

# Lakeview Area News

Thursday, March 19, 2020

## COVID-19 Phone Scam

**By Leslie Kinnee**  
**Public Information**  
**Officer, Mid-Michigan**  
**District Health Dept.**

Some Michiganders have received phone calls from someone claiming to be a nurse following up on recent COVID-19 test re-

sults. They are told that they tested positive for COVID-19 and they need to provide their credit card information in order to have antibiotics shipped to them.

This is a scam. If a nurse calls with test results of any kind, she/he will

never ask for credit card information. Also, antibiotics are not used to treat COVID-19.

Please visit [www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus) for up-to-date information on Coronavirus (COVID-19).



Registered nurse Eric Eiseler adjusts his protective gown before going into a room on the floor housing patients with low to moderate COVID-19 risk on Thursday at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing. PHOTOS BY NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

# On the front lines of virus battle in Lansing

‘I think of it like soldiers going into war,’ nurse says of COVID-19 challenge

**Rachel Greco, Carol Thompson  
and Kristan Obeng**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN



Sparrow Hospital charge nurse Lindsay Muenchen says disposable masks are left on as long as possible to conserve their supply.

Melinda Baker was angry last weekend when, days after the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Michigan, the restaurants, bars and businesses in Greater Lansing were still filled with people.

Social media posts she read made fun of the virus, or claimed it was a hoax.

Baker, a registered nurse who serves as an assistant department manager at Sparrow Hospital, came into her unit, referred to as 7 West, on Saturday and Sunday, her days off, to prepare for coronavirus. The 30-bed medical unit is among the departments designated to care for potential and confirmed COVID-19 patients.

Monday, as she headed back to the hospital, she settled on forgiveness for anyone who hadn't yet grasped the

**See FRONT LINES, Page 6A**

## Front lines

Continued from Page 1A

seriousness of the virus.

"The truth is, they don't see it the way that we see it in health care," Baker, 35, said. "People don't know. I think of it like soldiers going into war. Sometimes I think we forget that those soldiers train for war, but I can't imagine walking into it. When you're not in it it's easier to shut it out of your mind and pretend it's not happening."

Caregivers on the front lines of the pandemic don't have that option.

Officials and health care workers at hospitals and health departments around Greater Lansing say they are in the thick of Michigan's coronavirus response — balancing unknowns about the virus and its spread with rapidly developing information about how to fight it.

These are their stories.

### Nurse says caring for patients is 'what I've always done'

David Brewster takes off the nursing scrubs he's been wearing during his shift at Sparrow Hospital and puts them in a bag before he leaves work.

At home in East Lansing his wife, who works in a different department at the hospital, and three boys, ages 1, 5 and 13, steer clear when he comes through the door.

Brewster, 35, empties the bag of clothing he's carrying into the washing machine and launders them in hot water. Then he showers before joining his family.

Brewster has been a nurse at Sparrow for 17 years. This routine is his new normal.

The possibility that he could take COVID-19 home to his family has "been in the back of my head," he said.

Nurses are at higher risk for contracting the virus, he said, but the work they do is fundamental.

"It's what I've always done," Brewster said. "I like to take care of people and I feel rewarded for what I do, more now than ever."

Brewster provides bedside care to patients throughout the hospital. He's assigned to different departments daily. On Saturday, he cared for three people being tested for COVID-19.

Caring for those potentially contagious patients means donning protective gear. A plastic gown, disposable gloves, mask and eye shield go on when entering their room and come back off when they leave, Brewster said.

"After hand washing and getting the equipment on and off, it takes time," he said.

The hospital staff is adjusting to changes that come with treating and caring for people during a pandemic. Daily screenings of all staff as they enter a rear entrance include answering a series of questions.

"I haven't shown any symptoms, but I was told if you do they ask you more questions and take your temperature."

And there are several staff "huddles" held throughout any given work day, during which managers share updated information about the virus from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Brewster's hours hadn't increased Thursday, but as the number of positive cases rise, he believes they almost certainly will.

"How bad is it really going to get here?" he said. "That's the big question. Hopefully we'll see this bell curve quickly start to level off, but we just don't know. It's really day by day. Each new day brings new numbers and new information."

### Health department 'has completely turned on its head'

It didn't take long for Marcus Cheatham to discover the novel coronavirus is a different beast entirely from the H1N1 outbreak he responded to a decade earlier.

Cheatham had been serving as the health officer at the Ingham County Health Department in 2009. He and his team had prepared for the worst but instead found the novel A influenza virus to be very mild, with a low number of deaths.

The rapidly rising number of confirmed coronavirus cases and deaths, and the public's response to the outbreak, proved to be much different, he found.

"We worked so hard to put together a public health system to respond well in a crisis," said Cheatham, who is now the health officer at Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which covers Clinton County. "We have been floundering."

Responding to public information requests, monitoring the outbreak and tracing those who have been in contact



Room house patients with low to moderate COVID-19 risk on Thursday at Sparrow Hospital in Lansing. No patients on the floor had tested positive as of that afternoon. PHOTOS BY NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

with infected people has consumed the work existence of department employees who are no longer working traditional 9-to-5 hours.

"The department has completely turned on its head. Completely," Cheatham said. "No one is doing the work we did two weeks ago."

Programs that staff spent years working on — such as the supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children (WIC), other children's services and restaurant inspections — have fallen to the wayside, he added.

Cheatham knew things would be different as he watched what happened to Washington State, which became the epicenter of the American coronavirus outbreak after the first case was confirmed there in January.

He had been carrying on with his health department duties when he discovered his 88-year-old parents, who live in an assisted living facility outside Snohomish, Washington, were in quarantine after eating dinner with an infected person.

"The facility is locked down," Cheatham said. "(Coronavirus) has impacted my family. That gives me the determination to keep going. I know Michigan will experience what Washington has experienced."

### We're at war, says doctor who specializes in infectious diseases

Dr. Subhashis Mitra spends his days among highly infectious patients at Sparrow Hospital.

Right now, he's doing it during a pandemic caused by a virus we know little about and a nationwide shortage of equipment that keeps health care workers safe.

Why does he do it? Mitra responded with a sort of metaphor: Why would someone in the Army sign up to fight in distant countries?

Because we're at war.

"This is what we as an infectious disease community say," he said. "We fight germs. This is not alien concept to me." The realities of this war against the new coronavirus are challenging. Doctors in Lansing are busy with patients who show symptoms and need to be tested for COVID-19. That will likely increase, Mitra said, although Sparrow's testing capacity has recently expanded to help keep pace.

Local health care workers also are inundated with reports from health agencies around the world that are racing to understand the virus. They have to decide what information is most reliable and how they should use it to keep themselves and patients safe.

