

COVID-19 Update Press Conference

Thursday, July 2, 2020

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Ed Kelley - Chair, Volusia County Council

Ray Manchester – Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Howard Bailey – Chief, Volusia County Fire

Brad Harris – Business Manager, Volusia County Economic Development

Carmen Hall – Director, Volusia County Community Assistance

Patricia Boswell – Administrator, Florida Department of Health

Dr. Margaret Crossman - Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon, I'm Kevin Captain, Community Information Director for Volusia County Government. Today, you'll hear from Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley; Ray Manchester, Volusia County's Beach Safety Director; Chief Howard Bailey with the Volusia County Fire Service Rescue Division; Mr. Brad Harris, Business Manager of the Volusia County Economic Development; Carmen Hall, the Director of Community Assistance for Volusia County; Patricia Boswell, the Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County and Dr. Margaret Crossman, the Chief Medical Officer for Halifax Health in Daytona Beach.

So, with such a full lineup today, we'll get right to Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley.

Ed Kelley - Chair, Volusia County Council

Good afternoon, and, Kevin, it is a full lineup so I'll get right to it. COVID-19 is real. It's out there. It is not a Fig Newton of your imagination. It is out there; it is serious; it is dangerous, but we can take all of the precautions we can to make a difference. I will address some of those and during the course of my little

points, I'm going to give you a guaranteed, fail proof, safe, plan for 30 days to end it. So, with that, I've been asked, with emails and so forth, "Why not do a county wide mandate directed to you?" The reason is that we believe that you are smart enough, and you should be educated enough, and if you will follow our *Wash Up. Back Up. Mask Up.* Plan, you will be able to successfully help end the COVID-19. You should be able to choose for yourself. It shouldn't be up to the Volusia County Government. We want you all to use your masks. We want you to social distance. Those two are the two key points.

This week we will keep the beaches open. If I step on anything Director Ray Manchester says, he's already given me permission that I'm forgiven for stepping on it. Why we decided to keep the beaches open? The beaches are one of the safest places you can be. Outside, sunshine, social distancing, following the guidelines that we have. And, if you look at the pictures that we have posted; the vertical pictures from the drones, you can see, not when you are looking from Main Street Pier, north and south, where it looks like everyone horizontally is right next to each other. If you look at it from above you can see that the majority of times, everyone is social distancing, with their groups of six, and ten feet apart. There may be a small exception to that. And, the way that we are going to be controlling that, is the parking.

Cars will be parked and when they are directed to park in their appointed spots, you are already social distancing, so you don't have to do anything other than stay within that area and you are already going to be in, no more than six in a space, ten feet or more from the next person. That's why it is important; it's safe. We will point out this; when the beach parking spots are filled, the beach will periodically be shut down. Also, to make sure that everyone has time to park while they are accessing the beach, the beach may be periodically closed to allow that. So, if you are backed up in traffic, don't think that you are not going to get on, because it is will take time. We would rather have you park safely to start with than do that.

I have been assured by our County Manager, George Recktenwald that Ray Manchester's Beach Patrol is going to enforce the parking. They are not going to remind you once, and say, "That's okay," and go away. Steps will be taken to enforce the parking at the proper place. They have added, or are adding, every four-wheeler that we have available will be in use. Every employee available will be employed. I think that is stepping all over what he is going to tell you, but, uh . . . and we are adding four new four-wheelers so that can in the future can be adequately prepared to be out there and not be necessarily sitting in a truck. But, being able to access areas where we, in the past, maybe did not have the personnel to be there.

Social distancing everywhere we go is important. When you go to the store, social distance. Social distancing is one of two keys; it's three, but that's one of two, obviously masking up is one. And, obviously washing your hands or using a hand sanitizer are very important.

My personal do's and don'ts are this: if I am going to get out of my car and going into Publix to shop, which is once every seven or eight days, we do that to the minimum amount of time that we can, before I go into the store, I mask up. When I leave the store walking to my car, I take my mask off and dispose of it, unless it is a reusable one, and I don't just lay it in the parking lot or something like that.

