Beach

Craig Capri – Police Chief, Daytona Police Department

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon. I'm Kevin Captain, interim Director of Community Information for Volusia County Government. Today you'll hear from Patricia Boswell, the Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County; Lindsay Cashio, the Director of Communications for AdventHealth Central Florida Division and North Region, and Dr. Margaret Crossman, the Chief Medical Officer with Halifax Health. In addition, you will also hear from Sheriff Mike Chitwood; Craig Capri, the Police Chief for the City of Daytona Beach and the Daytona Beach Mayor, Derrick Henry.

Many of you are probably aware that as of today the State has entered Phase Two of the Governor's *Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida Recovery*. With the transition into Phase Two, restaurants can now seat at a bar, and bars and pubs can open at 50% capacity, with social distancing and sanitation. Retail establishments can now operate at full capacity, while entertainment businesses such as movie theaters and bowling alleys can also open up at 50% capacity. Personal services, including tattooing, tanning and massage may also operate with appropriate safety guidelines. Restrictions and group size have been relaxed, and people are encouraged to avoid congregating in groups larger than 50 people.

The County is also in Phase Two of the *Relaunch Volusia Plan*. County buildings and services reopened on Monday of this week, with some adjustments to ensure the safety of staff and customers. County

fields are now permitting for league sports, but there are additional measures put in place that all leagues must abide by. We've also loosened restrictions slightly regarding groups on the beach to align with the governor's newest order. For detailed information visit Volusia.org/Coronavirus.

And, lastly, thanks to the Volusia County Council, the County will be launching a program to provide small businesses with some of the equipment that they need to ensure the safety of their employees and customers. The tentative plan which was unveiled, at this past Tuesday's County Council meeting, is for the County to allocate up to \$1 million for the purchase of additional personal protective equipment to distribute to businesses that need it. The County has been collaborating with the Volusia County Chamber Alliance to put the program together. The County Council is expected to give final approval on the details, and the allocation of funds, at their next meeting on June 16th. The money will come from the Federal Corona Virus Relief Funds that the County has received through the CARES Act.

And, one last but not final note, this morning we held a panel discussion that focused on all things "Assistance." Whether you are in need of assistance with rent, mortgage or your small business, or a nonprofit, I recommend that you check it out. You can review it on the Emergency Management FaceBook page. With that we will move to Patricia Boswell, the Administrator with the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

Patricia Boswell – Administrator, Florida Department of Health

Good afternoon. So, the statistics for today are 791 total cases. Volusia County currently has a positivity rate at 3.3%. Fifteen percent, or 118 of Volusia cases have been associated with long-term care facilities.

Twenty-one percent, or 161 of the cases have been associated with the correctional facilities. In other words, about one third of the COVID-19 cases in Volusia County have been associated with either long-term care or correctional facilities. There have been 44 COVID deaths in Volusia County. Twenty-eight of those deaths have been residents or staff at long-term care facilities.

I've shared this data with you as an example of some of the numbers that the Health Department are watching. The number of new cases and the number of positivity are just two of the health metrics that the Department of Health uses to monitor the spread of disease. This line graph shows the progression of new cases by week since April 19th.

Volusia County was on a steady decline until we saw an increase in mid-May. This increase in cases is primarily a result of increased testing in long-term care facilities, at our community test sites, and by our hospitals as part of their pre-op testing. This graph does not include this week's numbers.

The more testing that is conducted, the more cases can be found. We saw this effect this week. We had three days of higher case numbers. A significant portion of these new cases were in long-term care facilities or were close contacts to known cases. For example, the State Regional Nursing Team has tested staff at 68 of our long-term care facilities, with another eight care facilities scheduled for Saturday, and four more for Monday.

The increased testing is also identifying new cases. We can balance out the effects of increased testing that produces more cases by watching the percent of positive cases, which I will explain next. Also, we anticipate a slight increase in the number of cases as we reopen. We have not seen any significant increase in the number of non-facility cases.

The next chart illustrates Volusia County's positivity rate. This is the number of positive tests each day divided by the number of tests conducted on that day. This chart illustrates a fluctuation between one and three percent since May 4th. Currently Volusia County's positivity rate over the past 14 days is 2.4%. The number of new cases does not include antibody tests. This chart only reflects the number of positive PCR or swab tests.

The next two charts are based on data received from all emergency rooms and all free-standing emergency rooms and departments. Both of these metrics continue to climb. The first chart illustrates the number of visits to the emergency room for any influenza-like illness.