Guidelines for health care staff vary among countries and hospitals, Mitra said.

"There are some things we are hearing which sometimes do not match with the recommendations that maybe the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] is sending out, or that different sources or different authorities are giving us," he said.

Mitra, director of Michigan State University's Infectious Disease Fellowship Program and an associate professor of medicine, teaches doctors studying the specialty how to treat patients



Charge nurse Lindsay Muenchen gets water ready for a patient on the floor housing those with low to moderate COVID-19 risk at Sparrow Hospital.

who are sick with germs that easily spread, like tuberculosis or HIV.

Pandemic or not, Mitra teaches residents how to protect themselves as they treat patients.

"That's something that is part of my job, not just today," he said. "It was yesterday and it was a year ago. That's something incorporated into what I do."

### At MDHHS, even with preparation, 'things are uncertain'

State public health workers knew this was coming.

They began preparing when news reports started featuring cases of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response Division Director Jay Fiedler said. Of course the virus could reach Michigan.

The department's Bureau of EMS, Trauma and Preparedness team launched the Community Health Emergency Coordination Center in early February, and started translating complicated medical information into something people could absorb during a crisis.

But the virus, now causing a global pandemic, didn't feel real to Fiedler and Katie Dunkle, manager of the planning and competency evaluation unit within the department's emergency preparedness section, until they saw its impacts outside of work.

For Dunkle, that happened during a 9:30 p.m. trip to the grocery store, where shelves were empty, aisles were busy and shopping carts were full. She saw how the outbreak affected her neighbors.

"They're fearful," she said. "Things are uncertain. They don't know what's going to happen. For me, that's when it really hit home, how important it is what we do."

Fiedler remembers the date coronavirus became personal. It was March 12, two days after the first positive cases were identified in Michigan. He picked his daughter up from her dance class, knowing before the rest of the state that Gov. Gretchen Whitmer would soon announce her decision to close schools.

He asked the dance teacher what she would do. The conversation was frank. It was hard. He choked up. The studio probably would have to close. Dance class is his daughter's favorite thing.

"That's when it really sank in," he said. Back at work, the state's emergency response team is "all hands on deck," Dunkle said. On March 14, DHHS launched a hotline to answer calls from Michigan residents worried about protecting themselves, doctors who want to know how to respond to a possible case, business owners who want to know whether mandated shutdowns apply to them.

A team of 16 operators, many of whom are DHHS employees who volunteer to staff the phones, field over 5,000 calls a day. So many calls they had to turn the ringers off. Now, phones just flash when someone is on the line. They are almost always flashing.

The phone lines are open every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but the work bleeds outside of those normal business hours. People are there early and late, working six or seven days a week.

"I think they really feel like they're making a difference by answering questions and helping to give people reassurance," Fiedler said. "It's just an example of [what we all should do], you make an extra effort to help people."

### 'We're not panicking.... We've been trained and we're ready'

Milea Burgstahler was working at her desk, a safe six feet away from her colleagues at the Barry-Eaton District Health Department, when the news came. An Eaton County woman had

tested positive for the coronavirus, the first diagnosis in the district.

That Wednesday afternoon announcement changed everything for Burgstahler and her counterparts on the department's community health promotion team. Their preparation was over. The virus was here.

"We all dropped what we were doing and started working," she said.

Burgstahler and the other health promotion specialists were in charge of delivering the upsetting news. They issued press releases, fielded media calls, urged people not to panic but to wash their hands, stay home and avoid social contact.

The news issued by Burgstahler's office understandably made people concerned, but she isn't scared. She wants to reassure the public with a message: This is what health departments do.

"We're not panicking," she said. "We are training to do this stuff every day. We've been trained and we're ready."

She acknowledged COVID-19 is different. It has spread worldwide, sickened and killed thousands and little is known about the disease. Even with training, a global pandemic is not something health workers expect.

"It's a really once-in-a-lifetime experience," she said. "We're in [public health] because of the help and the services we provide to our community. We're getting the chance to do that in such a huge way."

### 'Health care is always high stress ... but this is different'

Baker, the assistant department manager with Sparrow Hospital, said her unit's COVID-19 preparations have been evolving since last Saturday. Her department will take in and care for patients being tested for the virus.

Her staff has tested more than a dozen people for the virus, Baker said, but none resulted in a positive test as of Friday morning.

Baker coached her staff as they worked this past week, reminding them and herself to do what they know to do. It will protect them and their patients, Baker said.

Beyond that, caregivers are focused on practicing empathy and compassion in an uncertain time.

"Remembering that even though we have uncertainties, these patients are scared," Baker said. "They may have this and they don't get to have a visitor right now. We're in masks so they don't even get to see us smile at them."

Her message to staff? "We're one team, one Sparrow," she told them. They have to support one another "and give each other grace, as we're learning as we go."

"Honestly, I'm so proud of our team," she said. "They're so amazing, so courageous. We're just getting in there and doing what we do."

The unknowns surrounding COVID-19 weigh on every nurse and patient care technician she helps oversee, Baker said, and all of them have concerns about how life will proceed at home. They worry about loved ones, too. Baker doesn't plan to spend time around her grandparents or mother-in-law, because she doesn't want to put them at risk.

She, like many other people, longs for social interaction.

"I'm very much an extrovert, so staying in the house isn't so fun all the time," she said. "I'm a hugger and I can't hug anybody. It's difficult."

Tuesday, after finishing a 10-hour shift at Sparrow, she felt like she couldn't escape coronavirus.

She opened her social media feed and read posts about the pandemic, some fact, some fiction and some pure frustration. It was too much.

"The whole time I'm at work, that's all we're thinking about," Baker said. "That's what we're dealing with."

Then someone she knew told her they thought life would be like this through the end of July.

In that moment, the idea overwhelmed her.

"That made me tear up a little bit, because this is high stress," Baker said. "I think health care's always a high-stress environment, which I thrive on, but this is different."

She took Wednesday off, and met her sister for a trail walk. They kept a six-foot distance as they strolled together.

"That was nice," Baker said, and a necessary distraction from what lies ahead at work.

And she'll keep running. Before the pandemic reached Michigan she was training for a half marathon in Traverse City this spring.

"I'm pretty sure that isn't still happening, but I'm still running," Baker said.

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# Daily News

Wednesday, March 25, 2020



Sparrow Health is the first hospital in mid-Michigan, and among only a few in the state, to perform same-day COVID-19 testing at its Center for Laboratory Medicine in Lansing. Sparrow test results are significantly quicker than the current wait times for testing from the state laboratory, which is currently between 48 and 72 hours. Sparrow reports it now has the capacity to process 60 COVID-19 specimens for same-day results, if needed. — Submitted photo | Sparrow Health

## COVID-19 testing stats difficult to come by

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Montcalm County's only documented COVID-19 victim to date is three weeks into her recovery and is feeling better all the time.