The mitigation that we have done in Volusia County, I think has made a difference, if we follow it. And, that is the Plexiglas shields that we have put into place. I was at Ace Hardware buying some paint this week, or last week, I had to wait six feet behind the next person, to pay someone who was behind the Plexiglas shield. This is for your benefit.

When you go into stores that have directional arrows on where to shop, please do that, because if everyone is doing that you are not going to be facing someone, and you are more likely to contract something from someone who is unmasked, walking toward you, than someone who is masked, walking away from you. So, take those precautions.

Now, my 30 Day Plan. Guaranteed by August 2nd, if all of you will get on board with our *Wash Up. Back Up. Mask Up.* If you will mask up voluntarily, everyone, for the next 30 days, we will not be dealing with the numbers that we are dealing with right now, and we should see almost zero new cases. That's all we got to do folks.

We are celebrating Fourth of July Weekend this weekend. We are celebrating the fact that we were given our freedom and independence from Great Britain by those who stood up, the colonists, who stood up and gave us that freedom. Let's do something and exercise our freedom to make a difference in the lives of everyone else that we come into contact with. Mask up. All we are asking for is mask up for 30 days. Social distance when you can, and it will go away. And, it will be a whole lot easier than shut down every business again. Wouldn't it be nice if you didn't need to worry about going somewhere that you couldn't get a seat, or that you had to worry about it? Wouldn't it be nice if no one, no new cases were being developed?

And I will say this to those, the numbers for the last two weeks, the median number increases have been from the lowest ages; 31 to 43. We are seeing an increase, and I'm stepping all over Patricia Boswell

right now, I know, but it's important to me because I am not in that age bracket. But, I can remember I was at one point, and maybe felt a little different. But, we are all subjected to get this.

Just one personal little example. My brother's grand-daughter, 21 years old, fourth year student at University of Tennessee. Her roommate tested positive, because she was in contact with her, she was tested, and she tested positive. She finishes her 14 day stint in her room today. She was in contact with her mother, her father, her two sisters, her brother and my brother and his wife, in direct contact. None of them have tested positive so far. And so we know, and they were in direct contact, because they were telling her "good bye" to go back to school or go back to work. So, be careful in doing that.

Mask up, and let's just do this 30 day plan, and it will work. All we are doing is asking. We don't want to be mandating that you do it. We want you to want to do it. So, with that I will introduce Ray Manchester, Director of Beach Services, and he is going to tell you some really good things that I skipped over.

Ray Manchester – Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Thank you Chairman Kelley and honestly you captured a lot of my things and I do appreciate that. Ray Manchester with Beach Safety, and looking at this weekend, as you can imagine, this is our Super Bowl and World Series all rolled up into one. This is our busiest weekend, and with that being said, we have some of these common sense tips for everyone to follow and to be safe and to have an enjoyable weekend.

One thing is that we do have high tide in the mornings, so there may be a delay in ramp opening. I don't think there will be because the surf is pretty quiet, but there may be so keep that on your radar. If needed, you can always seek off-beach parking. We have large off-beach parking lots all up and down the coast from New Smyrna up to Ormond, so if you want to, take advantage of those. If you do park on the beach as Chairman Kelley said, you do need to park at a post. We have about 15 miles of beach you can drive on. They are marked with conservation poles, and in between those conservation poles they have blue markers in the sand. There was a lot of work that went into putting those into place, and it actually makes it very easy for you to park. So, if you come down to the beach, park in front of one those posts.

So, if you have someone that you are meeting or you have family that are showing up at a later time, and they can't do that, then you may need to find a place where you can do that, because we can't have the cars bunching together. When the cars are parked at a post that leaves a lot of room in between them, and that is done on purpose. So, we are trying to avoid other cars trying to sneak in there and get all jammed up. So, please adhere to that; park at a post.