The final graph I'm going to show today illustrates the emergency room visits for COVID-like illness. This metric is also on the decline.

Beginning June 10th, Port Orange area residents will have a free COVID-19 testing site in town. Testing will be just off of Dunlawton Boulevard on Halifax Drive. That's north of Aunt Catfish, along the river. The site will be open on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, weather permitting. It will be open from 9:00 in the morning until 1:00 in the afternoon, or while supplies last. Anyone can get tested. This is a nasal swab test. You do not need to have symptoms to be tested and you do not have to live in the city of Port Orange. It will be a drive through test site, and please enter from Dunlawton Boulevard. It is a partnership between the city of Port Orange and the Florida Department of Health. To get through the line faster you should pre-register. To do that, please call the department at (386) 274-0500 and select

pound (#) for the Corona virus information. The registration call center is open 8:00 to 5:00, seven days a week. It will take a week to receive results. The Department of Health will either call or mail you the results, whether positive or negative. And, again, if you would like to pre-register, call the Health Department at (386) 274-0500 and press pound (#) for Corona virus.

One final message, I'd like to remind everyone that we play a role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Everyone can do their part by hand washing, wearing face coverings in public and by practicing social distancing. And, as we head into the weekend and into Phase Two, please continue to practice these measures. At this point I'd like to introduce, Lindsay Cashio, the AdventHealth spokeswoman joining us virtually on the phone.

Lindsay Cashio – Spokeswoman, AdventHealth

Thank you Patricia. Good afternoon everyone. As the state continues the phased reopening, proper hand washing, mask usage, and social distancing remain essential. Until an effective vaccine, or curative treatment is available, COVID-19 will continue to be a virus our community must grapple with.

AdventHealth has made significant investments in services, infrastructure, personnel and technology. And, the safety of our patients, team members, physicians and greater community remains a top priority. No one should delay medical care and AdventHealth is here to safely care for Floridians.

As a faith-based organization, AdventHealth is called to love others with the heart of Christ, regardless of race, gender or creed. Today, from 1:00 p.m. to 1:09 p.m. AdventHealth team members joined health care professionals across the nation in kneeling for a moment of silent reflection and commitment to improve the health and safety of black patients, colleagues, family, friends and community. The nationwide movement was started by *White Coats for Black Lives* and is centered in combatting higher rates of disease among black communities; higher barriers of entry to the healthcare industry for black individuals; lower rates of black medical students, and the fear among black individuals to seek medical care. As a faith-based healthcare provider, AdventHealth believes racism is a public health crisis and has a sense of responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the community as a whole.

And, now I'd like to turn this over to Dr. Crossman of Halifax Health.

Dr. Margaret Crossman – Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Good afternoon, Margaret Crossman, Chief Medical Officer of Halifax Health. And, I will let you know that at Halifax Health, and I will let you know that at Halifax we are following our hospital metrics. And, I will share that in our special containment unit we currently have seven patients, only one of which is on a vent. Our capacity in both our critical care areas, and certainly our ventilator capacity, is in great shape. Our protective equipment and gear is still doing terrific there.

One of the things that has become sort of trademark of COVID-19 is the super-spreader events. And, that is something that I am going to speak to a little bit more at this time. If we don't study history we are bound to make some of the same mistakes again. So, I want to focus on this just for a second on the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. Some of you have heard about this and I just want to refresh our memories together. This was considered the deadliest pandemic in modern world history. It is felt to have started in some of the animals and bird species in the Midwest of the United States. It found its way into a human, and had slow spread over the next six months across the United States, before it jumped across the ocean and hit Europe.

Here at home we thought that it was largely over by June or so, of that 1918 year. Meanwhile, it continued that spread in Europe and it ended up in Spain. Now Spain, and this is a little bit of a history lesson, was neutral in World War I. So, they didn't have as much censorship on their news media and they were able to begin the reporting on the devastation from this flu virus. And, this is why it was misnamed the Spanish flu. But, it wasn't that it started there necessarily, or it was worse there than anywhere else.

The interesting thing about it is it continued to grow, the momentum gained across Europe. By Fall of 1918, it began to hit more seaports across the world. It came in a second wave. Now, we thought we were done with it by June, remember, of 1918. It came and made a second wave entrance into the Boston port here in the United States. And, what happened after that, it got a little worse and spread through the country. It got a little more deadly than the first time, which may have had to do with some mutation that it experienced while traveling across and through other European countries.