"I'm still not 100% but better," she told the Daily News. "I'm staying home — I've got this down. Maybe I'll get the 1,000 piece puzzle done. I still get tired easily and still get out of breath easily, but it's better. I'm one of the lucky ones — the 80 percent."

The woman, who is in her 60s, was screened positive for COVID-19 at a local hospital in early March after returning from a family vacation in Italy. She and her husband — who did not test positive — have remained in a self-induced quarantine ever since. The woman said she can come out of quarantine after 72 hours of no fevers controlled with medicine; however, she is erring on the side of caution by staying home for now.

The woman has requested to remain anonymous for the safety of her family due to negative posts made on social media.

Michigan reported a total of 1,791 COVID-19 cases and 24 related deaths as of Tuesday afternoon. However, statistics regarding the number of local tests completed in Montcalm and Ionia counties — as well as the number of people who have requested tests but were denied them — are more difficult to come by.

Michigan's COVID-19 website ([michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://michigan.gov/coronavirus)) lists positive cases and deaths for Michigan counties, along with the percentages of gender and age for cases, but nothing about test numbers for each county and where that testing is being done.

"We do not have data at this time on all tests run, just the positive tests results," Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) Public Information Officer Lynn Sutfin told the Daily News on Tuesday afternoon.

The Ionia County Health Department began posting Ionia County's test numbers on March 19 (40 tests with four re-

Continues on Page 2

# COVID-19 testing stats difficult to come by

Continued from Page 1

turned as negative) and again on March 20 (47 tests with 14 returned as negative), but then stopped posting the numbers. Ionia County Health Officer Ken Bowen told the Daily News the numbers posted came from a combination of Sparrow Health System and the Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS via the MDHHS).

"We stopped providing those numbers because they change too quickly and we don't think they represent what is actually happening in the community," Bowen said.

The Daily News asked Bowen and Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham for local test numbers for Ionia and Montcalm counties on Monday, but they both referred the newspaper to local healthcare providers.

The Daily News contacted Spectrum Health and Sparrow Health, both of which declined to provide local numbers and referred the newspaper to state and county health departments.

"Spectrum Health takes the confidentiality of its patients seriously," John Norton, communications specialist for Spectrum Health, said on Monday. "At this time, we are not sharing the number of patients who have been tested or being treated during this outbreak. It is the role of the local and state health departments to track infectious disease, aggregate data and share information with the public. The health department's data includes hospitalized patients and gives a clearer picture of what is happening across the county."

"I'm told that you should check with the state health department," John Foren, spokesman for Sparrow Health, said on Monday. "They should have those numbers. I'm told it's hard for us to break them down (local numbers) that way."

However, on Tuesday afternoon, Spectrum Health released statewide testing numbers. A total of 1,064 patients have been tested at Spectrum facilities (including Lakeland Health in St. Joseph) with three of those patients testing positive for COVID-19 in the 13-county service area and 38 patients currently under investigation for COVID-19.

Also on Tuesday afternoon, Cheatham provided the Daily News with the most recent combined test numbers for Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties — 131 people are considered "active suspects" which assumes a test is in progress, 63 people tested negative and seven people tested positive (five in Clinton County and the previously mentioned case in Montcalm County, but it's unknown where the seventh case is at this point).

Cheatham emphasized that these numbers do not indicate all the tests that have been done statewide.

"There are many tests that have been done that have not been reported to MDSS or are in hospital laboratory reporting systems," he said. "So I'm not saying that this is how many tests have been done. It's only a fraction. Notice the jump in the number of positives. This is because some of the lab systems are getting connected to MDSS and so those results are finally coming in. Oth-

ers are not."

Also on Tuesday afternoon, Bowen provided the Daily News with Ionia County's most recent test numbers — 69 people tested, 47 tests pending and zero positive cases so far; however, "I do not believe that those numbers are accurate," Bowen emphasized. "I believe that it is irresponsible from both a public health and public safety perspective to report numbers that I suspect are inaccurate. That is why we stopped giving out numbers and have focused our recent messaging on the fact that yes, we have yet to get a positive (in Ionia County), but COVID-19 is here. People need to stay in their homes, period. Particularly if they have symptoms of any kind."

Cheatham and Bowen said a lack of communication between health care providers and health departments has been a struggle amid the ongoing pandemic.

"One frustrating thing is that health care providers are telling people who want to be tested to go to the health department," Cheatham added. "We only have a handful of tests (less than 10 provided by the MDHHS) and we are reserving those for special populations like first responders. We were never issued many tests and have not been asked to test the general public."

"I hope you write that COVID is revealing how unprepared our health care system is," Cheatham told the Daily News. "What you are discovering is how fragmented our health care system is. This is a real problem."

Bowen confirmed that health care providers were also telling people to contact the Ionia County Health Department, but that health department only has a handful of tests as well.

"MDSS is really our only data source other than direct communication with the various health systems," Bowen said. "MDSS is only as good as the data that are put into it by the various partners."

"Sparrow has been a good partner," Bowen added.

## COVID-19 TESTING EMERGENCY ORDER

On Tuesday, MDHSS Director Robert Gordon issued an emergency order to maximize COVID-19 sampling and testing capacity and to ensure timely reporting of critical resources and needs. The order establishes procedures to be followed during the pandemic to ensure continuation of essential public health services and enforcement of health laws.

Pursuant to MCL 333.2253, Gordon ordered that:

- Facilities in the state of Michigan processing tests for COVID-19 must prioritize sampling and testing for COVID-19 as instructed by MDHHS. This currently includes specimens associated with active investigations of known contacts, individuals with concerning exposure histories and risk profiles and specimens obtained during cluster investigations. All laboratory tests conducted for COVID-19 must be reported to MDHHS via the Michigan Disease Surveillance System within four hours

of completion of the test, whether negative or positive. Health facilities must contact the local health officer to inform them of a COVID-19-related death within two hours of the death.

- Physicians and other health professionals who collect specimens for testing of COVID-19 must label specimens in the manner instructed by the MDHHS. This includes patient name, date of birth, specimen source, collection date, etc.

- Hospitals in the state of Michigan must abide by MDHHS' instructions on reporting of information related to the COVID-19 response. This includes reporting the following data: Frequency of updates to bed capacity, personal protective equipment inventory, laboratory testing capacity, number of ventilated patients, number of ventilators, patient census, staffing shortages, units or areas dedicated to COVID-19 treatment and other data, which in the hospital's judgment, may help to support response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## COVID-19 TESTING AT SPARROW

Sparrow Health is the first hospital in mid-Michigan, and among only a few in the state, to perform same-day COVID-19 testing at its Center for Laboratory Medicine in Lansing, according to a press release from Sparrow.