We also have soft sand issues on the beach. We are starting to see some of that infamous red sand starting to work its way down south, so be aware of that. Sometimes it affects traffic patterns, but if you do get stuck, flag us down and we will try our best to take care of you.

As always alcohol is illegal on the beach. You cannot have open alcohol or glass containers on the beach for obvious reasons, so please remember that.

And, also fireworks are illegal on the beach. I know that the Governor just signed an order that allowed it for certain times of the year, so I want people to know that even with that order the fireworks are illegal on the beach. A lot of the municipalities have, but not all of them, have cancelled their fireworks shows so we are thinking that a lot of people might come down to the beach to shoot off their fireworks, but we don't want you to do that. The use and possession, and I stress possession, of fireworks on the beach, is illegal. If we see you with fireworks, we are going to do our best to educate you, but even if they are brand new, still in the box, still in the bag from where you just bought them from, you can't have them on the beach.

Again, we are going to try to educate you, but if we have to, we will take them from you. You cannot have them on the beach. Neither can you have them around the beach, like in the beach side parking lots, the hotels, the condos. That is just a safety issue right there in itself. And, so we are stressing – don't take them down to the beach.

When fireworks are used on the beach they generate tons and tons of garbage that has to be picked up the next day. It is something that we don't look forward to, but it is something that we have to do. Tons and tons of garbage gets picked up July 6th or July 5th, whatever the days that apply to the weekend, so we don't want that.

In addition, all of this garbage, it impacts wildlife. It impacts birds, it impacts turtles. We are in the middle of turtle season so we don't want things down there that are going to impact turtles coming up, or birds, think they can eat. We don't want or need that happening. So, I cannot stress that enough. I know that it is the Fourth of July and we are celebrating our independence like Chairman Kelley

mentioned, but you cannot have fireworks on the beach. Again, not just the use, but of the possession also.

So, when it comes to fireworks and safety, I am going to let the Fire Chief speak more about it, but if you need more updates as to what we do and how we are doing it, or any up to date beach information, you can go to our Volusia Beaches on Facebook and Twitter and download the Volusia Beaches app. And, now I'd like to introduce Volusia County Fire Chief Howard Bailey to fill you in on some of the safety issues when it comes to fireworks. Thank you.

Howard Bailey – Chief, Volusia County Fire Rescue

Good afternoon. I'm Howard Bailey, Fire Chief with Volusia County Fire Rescue.

On behalf of all of the men and woman of Volusia County Fire Rescue I want to start off by wishing everyone a happy July 4th weekend. In April, Governor DeSantis signed Senate Bill 140 which legalizes the use of fireworks on the July 4th. Although the state law has changed, the use of fireworks on Volusia County beaches, as Ray has indicated, is illegal.

With many professional firework shows being cancelled and record sales of fireworks this year, I cannot overstate the importance of fireworks safety. If you own the property you're standing on, then go ahead and use them! Use them safely and use them according to manufactures recommendations. And of course - any illegal use of commercial grade fireworks should be reported to the authorities.

Fireworks continue to cause thousands of injuries each year – I cannot stress enough that Fireworks should only be used by adults. According to the National Fire Protection Agency, Children ages 10–14 continue to have the highest rate of fireworks injuries every year. Please keep fireworks away from children! Also, please take the time to visit our website for additional information and fireworks safety tips.

Again, we hope all of you have a very safe and enjoyable July 4th holiday, and by following safety guidelines, we hope everyone can avoid injuries and accidental fires. Thank you!

And now, Brad Harris, Business Manager for Volusia County Economic Development is up next.

Brad Harris – Business Manager, Volusia County Economic Development

Thank you Chief Bailey. As Kevin said at the beginning, this is a wide ranging press conference, but I want to narrow our focus a little bit right now and speak specifically to our businesses. The Volusia County Council has stepped up and done a lot of good things for our businesses, some wonderful programs, and I want to speak to those today.

So, today I'd like to share information about Volusia County's new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Distribution Program, but before I do that, I'd like to mention three other financial grant programs that our County Council has already approved and are already in place currently. So, let me run down those quickly before we get into the Personal Protective Equipment Program.

