

## **COVID-19 Update Press Conference**

**Wednesday, August 12, 2020**

**Kevin Captain** – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

**Don Burnette** - Volusia League of Cities President and Port Orange Mayor

**Chris Via** – Mayor of Holly Hill

**Jim Judge** - Director, Emergency Management of Volusia County

**Kevin Captain** – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Good afternoon, I am Kevin Captain, Community Information Director for Volusia County government. Today is Wednesday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, and today's press conference will cover the Florida Division of Emergency Management's COVID-19 testing site, opening at the Volusia County Fairgrounds. Our speakers today are: Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley; Volusia County Emergency Management Director, Jim Judge; Volusia League of Cities President and Port Orange Mayor, Don Burnette, and Holly Hill Mayor, Chris Via. With that, we will move right along to Volusia County Chair, Ed Kelley.

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

Thank you Kevin. This is a great day for Volusia County. Testing is one of the things that we have been concerned with. The testing results are something else that we have been really concerned with, and Jim Judge is going to get into the details of what will begin as a soft opening Thursday and Friday. Before we do that, and get into that, I want to recognize Mayor Don Burnette, who is also the President of the Volusia League of Cities, and who holds a weekly telephone meeting of all 16 mayors, which they include me, and allow me to participate with them and share things from the County, as we work together going forward. So, Don, if you could come up and share what you want to share, and then we'll move on.

**Don Burnette** - Volusia League of Cities President and Port Orange Mayor

Chairman Kelley, thank you very much. Ed, we appreciate everything the County has done. I just want to say briefly, in my role as President of the Volusia League of Cities, last year when I was sworn in I said, "We are going to make this a year of collaboration. And, we are going to work together like we never have before." And, nobody knew that COVID was coming when we talked about that. That was last December.

This year, more than any year I have ever seen, the mayors and the cities, and the Volusia League, have come together. This was, this effort that you are going to hear about, was something that was born out of a personal experience from Mayor Chris Via, out of Holly Hill. And, sometimes you have something bad happen to you, and you want to make something good come out of it. And, if ever was the case with him, I am ever so grateful for that. But, I am also grateful for all 16 mayors in the Volusia League; talk about collaboration? This came together as an effort at the request of the Governor in just a matter of a couple of days. From a Friday afternoon phone call, to a Monday morning submission. All 16 mayors recognized the need and came together. We worked together as a league and collaborated. And, Mayor Via, I appreciate your efforts. Chairman Kelley, I appreciate yours as well, and the Volusia League of Cities will continue to work together on behalf of its citizens. Thank you very much.

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

Thank you Mayor, and you took a little bit of my start, but the biggest thing is Mayor Chris Via did exactly that; he took a bad situation, and instead of complaining about the lack of the timely results of his testing, which eventually proved the fact that he was positively positive, he started self-isolating, and waiting for the results. He waited a week. It was supposed to be five to seven days; he waited another ten days after that. By the time he got the results from his test, he had a second test which in fact confirmed that he did have COVID-19, for which he isolated and stayed out of the contact of people, possibly saving the positive affect on other people. And, what he said was, "We have to have results faster." At about the same time that he finally had his results, the Governor was saying, he's picking four counties and is going to do rapid testing. A test where people who are positive, or feel that they are positive, can be tested. First responders will get a line dedicated to them so that they can get rapid results. And, pulled together with Mayor Burnette, the total of the 16 mayors together, created a letter which the County Council fully supported, we sent it to the Governor, and lo and behold, tomorrow is

the result of that action. Of taking that negative thing that he had to deal with, and creating where now Volusia County will be one of five counties having the rapid testing from the state.

We will also have the testing to see whether you may or may not have already had it, and if you have, you may have already created an antibody, so there is going to be a line for that, too. There's going to be a line for those who are asymptomatic. And, there will be a line for those who need faster results.

The testing for the enzyme or serum will be a 30 minute wait. In 30 minutes after you've had your finger pricked, they will know whether or not you had COVID. That's what we need. You will also have the other results, they are guaranteeing . . . I'll let Jim take care of that, I am not going to take anything more from Jim. But, I just want to say that by working together, the County, the 16 cities, working together, creating the need and showing the need, and getting the solution to that need. With that I will introduce you to the star of stage, screen, and he's also a musician which some of you may not know about, the star of what I say this movement is, Mayor Chris Via, of Holly Hill.