Sparrow was the first health system in Michigan with the capability to deliver a laboratory-confirmed coronavirus diagnosis to inpatients who have been admitted to the hospital with suspected COVID-19 symptoms or distress.

Sparrow test results are significantly quicker than the current wait times for testing from the state laboratory, which is currently between 48 and 72 hours. Sparrow reports it now can process 60 COVID-19 specimens for same-day results, if needed.

"Sparrow medical providers and caregivers welcome this heightened capability to confirm or rule out the highly viral and contagious risk posed by COVID-19," said Dr. James E. Richard, director of Sparrow Laboratories. "Patients and their families also deserve to know what they are facing so they can make important decisions."

On-site testing by hospitals was made possible after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration implemented emergency authorization to develop testing. Once the standards were released to allow on-site testing, Dr. Walid Khalife, director of Scientific Affairs, and the Sparrow Lab staff immediately applied for status and began implementing the steps needed to bring this service to mid-Michigan.

While this service is not currently available for non-hospitalized patients, Sparrow continues to support the efforts of its providers to collect coronavirus specimens for confirmation at its outpatient laboratory sites, including a newly established drive-through collection site at its Sparrow Hospital St. Lawrence campus. Those tests will still require confirmation by the state lab.

*Community Editor Stacie Smith contributed to this story.*

# Daily News

Friday, March 27, 2020

## Greenville High School student diagnosed with COVID-19

Staff report

GREENVILLE — A Greenville High School student has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Greenville Public Schools Superintendent Linda Van Houten sent out a letter to parents and families in the school district Thursday evening.

“In order to stay transparent with our school family and community, and to assure that we are doing everything we can to keep students and families safe, I wanted to let you know that we were notified late this afternoon that a Greenville High School student has shared with our staff that they have been diagnosed with COVID-19,” Van Houten wrote. “We have reached out to the Kent County Health Department and are working with them to assure we are following all appropriate protocols for this situation. Because this is a personal health situation, we are limited in the information we are able to share with the public. We are committed to doing all that we can to continue to join in the fight against this very serious disease and want to remind everyone to please follow the Governor’s executive order to “Stay Home, to Stay Safe.”

Van Houten also shared the following statement from Joann Hoganson, community

wellness division director for the Kent County Health Department:

“As the number of people who test positive for COVID-19 begins to climb in Kent County and Montcalm County, inevitably we will have students, staff, and family members who will be among those infected by COVID-19. Our school is in frequent communication with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department and the Kent County Health Department during this difficult time. The Health Department is responsible for monitoring the incidence of COVID-19 in our community. Those who test positive are contacted by the Health Department and those people who meet the CDC definition of a close contact are also notified. The Health Department staff orients cases and their close contacts about the need for isolation or quarantine.

“While only a portion of our community will require quarantine, all of us should be monitoring for symptoms, maintaining a safe distance from other people whenever possible, staying home unless it is essential to go out, and washing hands and surfaces frequently. These steps are good for everyone, whether you have had exposure or not. As a school, we will not be informing our school families every time one of our students tests positive un-

less there is a specific reason to do so. We want to respect the confidentiality of each family.

“The Health Department is very diligent in their contact investigation and surveillance. Since school has now been suspended for 10 days, the likelihood that your child was exposed to COVID-19 in the school setting is extremely low.”

Residents with specific questions are asked to call the Kent County Health Department at (616) 632-7228 or the Mid-Michigan District Health Department at (989) 831-5237.

The Health Department recommends the following good practices to avoid the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Put distance between yourself and other people.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.

# Daily News

Friday, March 27, 2020

## Montcalm County reports third COVID-19 case, Ionia County has two

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The Ionia County Health Department reported Ionia County's second positive case of COVID-19 on Thursday while the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) reported its third positive case.

In the meantime, the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services has finally begun posting both positive and negative test count numbers online at the behest of multiple journalists.

Ionia County's first case was announced Wednesday, a female senior citizen who is currently hospitalized. The second individual in Ionia County is a senior male who is currently hospitalized. The Ionia County Health Department is contacting people who have been in close contact with the patient. They will be assessed for symptoms and monitored appropriately.

As a precaution, the Ionia County Health Department is asking anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 to self-isolate for 14 days to avoid potentially exposing others. COVID-19 symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the

virus. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

The MMDHD has declined to release information about any of the Montcalm County cases, not even the victims' age range or whether they are being hospitalized or are at home.

"It is a violation of HIPAA to release any personal health information," MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham said. "Organizations that do that are violating HIPAA. The three cases we know about in Montcalm County are not dangerous because they are either quarantined or in the hospital. However, there are many more contagious people we don't know about. So everyone needs to stay home and stay safe and follow the Governor's Executive Order."

Montcalm County's first reported case involved a woman in her 60s who is currently doing well and continuing to recover at home, as documented by the Daily News.

As of Thursday afternoon, the Michigan Department of Health & Human Resources posted that a total of 9,109 tests for COVID-19 have taken place statewide, with 6,550 of those tests negative and 2,453 of those tests positive.

Michigan has seen 60 deaths so far related to COVID-19.

Updated results continue to be posted at [michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163-520743--,00.html](https://michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163-520743--,00.html) online.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, people should:

- Wash their hands.
- Stay home when sick.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching their face.
- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces.
- Avoid shaking hands.
- Follow suggested guidelines for social distancing.

For social distancing, we recommend the following:

- Keep six feet between yourself and others when possible.
- Avoid public places at their busiest times.
- Work from home when possible.
- Cancel gatherings of more than 50 people as required by Michigan law. However, it is recommended gatherings not exceed 10 people.

Continues on Page 3

## Local COVID-19 cases

Continued from Page 2

- Limit travel.

People who are concerned that they may have COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider and call ahead before visiting any healthcare facility. Mildly ill people are encouraged to stay home and contact their healthcare provider by phone for guidance. If

you feel well, you do not need to be tested. Testing is determined based on risk assessment.

Information about the COVID-19 situation locally and in Michigan is rapidly changing. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) or [michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://michigan.gov/coronavirus) online.

# Daily News

Saturday, March 28, 2020

## ‘We don’t know where it came from’

Greenville family  
shares story of teen’s  
COVID-19 diagnosis

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GREENVILLE — A Greenville-area family is sharing the details of how their teenage daughter was diagnosed with COVID-19 by two doctors in the hopes of using factual information to combat rumors, as well as encouraging people to obey Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s order to “Stay Home, Stay Safe.”

“Our reason for doing this is to alleviate some of the fears and misconceptions in the community,” the girl’s father told the Daily News.