First one is the Small Business Reopening Grant. This was the first of the grant programs that was authorized to use care dollars. That program was authorized and funded with \$10 million and it was launched on the 14th of May. Since its launch we have had several thousand, at least over two thousand applications. We've seen several million dollars issued in grant funds issued to our small businesses, but I want to let businesses know that that program is still available, and is still funded, and we encourage you to apply. So, it is being administered by the Volusia County Division of Economic Development, it is for profit businesses that have at least, or have up to 50 employees. It is for grants of \$3,000 for those with up to 25, or \$5,000 for those with between 26 and 50 employees. So, that is still available and one of the requirements is that businesses must be in a bricks and mortar location, neither a commercial, agricultural or industrial location. So, again, funds are still available and it is something that we encourage you to do, and it is something widely utilized. And, as I said, millions of dollars have already been paid to businesses through that program.

The second one is the Non-profit Agency Grant Program. This was funded with \$2.5 million. It was launched in early June, and it is being administered by the United Way of Volusia/Flagler County. And, the constraints on this are very similar, the eligibility is very similar to the Small Business for Profit Grant Program. We have eligibility up to 50 employees, and again, there are \$3,000 or \$5,000 grants. They are for non-profit business, including now our military non-profit organizations, which was added just recently. And, again, this requires that the applicants have a bricks and mortar business, or bricks and mortar location to make the application.

So, Small Business Re-opening Grant, Non-profit Agency Grant Program and then the Home-based Business Grant Program which was launched last week on the 24th of June. That is also administered by the Volusia County Economic Development Division. It is home-based businesses with at least \$6,000 in

gross receipts for the business. Each of those businesses to be eligible, must have experienced at least \$1,500 in COVID related losses. And, again, it can go up to 50 employees. The grant amount for the home-based business is \$1,500. And, one other thing we use to qualify a businesses is that if you've already applied for the County Rent or Mortgage Assistance Program, which we may hear more about shortly, then you cannot apply for this as well, at least at this point in time. So, those are three programs already administered for small businesses, for not for profit and homebased businesses.

Now, let me turn our attention to our newest program, which is a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) program. And this program was funded with \$1 million by our County Council, and that program is going to launch very soon. It is designed to help local businesses with short term personal protective equipment needs as they re-open or strengthen operating practices, to reduce the risk of Corona virus exposure, both for the workers and for the customers. Right now personal protective equipment is very hard to find. We've had several businesses even contact our office at Economic Development, looking for possible sources.

So, the County Council has stepped up in a big way and are using the buying power of Volusia County to launch this program, which, by the way, is being administered by the Volusia County Chamber Alliance. So, our Chamber Alliance has come together to try and distribute this PPE to our local businesses. And, it will begin, it will launch, on Monday, July 6th. So, the Chamber Alliance has assembled folks that have built kits, and there are 7,000 kits that will be built. I think 3,500 have already been assembled, and they will be distributed next week. Monday through Friday, next week, at six different locations, those kits will be distributed. They include gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and there are spray bottles in there with paper towels. And, there are some thermometers available to some businesses that come in. So, they will be distributed at various locations across the county from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., on designated days, next week, and you can find those locations at the VolusiaBusinessResources.com site. So, go there, look for the locations, but essentially they are across the county.

Just the one detail that I wanted to share with people is that it isn't a come-get-all-you-can. There is a limit to what you can get. There are two (2) kits per business and we ask that businesses come in with some identification like a business card just so that we have some evidence that you in fact are a business here in Volusia County, before you are given those kits.

So, let me finish by saying this, our thanks go out to our Chambers and all the business representatives that joined them in building these kits. They spent a long day putting this together, on a voluntary basis, with an effort to help our businesses and help our residents be safe during this time of COVID-19.

So, those are the programs. Again, look for them on VolusiaBusinessResources.com. Right at the top of that website you will see links to every one of these programs, and you can go in and find the details, the locations, and the eligibility criteria for each one. So, with that, I will finish and ask that Carmen Hall join me, and she is the Director for Community Assistance. So, Carmen . . .