**Chris Via** – Mayor of Holly Hill

Well, thank you Chairman, and thank you President Burnette for the kind words, but I have to reiterate once again that this was never about me. This was never about my family, and this was a huge collaborative effort with all of the mayors across Volusia County. Unprecedented to have 16 of our mayors and our County Chairman all come together for a common goal, and to work towards that. So, I appreciate those words that you said, but I have to reiterate that this was a big collaborative effort. And, I want to thank the County staff for their tireless work, and the Governor as well, as well as our state representatives David Santiago, Representative Leek, Representative Federhoff and Senator Tom Wright, for also helping lead this charge. Of course, Chairman Kelley, of course President Burnette, and all of the Volusia County mayors here in Volusia County.

You said it earlier Chairman Kelley, that this is a great day in Volusia County. This is a great day because we are receiving faster, better, more reliable testing, for all of our residents here in Volusia County. And, I am grateful for our Governor, Ron DeSantis, and I want to thank him profusely for not only listening to us, but for delivering to every single family here in Volusia County.

As they stated before, this was personal for me and my family, and this was a frustrating experience to have to wait 17 days without knowing whatsoever. After knowing that we were exposed, we

immediately self-isolated, waiting 17 days without knowing whether or not we were positive or negative. And, so of course, we buckled down and stayed inside just as the CDC says. We were self-isolated for 28 days without knowing. And I heard from many of you. I heard from families that were going through the same, but were also having to make the decision of whether you go to work, and, you don't know whether you are sick or not, and you have to go to work to put food on the table, or to stay home to help protect your colleagues. That is a decision that no family should have to make without knowing whether or not they are positive. And, that is why it is a great day here in Volusia County because we could use these experiences to go to the Governor, and to ask him to bring this expedited testing lane here to Volusia County. And, now people can be tested and know right away, within two to five days, whether or not they are actually positive or negative and make their decisions based on that.

I am glad that today, once again I just have to thank the County staff, because when you talk about the experience of people; I talked to an officer the other day and he arrested someone, and within one day, the inmate came back positive with COVID-19. The officer went to get tested immediately and didn't receive his results for two weeks. Everybody agrees that is absolutely unacceptable. And, it is with great pride that here in Volusia County now our first responders who are on the front lines for us every single day; they go to the front of the line with testing. And, they can receive their results back. And this is important because all of our first responders need to know that we have their back, just as they have ours. So, they can go home at night and know that they are safe, and know that their family is safe because they can have accurate and fast testing available to them.

So, in closing I want to once again thank the County and I want to thank Governor Ron DeSantis, for listening and delivering for Volusia County. Once again, this is a great day in Volusia County. Thank you.

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

And, absolutely we want to thank everyone involved in the rapid response, which is what we are going to be having here. The rapid response from Governor DeSantis, and his office, and all of those involved, is exactly why we are here and to tell you the protocol and what we are going to be doing. We are going to be bringing up the Emergency Operations Management Director, Jim Judge.

**Jim Judge** - Director, Emergency Management of Volusia County

Thank you very much Chairman Kelley, and good afternoon everyone. The County of Volusia has been coordinating with the Florida Division of Emergency Management in assisting with the logistics now for several weeks, to be able to get this site up and ready to operate. And our sincere thanks also to the Volusia County Fair Association Board of Directors, and our good friend, General Manager, Ronnie Hull, for permitting the use of their property for this testing site. Ronnie is a good friend, because we also work with Ronnie during hurricane season, and especially the Fairgrounds is also one of our shelters. And of course, the site is run by the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and the Incident Commander for that site is Michelle Kozlowski. Michelle is a good friend also. She also ran the Orange City University High School site, and she has also managed other sites around the state. Great partner there, and very experienced, so we are excited to have her running the Volusia County site as well.