The family, who is remaining anonymous at this time, also wanted to publicly thank the medical staff at Metro Health in Rockford and at the ER at Spectrum Health United Hospital in Greenville for helping the family through this process so far.

The teenage girl, who is a student at Greenville High School, is the oldest of the family’s children. Her first symptom was so mild that she didn’t even mention it to her parents at the time. This past Monday, she had some diarrhea, which was gone after a few hours.

“That, we’re being told by doctors, was the first notable symptom,” her father noted.

On Tuesday, the girl told her parents her throat felt a bit irritated, but otherwise she felt fine. However, by Tuesday evening she had a headache and they wondered if she might have strep throat, which had recently been making the rounds in the family.

On Wednesday, the girl woke up with a more severe headache and severe sore throat. She began to develop a cough throughout the day — which her father described as an “unproductive cough” without any phlegm — as well as muscle aches and pains. By late Wednesday afternoon she was complaining of discomfort — especially in her abdomen, where she said it felt like she had done “a really hard ab workout.”

The girl’s parents arranged for her to be screened via telephone at Metro Health in Rockford. A doctor said based on her symptoms she likely had COVID-19. Around 9 p.m. Wednesday, the girl was complaining of relatively severe abdominal pain, so the parents contacted their doctor again. After another telephone screening, the doctor recommended they take the girl to the ER at Spectrum Health United Hospital in Greenville.

“Spectrum was very accommodating, they had a separate entrance and separate rooms and different protocol they followed based on what we shared with them,” the father noted.

Spectrum conducted a strep test on the

Continues on Page 12

# COVID-19 diagnosis

Continued from Page 1

girl, which came back negative. A doctor noted gastrointestinal symptoms — such as diarrhea — are showing up as COVID-19 symptoms among some Americans. The doctor agreed with the first doctor's diagnosis that the girl likely has COVID-19.

The father noted that his daughter never had a fever that they were aware of until her visit to the ER, where she was recorded with a fever of around 100 degrees.

The girl was not tested for COVID-19 at the ER.

"We've been told she will not get a test because she does not meet the criteria they are using right now for being an urgent need," her father said. "We fully support what the medical professionals are doing in the community. We might as well wait and save the medical supplies for someone who needs them. I believe that if they had the supplies and equipment, they would have tested her and we would definitely know her diagnosis.

"I wish we knew for sure," he added. "It is hard not knowing."

The father described Thursday as "an OK day" for his daughter.

"She had her ups and downs," he said. "She does have discomfort when she breathes, but no wheezing or anything like that."

Friday was the girl's most uncomfortable day to date, as her headache and sore throat were even more severe.

"She said her chest feels heavy, like there's a brick on her chest," her father said. "We were told by all the doctors that today and tomorrow (Saturday) could possibly be the worst days. It's a little bit nerve-racking as a parent, but I don't feel that she's in any type of danger or great risk."

The girl has been sleeping between 15 and 18 hours per day. She is drinking her mother's homemade chicken soup and hot tea and taking Tylenol to keep her pain and fever down (her ranges from 100 to 101 degrees and comes and goes).

The girl's father noted that doctors advised the girl against taking Ibuprofen as it appears to aggravate some of the symptoms of COVID-19. Doctors instead recommended medicine with acetaminophen like Tylenol to manage pain and fever, according to the father. The girl was also prescribed several other meds to help with her symptoms.

The girl stays in her bedroom and sleeps most of the time while her parents keep the other children occupied. When the youngest children are in bed, the girl sometimes joins her parents in the living room to watch TV. She does wear a mask when she is around her family as a precaution.

Some members of the family have experienced slight fevers on and off over the past week, but no other significant symptoms. The family has notified their friends and neighbors of their situation and people are helping them out by picking up groceries and prescriptions and dropping them off at the house.

The father said the family was taking health precautions well before Whitmer ordered last Monday's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order.

"We've social distanced, we've followed the precautions," he said. "We've still had to go the grocery store, but we sanitize, we wash our hands. Our daughter didn't go to any stores. We've been very consistent with only mom and dad are going to the store, we've been doing that even before the state shutdown. We don't know where it (the virus) came from."

The father spoke with an official from the Kent County Health Department on Friday. He said the health department made a record of his daughter's case, but her case won't be included in the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services list of positive COVID-19 cases as his daughter has not been tested and likely will never be due to a shortage of available tests.

"The majority of the cases out there are probably situations like ours," he noted. "The majority of cases are not being reported in the media. I think most of these cases are going unreported."

The father encouraged people to take the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order seriously.

"We've followed the advice of medical professionals the whole way through," he said. "Follow your doctor's orders. Stay at home. Be serious about your social distancing. Wash your hands. Wipe off your door handles on your car and other things that you've been touching after you leave a store. Make smart choices."

The family said they will share future updates with the Daily News regarding their daughter's progress. They are staying positive and have no reason not to hope for her complete recovery.

"We're doing our best," the father said. "Considering the current state of events, we're doing OK."

According to Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, currently the only official definition for a case of COVID-19 that the state of Michigan has is based on a positive lab result.

"However, there are a lot of people that have mild illness and have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 so they don't need testing to confirm their diagnosis," Morse noted. "Also, those with mild illness are often encouraged to stay home due to limited resources to test them and the risks of exposing others going in for testing would cause. Since there is no official 'clinical' definition of a case of COVID-19, the best thing to do is act as though it is a lab diagnosed case."

Morse said this means clinically diagnosed people should stay under isolation at least seven days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 72 hours (three days) since they last had a fever (without the use of the medication) and their symptoms are improving.

"The end of this time period is when they are no longer considered contagious," she said.

Morse said close contacts with clinically diagnosed people should self-quarantine for 14 days past their last exposure to that person when they were contagious, meaning if they live with that person, they could be in quarantine for up to 28 days (the seven days the sick person was considered contagious plus 14 more days).

# Gratiot County Herald

Thursday, April 2, 2020

## COVID-19 Testing In Gratiot: Who, How and Where?

By Emma Selmon  
Herald Staff Writer

It's no secret that the United States is experiencing a shortage of COVID-19 testing kits.

But what does this mean for Gratiot County? Are there enough kits available for all residents to get tested?

In short, no.

But the hospital and the health department have a plan.

In terms of COVID-19 testing, Gratiot County is not exempt from the shortages the rest of the state and the nation is facing. Marita Hattem-Schiffman, regional president of MidMichigan Health - Central Region, said that there is a widespread shortage of the collection kits and the tubes that swabs are placed into, as well as a shortage of laboratory capacity.

And while Gratiot's hospital is in fine shape at the moment in terms of resources, they are following guidelines that limit who can get tested in order to "conserve supplies."