Carmen Hall – Director, Volusia County Community Assistance

Good afternoon, as Brad mentioned we do have a COVID-19 rental and mortgage assistance program. This program is an effort to assist residents who have suffered a loss of income due to COVID-19, and it is for renters and home owners. Volusia County Council has allocated \$5 million toward these programs. It is designed to help these eligible renters and homeowners with up to three months of assistance. The maximum amount of assistance is \$1,500 per month, for a total amount of \$4,500. It can be used to pay past due payments, current payments or future payments. At this time we have received close to 2,600 applications. We've processed close to 2,100 of these applications, and 806 have so far been approved.

If you would like to apply, a list of the required, minimum documentation and application is available online at Volusia.org. In addition to this program we are offering our summer food service program. These sites are offering breakfast and lunch for children 18 years of age and under. Due to Corona virus concerns, some sites are offering Grab-N-Go meals, while others are offering sites on campus due to other programming on the site, such as childcare and day camps. If you would like to find a site near you please visit SummerBreakSpot.com. And, now we have Patricia Boswell, Administrator of the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County.

Patricia Boswell – Administrator, Florida Department of Health

Good afternoon, I am Patricia Boswell. I am the Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Volusia County. Volusia now has a total of 2,372 positive cases of COVID-19. It was only two weeks ago when we reached that 1,000 cases mark. We have had more cases in the past two weeks in Volusia than

what we had all year up to two weeks ago. Our 14 day positivity rate is now 10%. That is significantly higher than a week ago when our 14 day positivity rate was 5.8%.

We continue to see positive tests in younger age groups. We also continue to see cases in people without symptoms. In fact, over the past two weeks, 20% of the new cases have been in people who did not have any symptoms when they were tested. We continue to report COVID related deaths in Volusia County. As of today, the state has reported 58 deaths, that is an increase of four deaths since this time last week. Thirty six of those deaths were related to long-term care facilities.

We are keeping an eye on the status of our hospitalization and healthcare systems. The number of COVID positive people hospitalized continues to increase and this week the number of daily COVID positive admissions also increased significantly.

The data that I am sharing with you says one thing, the virus is spreading in our community. If you test positive, please notify anyone that you have come into close contact with so that they can begin to stop the further spread of this virus. Your close contacts need to self-isolate at home for 14 days. There is no way around this timeline. Even if a close contact should test negative, they still must self-isolate for the 14 days, because that test is a result for one day. The virus can develop for up to 14 days. So, please do your part. If you have tested positive, tell your close contacts. If you have been close to someone who has tested positive, stay home for the full 14 days.

Since COVID may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms we all need to recognize and understand that we are at risk for the possible unrecognized COVID-19 exposures, so practice social distancing.

My message for everyone today is let's stop the spread of this disease, especially to our older adults and those with serious medical conditions. Everyone should practice social distancing, wear a mask when in public, and this is the best way for all of us to protect one another.

With this long holiday weekend I wish everyone to stay well, be safe, practice social distancing, wear a facemask and avoid those close spaces, crowded spaces and close contact settings. To summarize, back up, wash up and mask up Volusia. And, with that I would like to introduce Dr. Margaret Crossman. She is our Chief Medical Officer at Halifax Health.

Dr. Margaret Crossman - Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health (12:42)

Good afternoon and it is a pleasure to be back here with you today. From Halifax Health I can share with you today that we have 16 in our special care unit, six of those are on ventilators and again, in our special care unit we have a 30 bed capacity in the special care unit, COVID unit. Our ICU beds, we have 30% of those are open right now. That has fluctuated anywhere to 20% capacity and 30 – 35% capacity. Right now we are at about a 30% capacity. The same with our hospital beds. We have abundant vents, ventilators, and our elective surgical volume is now back up to about 90% of our pre-COVID volumes. So, that is good, we still have plenty of protective gear. We've got our supplies in store and we are looking good.