But, in particular I want to talk about two cities. One was Philadelphia, and the other, St. Louis. In Philadelphia, on September 28th, they avoided some of the concerns that were out there and they said that they were going to go ahead and have a big parade. Thousands of people gathered there, and following that parade, thousands were infected; twelve thousand deaths in that city alone. Now, in the same time frame, St. Louis had put on their mitigation strategies. They had begun to roll things back,

close things, and avoid large gatherings. And, they had one-eighth per capita loss of lives of what Philadelphia had, during the whole time of this pandemic.

So, I point that out so that if we don't learn from history, as we go forward into this second phase, if we don't remember the lessons learned from some of those areas, we are bound to have more loss of lives than we otherwise have to have. You know, the end of that pandemic there were 500 million infected globally. And, we lost 50 million globally in lives. There were some countries that actually lost ten percent of their population; that was Tahiti. And, twenty percent of the population was dead in places like West Samoa.

So, remember, as we talk about these super-spreader events, that something like World War I served as that global spreader event. What happened is that they were transporting men across the world into these seaports. And, as it entered the seaports, it entered these countries. So, hopefully we've learned from that time? While our super-spreader events are a little more local, let's talk about some of the ones we've seen for COVID-19. The Boston Conference, some of the carnivals – Germany, Louisiana; some of the funerals, some of the services that have been held, choir practices we've heard about, after ski parties, it goes on and on. Horse races, soccer games; we are coming together. And, I don't want to be fearful, we can do these things, but we need to do them more safely.

So, when you are in these gathers, if you are in these gatherings, regardless of what this gathering is, you have to remember the things that we've learned from Patricia and our Department of Health, and from the CDC; we want to avoid the things that are increasing the likelihood of spread. We know that loud talking, shouting, singing, as much as those things cause projection of your voice, that is when you are going to cause more of those droplets; perhaps even some aerosolization. And, these particles can float around for just a little while. They will land in the area; we know that. We are counting on our warmer weather, our sunshine, being outdoors and lots of ventilation. But, if you are doing these events, especially in an inclosed environments or very close to other people, you need to take extra precautions.

And, from those super-spreader events, those large events, you can take them into your homes. And, in your homes you are living in close quarters, you are close together again, and that's how you can start those clusters though. I would like to encourage this community to not be the next explosion. Let's not be the turbo-charge for this pandemic in this community. Let's continue going forward smartly and with facts and have a great day. Let me know if you have questions when we are done.

Mike Chitwood – Volusia County Sheriff

Good afternoon, Dr. Crossman. Mr. Mayor, would you like to come up? Dr. Crossman, can you give me an address on where my friends and family in Philadelphia can send “hate mail” to you for invoking the pandemic in 1918, saying that it was our fault . . .

We are going to take this opportunity right now to talk about the events that are going to occur in Daytona Beach and in Volusia County. And, to get started I would like to welcome the Mayor of the great city of Daytona Beach, Mayor Derrick Henry.

Derrick Henry - Mayor, City of Daytona Beach

I simply want to say that these guys have done a magnificent job. The entire community has done an amazing job of providing them with leads. We live in a time when social media has a life of its own and that is why we need every resident in Volusia County to continue to communicate with them so it will help them to do their job, and be planned and prepared. They have a great plan, and I am proud to support it.

Mike Chitwood – Volusia County Sheriff

Thank you Mr. Mayor. Chief?

Craig Capri – Police Chief, Daytona Police Department

Just to echo what the Mayor and Sheriff said, we are expecting a large crowd this weekend. I think that it’s going to be every weekend through the summer just because people have been cooped up the last couple of months. Our plan is solid, we went over it, we’ve made adjustments as we get information, intelligence coming in from social media. We are totally prepared, the community is safe. I fielded probably 60 to 100 calls yesterday. People are generally afraid. Don’t be afraid, the town is safe, we have more than enough resources here. There is nothing to worry about. And, practice your CDC guidelines with the Corona virus. That is the main issue right now. We want to get through this and I

know that we will get through this weekend, and whatever else comes out our way. With the great team we have here between Daytona Beach, and all the other, the Sheriff's Office, and all the other law enforcement agencies that are our partners in the area. I am looking forward to a good weekend. We are going to be firm, but fair. And, people who are going to come here to obey the rules, have a good time, enjoy yourselves and don't be unruly because it won't be tolerated.