"We have the supplies that we need, but there's a risk of there being a shortage, so they really only want us testing people that are considered high-risk or high-probability," Hattem-Schiffman said.

Marcus Cheatham, health officer of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD), said that the Centers for Disease Control has established "elaborate restrictions" that prioritize who gets tested. The first priority includes hospitalized patients and symptomatic health-care workers. The second priority includes symptomatic patients from vulnerable populations — such as those in long-term care facilities, those 65 and older, and those with underlying health conditions — as well as first responders with symptoms.

The third priority is all other symptomatic individuals, including "critical infrastructure workers," and also health care workers, first responders, and individuals with mild symptoms in communities experiencing a high number of COVID-19 hospitalizations.

Those without symptoms are not considered a priority, Cheatham said.

*See TESTING on page 6*

# Gratiot County Herald

## Thursday, April 2, 2020

### TESTING *continued from page 1*

In accordance with these guidelines, Hattem-Schiffman said that the State of Michigan has established five criteria to determine who is eligible for testing. These include symptomatic individuals who are a known contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case; previously asymptomatic individuals already in 14-day monitoring and quarantine who have developed symptoms; and symptomatic individuals who are a part of a public health department investigation of a cluster of illnesses associated with a vulnerable population, such as a nursing home.

The other two criteria are symptomatic individuals who have "a higher likelihood of infecting a lot of people," such as health care providers, and any individual that is "ill enough to require hospitalization."

Those who do not meet either the CDC or State of Michigan criteria are unlikely to receive a test. And while these conservation methods help to identify sick individuals, the shortage gets in the way of the United States' ability to study the disease, Cheatham said.

"We don't have enough tests to do epidemiological research on the disease. We aren't learning about how it is moving and who it is infecting," he said. "We are using the testing to identify sick people, which is important, but unlike some other countries who did widespread testing to make better prevention decisions, we can't do that in the US."

The fact that the country is unable to learn more about the spread of the disease also factors into the importance of social distancing, he said. Because there are still many unknowns about COVID-19, the best way to keep yourself and others safe is to minimize contact with individuals outside your household, Hattem-Schiffman said.

"Please 'Stay Home, Stay Safe, Save lives,' because it really does matter," she said. "If you're watching the news, you've seen Italy, you've seen New York City, and now Detroit. COVID-19 is dangerous. We each must act as if we have the virus."

While there may not be enough tests for everyone, the hospital is equipped to handle residents concerns. (Cheatham noted that residents should not go to the Health Department to seek testing, as they have a very limited number of testing resources and everyone is working from home.)

MidMichigan Health has established a "virtual health clinic," reachable by phone at 888-591-0500, in which people can explain their concerns and be screened for testing eligibility.

Hattem-Schiffman said that the virtual clinic has been well-received, serving both to reassure concerned patients and keep everyone safe by limiting physical, in-person traffic at the hospital.

Those who are determined to be eligible for testing will be directed to a testing location. Hattem-Schiffman said that most of these testing centers work like a "drive-thru" to minimize contact with potential carriers of the virus.

Two swabs will be taken at these clinic. One is a test for all other common respiratory illnesses, which will be processed first.

"Flu is still active out there, both Flu A [and] Flu B. We've seen all kinds of things that normally we don't pick up on because we don't test in this great detail, but odds are people are sick with something else, so we test for that first," Hattem-Schiffman said. "If that comes back negative, then we process the COVID-19 specimen."

The potential COVID-19 samples are sent either to the state laboratory or to University of Michigan laboratories to be processed. The results are then sent back to the hospital, and Cheatham said that it is the responsibility of the health care provider, not the lab, to inform patients of their test results.

Hattem-Schiffman said that while positive test results are "obviously" a higher priority, patients will be notified of their results even if the test comes back negative. The hospital will attempt to notify the patient, and if they can't reach them after two attempts, they will send a letter instructing them to call the hospital for their results.

Because more labs are working to process the tests, the wait for results is shorter than it was a few weeks ago. Still, Hattem-Schiffman said that "the turnaround time" does take "a few days."

"I think it's important for people to know that there is a diligent effort underway to continue to shorten those turnaround times," she said.

It's hard to determine exactly how many Gratiot County residents have been tested for COVID-19, but it's safe to

say that only a fraction of the 41,000-person population has been swabbed. Most tests in the county go through MidMichigan Medical Center - Gratiot. Hattem-Schiffman said that the MidMichigan Health system reports as a whole how many tests they've ordered, but does not split up those numbers by location. As of Sunday, the entire system — including locations in Midland, Alpena, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Mt. Pleasant and West Branch — had tested 689 individuals.

And according to Cheatham, MMDHD has worked with "exactly 100" individuals as of Sunday: 49 cases were negative, 48 were ongoing and three were positive. He noted that most of these cases "would have involved testing," but due to the shortage, "physicians are allowed to make a clinical diagnosis without a confirmatory test."

Although MMDHD has worked with 100 individuals, Cheatham said that number does not necessarily account for every person in Gratiot County who has been tested for COVID-19.

"The problem is that the health department doesn't get notified of every case," he said. "Some tests are ordered by physicians but never reported to the health department. This is frustrating. I have spent many years working to help the US have an integrated public health data system, but so far it hasn't happened."

All in all, whether you are symptomatic or not — and whether you've been tested or not — Hattem-Schiffman and Cheatham agree that the only solution right now is to follow CDC guidances for social distancing to slow the spread of COVID-19.

"We should all act as if we have been exposed and stay home and self-quarantine until the Stay Home Stay Healthy emergency order is lifted," Cheatham said. "If we all do that it will make the disease go away."

Hattem-Schiffman said that it is imperative for Gratiot County to follow social distancing guidelines so that MidMichigan Medical Center - Gratiot will be able to keep up with hospitalizations related to the pandemic.

"If we don't each do that, we will infect others and we will overwhelm the healthcare resources that we have in this region...but it doesn't have to be like that if we all do our part," she said.

# Lansing area has its first deaths

## COVID-19 pandemic claims man, woman

**Ken Palmer**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING – The COVID-19 pandemic claimed its first two lives in the Lansing area as the number of cases in the region and across the state continued to spiral upward at an exponential rate.

An Ingham County man in his 50s died at a hospital from the disease, the Ingham County Health Department said Wednesday. He had underlying health issues that likely contributed to his death, officials said.

Meanwhile, an elderly woman from Clinton County died Tuesday at Sparrow Hospital, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department said. She, too, had serious underlying health issues, officials said.

“This is a tragic loss of life and our thoughts are with the family at this difficult time,” MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham said in a news release.

The Ingham County man who died was house-bound and had not been exposed to the general public, said Linda Vail, the county health officer.