One of the things that I really appreciated of what Mr. Kelley shared is about his family member who was in school and the contact with family members, but how, thankfully, none so far have turned positive. And, I just want to remind this group that we are hearing stories of this all over, where people are wearing masks. One example was an air flight where somebody, not realizing that they were carrying the virus had masked up. Soon after they landed they realized that they were positive and they became symptomatic, and of course, they were likely carrying the virus for that flight, but they had worn a mask. And, the 25 individuals that were closely around them, and were likely exposed to him during that flight, none of them turned up positive. So, that is really good news. The other is that we've heard stories of a hair salon in another state, where there were two workers there who were positive. They were wearing masks, as were the customers. And, they said that there were approximately 140 exposures in that particular situation, none of whom were positive.

So, we know that it can make a difference and I want to encourage everyone to continue doing those things that you know to do. And, with this campaign stuff, *Step Up Volusia*, I just want to share that when you wash up, and we know from other studies looking at respiratory virus and the transmission of that, you can reduce the acquisition of that virus by 80%. In other words, you can actually stop, let me say that differently, by 20%. In other words, one out of every five cases WON'T happen if you are washing your hands appropriately.

When it comes to backing up or keeping your social distance, we saw a study recently out of California in collaboration with Texas. What they found was that we can reduce hospital rates and deaths by up to 75% depending upon on when we enact this particular mitigation strategy of stepping back and keeping your social distance. And, you know, again, we've already said that we've had great gains here locally,

we don't want to back up and so, we want to back up and social distance, but we don't want to lose the gains that we have gained during this time.

And finally by masking up, there have been some good studies based on this Corona virus about the mode of the viral transmission and how it tends to spread infectively. And, some conservative estimates have indicated that if we will mask up, we can reduce the number of deaths by 33,000 between now and October. And, while these are complicated models, this is one of the more conservative ones. I did see some up to 60 and 70,000 lives across the country that could be saved.

But, I just encourage everyone to do exactly those things; wash up, back up, mask up, and let's keep going forward in the safest manner that we possibly can. And, now to close us down, I'd like Kevin to come back up and join me.

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Dr. Crossman. Thank you to all our speakers. We've said this before, but it's worth repeating. Life looks different today. So, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the responsibility falls on each and every one of us to continue following those key safety measures.

Those include washing hands, maintaining a safe physical distance of six feet or more, and wearing a mask when you're out in public and social distancing cannot be maintained adequately.

If you are interested in testing, you can visit Volusia.org/testing. All of the County's areas that are testing are updated on that site on a daily basis. So, please feel free to look at that site if you are interested in being tested.

So, each of us plays a role and it's time to wash up, back up and mask up. With that we will take any questions.

Question 1: Casmira Harrison, Daytona Beach News Journal

Have any lifeguards or beach safety officers tested positive for the virus, and if so, how many, when, and what steps were taken following that knowledge?

Ray Manchester – Director, Volusia County Beach Safety

Answer 1: Actually, as of today, we've had one, and only one, beach safety employee test positive. That individual is going through some training as we speak, so he was not actively on the line with the rest of our employees. He was at school a little bit, so he was isolated from the rest of the agency. He is going to be isolating for 14 days and they will be doing the contact tracing, and so far we are not aware of anything else. So, that's if for now; just one.

Question 2: Michelle from Telemundo

My question is that at what point do you guys say that you are going to close the beach? What is going to be that point?

Answer 2: To closing the beach for vehicles? (Michelle: Yes.) One thing we can control is vehicular traffic. So, when the cars are coming down and we are trying to get them parked at a post and everything, too, we will close gates to help us absorb that traffic in a reasonable fashion. So, I'd like people to know that if they come to the beach, and they see that the gate is closed and it's not really obvious why, that is probably the reason. We have a lot of staff that is out there that is going to be running around parking cars. As you know, we have 15 miles of drivable beach, so people could come down and maybe not park right away too, so we just have to be able to absorb all of those vehicles. And, if gets to be a whole lot, all at once, we are going to take our time to make sure they are parked the way we want them to park.