So, officially it starts on Friday, August the 14<sup>th</sup>. It's going to run from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We do have a soft opening scheduled on Thursday, tomorrow, and that soft opening has a limited amount of tests to be able to check everything out and make sure everything is going to flow properly. So, again, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Thursdays through Tuesdays. No testing on Wednesdays; that's a good day to go out to the market, which is extremely popular out there. The drive-up site will provide both viral and antibody testing. The testing is free. No symptoms are required for either test. The viral testing is a self-administered nasal swab, supervised by trained medical professionals. Five years of age or older. Adults 18 years or older are required to provide picture identification. Child consent forms are required to be filled out for those between five years and 17 years of age. Test results are anticipated between two and five days, a number we've been told, of approximately 36 hours, has been the norm.

The antibody testing requires a blood draw, and you stay in your car for not only the antibody testing, but also the nasal swab testing as well. And, it is available for individuals 18 years of age and older, also with a photo I.D. Those testing results will be available in 30 minutes. For the antibody testing no appointments are necessary and it will be on a first come, first served basis. There are only 200 antibody tests available each day. For the viral swab they are prepared to administer 1,250 tests per day so there are plenty of opportunities out there.

Appointments for the viral testing are required. And, we do encourage you to make those appointments in advance. Now, if individuals do show up and they did not register, the staff out there will work with them to get them registered on a smart device. But again, you may need to wait a little bit until the site, or the timeframe opens up. So it's best to get in, make an appointment, because you are talking ten to 15 minutes, in and out, versus no appointment and then you have to go through the process once you

are at the site. The Florida Division of Emergency Management staff, and with Michelle, they will accommodate and do everything they can do for folks who do come out.

So, to make the appointments you go to [DoINeedACovid19test.com](http://DoINeedACovid19test.com). DoINeedACovid19test.com. The registration process takes about five minutes and there is also information in there that is also valuable for the day of the testing, to help speed the process. If you are in need of a computer, public access, don't forget about our libraries, because they are available free of charge at the Volusia County Public Libraries for our card holders.

The site is expected to operate up to four weeks, and again, pending demand. So, we want to get the word out so that individuals in the community can take advantage of this opportunity. All of this information can be found on [Volusia.org/testing](http://Volusia.org/testing). So, with that, I thank you very much, and certainly all of us are available to answer any questions.

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

Thank you Jim, and I think from this a couple of things are worth repeating. One, get a reservation; make your reservations so that you can go through the test and make it a rapid experience. Two, the testing is free. You will need to have an I.D. for that, but the testing is free. Get your reservation, the testing is free, and as you heard, we can test as many as 1,200 for the COVID-19 test a day. So, with that, if there are any questions for anyone one that spoke . . . Kate?

**Question 1:** Hi, for Mr. Judge. Mike Springer, from WFTV, I had a quick question. Now, I know that Mayor Via with his experience, that he waited 17 days for testing, and there have been other people who have waited over two weeks to get their test results back. These test results are supposed to be back in 36 hours. If prior results took two weeks or more, what assurances do we have that this is going to be done in time, and quickly?

**Jim Judge** - Director, Emergency Management of Volusia County

**Answer 1:** Well, the State is good at this. They've got testing sites all over the State, and there have been many sites that have been up and operating, and then were closed down for different reasons.

But, the best information that we have is two to five days, however, they tell us that they have been very, very, right on the money on the 36 hour mark. So again, experience, using the labs that they have, I think that we are in good shape with the State, and with the labs and all of the procedures that they have in place.

**Question 2:** And, lastly, you said that this is going to be a self-swab test, where the healthcare professional is going to be monitoring what is going to happen? Can you walk us through that process and how that is going to work, to make sure that they do take the test properly, so you do get an accurate result?

**Answer 2:** You bet, and even when you register, there are going to be directions on-line on how you do that nasal swab. So, essentially you rotate the swab in one nostril, in the other nostril, and then it is put in a kit, sealed up with a label for that individual as part of the testing. But again, when you register, there are some really good details on the process on what you can expect when you arrive at the Fairgrounds.

**Ed Kelley** - Chair, Volusia County Council

With that I will turn this over to Kevin for any closing remarks.

**Kevin Captain** – Director of Community Information of Volusia County

Thank you Mr. Kelley, and thank you to all of our speakers. And again, to reiterate, you can find the information at [Volusia.org/testing](http://Volusia.org/testing). If you have any questions, or anything, you can go to that site and the information is right there. With that we will close this afternoon's conference. Take care, stay safe and help your neighbors.