“It’s a sobering reminder of why people must practice social distancing,” Vail said in a prepared statement. “Not everyone who has the coronavirus will be sick. Distance yourself from others as if everyone has it. Be diligent with hand washing. Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.”

The state reported Wednesday that 9,334 people had tested positive for the disease. Seventy-eight more people died, pushing the state’s death toll to 337.

The bulk of the cases and deaths have been in the metropolitan Detroit area, but the number of positive tests has been rising steadily in many out-state areas, including the Lansing region.

The number of cases in Greater Lansing rose to at least 181, up more

**See DEATHS, Page 3A**

# Deaths

Continued from Page 1A

than 40 from the day before.

Ingham County had the seventh-highest number of COVID-19 cases in the state, with 121, according to the state totals. That's up from 45 positive tests on Sunday.

The numbers were rising so quickly in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties that the Mid-Michigan District Health Department said they would be out of date by the time a Wednesday news release went public.

Clinton County had 33 cases and Montcalm County had 10 cases on Wednesday, according to the state totals. The number of cases in Montcalm doubled overnight, local health officials said.

"We really want to stress that even though we are reporting 44 cases in our jurisdiction, we know there are many, many more cases not yet diagnosed," Marcus Cheatham, MMDHDs health officer, said in the release.

MMDHD said everyone who has tested positive is either quarantined or hospitalized.

Eaton County had 27 cases as of Wednesday, up five from the day before, the Barry-Eaton District Health Department said.

Livingston County had 101 cases, Jackson County 56, Shiawassee County 11 and Ionia County 6, according to the state's numbers.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness.

About 80 percent of Ingham County's cases involve people who have mild symptoms and are isolated at home, Vail said. The rest are hospitalized.

Many people who are hospitalized for COVID-19 recover, Vail said.

"People's lives are being saved; I've seen it happen," she said. "(Going into the hospital) is not a death sentence."

*Contact Ken Palmer at (517) 377-1032 or [kpalmers@lsj.com](mailto:kpalmers@lsj.com). Follow him on Twitter @KBPalm\_lsj.*

## Greenville girl feeling better after ‘exhausting’ week

Teen offers advice  
for those facing  
COVID-19 symptoms

**ELISABETH WALDON**  
ewaldon@thedailynews.cc

GREENVILLE — A Greenville teenager who was diagnosed with COVID-19 by two doctors is finally starting to feel better after what

she describes as an “exhausting” week.

And despite painful symptoms ranging from a sore throat to coughing to chest heaviness to muscle pain, in typical teen fashion she said the worst part of being sick was being stuck bored in her bedroom.

The teenage girl, who is a student at Greenville High School, is the oldest of the family’s children (the family wishes to remain anonymous at this time). On March 23,

the teen experienced some abdominal and digestive issues, which were gone after a few hours. Her family was later told by doctors that those issues were a symptom of COVID-19, according to the father.

On March 24, the teen had a headache and a bit of a sore throat. On March 25, she woke up with a more severe headache and sore throat and developed a cough

**Continues on Page 4A**

# Greenville girl feeling better after 'exhausting' week

Continued from Page 1A

throughout the day, along with muscle aches and pains. She was screened via telephone at Metro Health in Rockford and that was when a doctor first said she likely had COVID-19 based on her symptoms. That night her abdominal pain became so severe that the family's doctor recommended they take her to the ER at Spectrum Health United Hospital in Greenville.

After strep throat and mono were ruled out, a second doctor diagnosed the teen with COVID-19. At that point, the teen had a fever of around 100 degrees. She was not tested for COVID-19 as the hospital was only using tests for what they considered to be "urgent need" cases, according to the teen's father. She also did a round of antibiotics with no improvement, meaning her sickness was not bacterial, according to her father.

The teen had an "OK day" on March 26, but took a turn for the worse on March 27 with a severe headache and sore throat and feeling like a brick was sitting on her chest. Her intermittent fever ranged from 100 to 101 degrees and she took Tylenol to deal with the fever and pain, as prescribed by her doctor.

On March 28 she felt even worse with pain in her throat and chest and upper back. She slept about 20 out of 24 hours that day and night. She woke up at 3 a.m. March 29 because she was having trouble breathing, but she was eventually able to get back to sleep.

The teen felt better for a few hours this past Monday but then regressed, complaining of throat and chest pain again. She slept most of the day. Tues-

day was similar with lots of ups and downs. The illness seemed to come and go in waves. At the same time, the teen was struggling with boredom and frustration with her illness.

In the meantime, the teen's mother and younger brother have felt "cruddy" off and on throughout the week, according to the father. Both have had intermittent fevers and some throat and chest discomfort. The brother had multiple bloody noses throughout the week, which the family said wasn't normal for him.

Wednesday was a very difficult day for the teen. Her cough was more severe, the pain in her chest and upper back increased, she had a difficult time sleeping and she coughed up a small amount of bright red blood three different times. Her parents called her doctor, who referred them to Spectrum Health's COVID-19 triage phone line so Spectrum could continue to track her conditions and make recommendations.

"Since the blood was bright red in color, our doctor believes it came from her throat, upper airway or sinuses," the teen's father said. "This is the area where the virus sets up in most people and it can also cause nose bleeds in some patients, which would explain what happened with her little brother. We were told to call back if there is a large amount of bright blood or dark clots, as these are more serious warning signs."

The teen wasn't having difficulty breathing, so her family continued to monitor her at home. By this point, the teen's mother and brother were feeling quite well again.

On Thursday, the teen woke up and

"surprisingly" felt much better, according to her father. She even sat outside in the sunshine for a while, enjoying the beautiful spring weather (while wearing a face mask). She woke up Friday feeling improved as well.

The past week has been "very exhausting, but I've also felt very loved by my family, friends and community," the teen shared.

"We are very thankful for our friends and neighbors who continue to check on us and drop off meals and supplies on our front porch," her father added.

The teen said toward the beginning of her illness, her worst symptom was her sore throat, but coughing and heaviness on her chest later became the most uncomfortable symptoms.

However, "In my opinion, the worst part of being sick from COVID-19 was being stuck in my room with no energy and no human interaction," she said.

The teen said her advice to others who go through this sickness is to "try to stay as positive as you can," although she admitted "that is definitely pretty hard at times, especially with how long it lasts, but it does get better."

"Also, try not to look at the news or look things up about it," she added. "Doing that just makes your anxiety levels so high and you'll imagine things way worse than they are."

The father said he spoke with an official from the Kent County Health Department, which made a record of his daughter's diagnosis, but her case won't be included in the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services list of positive COVID-19 cases as the teen has not been tested and likely will never be due to a shortage of available tests

for everyone with symptoms.