Now, I don't think that we are going to have any tide concerns. We do have a little bit of soft sand that is out there that is making things interesting, but if you see a reason why the beach is closed, like in the middle of the day, it's low tide, "Why is this closed?" (Michelle: It could be full?) Yes, if it's full, yes. We keep an eye on it and we work with the toll takers. We monitor it so if we see some spots opening up, we will let a couple of cars dribble down; yes. It is not a perfect science, but it's the best that we can do. We don't want a lot of people sitting there. We also use the message boards that we have on all of the major approaches to the beach and we will change the message as needed. So, if it is a capacity issue, we will try and stress the off-beach parking. We just try to do things to keep people informed. You can also use the beaches app, too, because we update that. And, that will tell you in real-time what's open and what's not. If you are heading to an approach that may be closed, there might be some others that are open.

Question 3: Dr. Crossman, I've seen some published reports in the last few days and heard some reports that the longer the time goes that the virus is showing signs of weakening. Have you seen anything to

indicate that is the case? The figures are scary, yes, the need for precautions is still there, but, yes, that the virus can weaken?

Dr. Margaret Crossman - Chief Medical Officer, Halifax Health

Answer 3: Yes, no, I would say that what we are really observing, and I have seen the same reports, but the best that we can put together is that we see it happening in younger people, they tend to not get as severely ill, so that is to some extent what we are seeing. So, as we are doing lots more tests, we talk about the case fatality rate; the percent of those who get COVID that might die from it. That case fatality rate continues to go down. And, a lot of that is due to the fact that we are finding more, finding more cases, where people are not as ill, they are doing better, so that makes the overall fatality rate look better. So, in general, it could be perceived that the virus is just not as mean right now, but I think that we are seeing more of the fact that it is here, it's all around us, it's in a lot more people that were doing better and it's just that we are discovering all those minor illnesses and asymptomatic cases that we were not as aware of earlier in the course of this. So, the fatality rate is looking a lot better. The other thing is that our treatments are better. The way we manage this is better, and so people are doing better with this disease. I think that there is an increased awareness as well, and I think that we've done a better job protecting some of the vulnerable, the more vulnerable populations. All of those things are contributing to not seeing quite the death rates. Even as the cases are going up, the death rates are definitely not going up in that same amount.

Question 4: To follow up briefly, is there more of the virus out there because we are just seeing more and more of it being tested, or has it always been out there and we just didn't know about it because many people were not getting tested? Ms. Boswell, I think, told the County Council the other day that there has been a surge in demand for testing over the last few days as well. I just wanted to know if we are seeing the virus because we are being tested, or more and more people are being tested?

Answer 4: That is exactly right. Remember early on in the course of this we were testing those that were presenting with symptoms, and we had even more limitation on the tests that we could offer at the time. So, now with increased testing we know a lot more about the better tests to use, and we are able to do prevalent studies in the different states and learning more about just how prevalent it is around us. In the beginning, it was all about testing those that we thought might have this virus so that we could manage them well, and treat them, and isolate, and quarantine. Yes, we have moved onto the next phase, "How much is around us," and we have more testing available to determine that. Thank you.

Kevin Captain – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Ray. And, thank you Dr. Crossman. Before we close I just want to mention that this morning we did a panel discussion on small business grants that the Volusia County Council has awarded, so if you are a business, or you know of a business owner, please consider watching the panel or visit VolusiaBusinessResources.com, and make sure your business or business friends know about the grants that are available.

In addition, if you know someone who is need of rental assistance or mortgage assistance, also, there are grant monies available thanks to the Volusia County Council. Please visit Volusia.org/coronavirus, all of the information that you need is on there, including testing information for COVID-19.

With that we'll close this afternoon's conference. Please be safe for the upcoming holiday weekend. Take care. Step up Volusia. Wash up. Back up. Mask up. Take care.