Mike Chitwood – Volusia County Sheriff

Thanks Chief, I just want to echo what everybody said. We believe in the plan that Daytona Beach has set forth. The Sheriff's Office has called in other sheriff's offices; St. John's County, Flagler County and Seminole, to give us a bolstered addition of resources. My message would be to our community, that we want to send a message clear and wide, whether you're a business owner or resident, you are more than welcome to come into our community to enjoy our amenities. You are more than welcome to come in and protest, as long as you do it peaceably. And, I would ask all of our business folks and all of our residents to not tolerate any type of violence in our community.

And, you, our community, are our force multiplier on that. As we have seen other citizens groups, or citizens band together with law enforcement and elected officials, to stop looting Target stores, and other stores around the country. We ask the same thing, if you are out on a protest, and you are in a peaceful protest and you discover someone in there that has an ulterior nefarious motive, you need to notify law enforcement right away, so that we can do our job and monitor that.

So, we are looking forward to having a good weekend again, and assure the residents that we have plenty of resources out there. Anybody have any questions? Claire? The Mayor went and sat down on us.

Craig Capri – Police Chief, Daytona Police Department

Question 1: Sheriff and Chief, we talked last week about this, June 6th event, and you felt that the promoter had gotten the word out, etc. Is there new intel, that, you know, people are going to come anyway? And, are there any organized protests this weekend that we are aware of?

Answer 1: I don't know of any organized protests, but we've had people out there everyday peacefully, thank God, protesting. And, it's good to see that. It's good to see them expressing their rights, expressing their feelings, in a peaceful manner. I love it; all day long.

Uh, we had some intelligence on social media that the event was going to go to Orlando, then it's coming back to Daytona. We really don't pay any attention to that because we are prepared. And, we are going to be prepared all summer long for huge crowds coming to the beach and I don't anticipate any problems. A lot of stuff on social media has to be vetted and verified, and we have not been able to verify anything of a serious nature. But, it doesn't mean that it can't happen; you've got to be prepared. And, I think that we are more than prepared and we will be prepared as we go along for any other future events. (Reporter goes on to ask: And, I know that there was some concern . . . oh, go ahead Sheriff.)

Mike Chitwood – Volusia County Sheriff

Oh, excuse me, Claire. I think that you are talking directly about The Mall? That issue has been going out, and I can tell you that the Chief and myself, and the outside agencies coming in, are extremely aware of it and we are going to have enough resources out there to have a positive affect on the event. But, one of the things that you are going to have to remember, and the Mayor alluded to the social media, uh, a win for these anarchists or ANTIFA, is for The Mall to close down. So, when they put these things out there we don't know if they are going to come and there is going to be a violent protest, or they scared them all into closing down, which causes an economic win for them. We've seen that in other protests as well, where they put a thing out that there is going to be a shooting at Walmart, and fearing residents from going out and enjoying life in Volusia County.

Question 2: And, the thing that went out about The Mall, kind of looked like a template that has gone out in other areas.

Answer 2: It was the same template used for DeLand, on Wednesday afternoon. Wednesday afternoon it was supposed to occur. And, all they did was put "Volusia Mall" in there, and changed the date; it was the exact same template that was being sent out. Now, we take that absolutely serious. We take that if people want to come here and create destruction, we are ready for that. And, and, that is the best that we can do. It also could be that they are doing that to create an economic issue as well. But, we can't

look at the economic issue, we have to look at you are not going to come here, it's not going to be tolerated, and we have plenty of resources out there.

Craig Capri – Police Chief, Daytona Police Department

And, I can add to that. That template has been used all around the country, so it could be a tactic. One thing I forgot to tell you is that there is another march tomorrow night, Saturday, at 5:30, from the Walmart at Bevel Road, that is going to march eastbound to U.S. 1, go south on U.S. 1 to the South Daytona Beach Police Department, South Daytona Police Department, and we've talked to the promoters and its going to be a peaceful march. Probably 100 to 150 people. And, they are going to be on the sidewalks following the traffic control devices. We don't anticipate any problems. 5:30 from the Walmart and we don't anticipate any issues with that one. That's it? (Sheriff Chitwood, "I saw you with your phone . . . Kevin?)

Kevin Captain – Interim Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Sheriff, thank you Chief Capri, Mayor Henry. I want to thank our hospitals for participating today and the Florida Department of Health.

With that we will close this conference. Again, for more information, visit Volusia.org/coronavirus. With that, help your neighbor, take care, and stay safe.