As of Friday afternoon, Michigan had reported 12 positive COVID-19 cases in Montcalm County and 12,744 statewide with 479 related deaths.

According to Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, currently the only official definition for a case of COVID-19 that Michigan has is based on a positive lab result.

"However, there are a lot of people that have mild illness and have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 so they don't need testing to confirm their diagnosis," Morse noted. "Also, those with mild illness are often encouraged to stay home due to limited resources to test them and the risks of exposing others going in for testing would cause. Since there is no official 'clinical' definition of a case of COVID-19, the best thing to do is act as though it is a lab diagnosed case."

Morse said this means clinically diagnosed people should stay under isolation at least seven days since their symptoms first appeared and at least 72 hours (three days) since they last had a fever (without the use of the medication) and their symptoms are improving.

"The end of this time period is when they are no longer considered contagious," she said.

Morse said close contacts with clinically diagnosed people should self-quarantine for 14 days past their last exposure to that person when they were contagious, meaning if they live with that person, they could be in quarantine for up to 28 days (the seven days the sick person was considered contagious plus 14 more days).

# Daily News

Saturday, April 4, 2020

## GUEST VIEW

### Greenville schools thank community for support

**T**hese have been trying times as we attempt to navigate the impact of COVID-19. We have transitioned from a community of social gatherings to one of social distancing. We continue to struggle with meeting even the very basic needs of food, shelter and digital connectivity, and search daily to find ways to fill our days with meaningful activities that can drive us to be the best of who we are. Beyond the reality of the impact on our basic human needs, COVID-19 has in many ways brought out the good in so many.



**Linda  
Van Houten**

Greenville Public Schools have been on the giving and receiving end of that positive outreach, experiencing an upswing of volunteerism in our community. There has not been a day gone by that someone hasn't reached out to me, as a school leader, offering assistance. I am grateful for our community partnerships and all the volunteers who are working alongside us during the mandated school closure. I have been amazed at the incredible dedication, commitment and compassion our educators have shown, and not only at Greenville Public Schools, but across the country who are working to connect with their students and families to extend learning to the best degree possible. Because of this support, we are feeding kids every week, working to address mental health needs and staying connected to our students and community.

Given the steps we are taking, we still struggle with the inequity we are seeing with accessibility. Many students are in need of access to wellness and health care, proper nutrition, daily person-to-person contact and interactions with highly-qualified teachers. In knowing our schools will continue to be closed for a while longer, we are doing our best to provide access remotely through some level of distance or online learning and will continue to work with local agencies to close the gap of accessibility for all.

We would like to thank the following organizations that continue to reach out and provide support for our students and our schools: Daily News, Meijer, Amway, United Way Montcalm-Ionia Counties, Greenville Rotary Club, McDonald's, IM Kids 3rd Meal, Mid-Michigan District Health Department and our incredible GPS staff. We are a strong community and because of this we will come out stronger than ever.

*Linda Van Houten is the superintendent of Greenville Public Schools.*

*The opinions expressed in the Guest View do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Daily News.*

# Officials: Lansing 'reserving capacity'

## Lansing will not take Detroit-area cases

**Megan Banta and Craig Lyons**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING – Ingham County officials are preparing for the epicenter of the new coronavirus in Detroit to keep spreading this way. That means while area hospitals aren't overloaded, they're reserving capacity rather than taking in patients from other parts of the state, Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail said.



Just 24 of the 152 people in Ingham County who had tested positive for COVID-19 as of Friday were hospitalized, Vail said. That's less than 16% of cases. But with cases in the Lansing area growing by double digits every day, the region seems to be "a suburb of Detroit," she said, so it's unlikely McLaren Greater Lansing or any of the Sparrow Health System hospitals in

**See CAPACITY, Page 5A**

# Capacity

Continued from Page 1A

the region will take overflow patients from Detroit.

“Right now, I don’t think that our county is jumping on that one,” she said.

Hospitals further away from Detroit, such as those up north, are taking on that load instead, Vail said.

Vail’s comments came during the first of what are planned to be regular media briefings as the region deals with the coronavirus pandemic. The session was scheduled after Lansing State Journal reporters pressed for additional information on the situation in Ingham County and preparations for growing numbers of patients.

Here are some other key takeaways from the briefing:

## No word yet on possible overflow

As officials anticipate a potential surge in cases, the hospitals do have plans in place, Sparrow Health System spokesperson John Foren said Friday morning.

“We’ve got plans to accommodate up to twice the number of patient beds that we have throughout our health system,” Foren said, although he declined to give specifics.

Vail declined to name potential locations for any overflow facilities until the health systems make those decisions, adding there are several scenarios at play.

## Contact tracing is still occurring

The Ingham County Health Department is still able to do contact tracing “right now” when someone tests positive, Vail said, but it’s becoming “increasingly difficult.”

“We have got a cadre of nurses doing contact tracing,” Vail said, referring to the process of identifying people who may have been exposed to the newly diagnosed patient and notifying them of the need to isolate for 14 days.

Those same nurses are monitoring the health of about 200 people who have likely been exposed, she said.

Ingham County is starting to reach an

infection rate that likely will shift the contact tracing method, she said. Soon, efforts will be limited to contacting people who are at high risk if infected and places where large numbers of people were likely exposed.

There have been some locations in the county closed for deep cleaning after an exposure, she said, but nothing that has required a mass notification.

“If we did have a large public exposure and we had no way of getting in contact with everyone, then we would do a public notification,” Vail said.

## Testing continues to be an issue

Vail said her office doesn’t get information on how many tests have come back negative, so they can’t provide that data.

And testing in general has been an issue, she said — especially long waits for results.

Test results can take anywhere from 24 hours to 10 to 14 days to come back, Vail said.

For now, often the best people can do is stay home if they feel sick, she said.

“Even if we test somebody, we need to have them stay home while we wait on the results,” she said.

## Advising masks wherever possible

Wearing a mask may not stop you from getting the virus, Vail said, but it can help slow the spread. Masks can be helpful for two reasons, Vail said: They keep you from touching your face and can prevent infected people who haven’t started showing symptoms yet or may never show symptoms from spreading the virus.

“I do think that people should basically consider, I’d even urge them to wear masks in public,” Vail said.

The masks should not be of the quality needed by medical professionals who are treating coronavirus patients, she said, but instead could be a simple cloth mask or a bandana. Handwashing remains the best protection, Vail said.

## Ingham County health orders carefully considered

As health officer, Vail has “broad authority” to issue additional orders to

protect public health. She said that’s unlikely, though, because the state has “effectively done that for us.”

Vail knows there are people who aren’t following the social distancing guidelines and who are violating the governor’s executive order by engaging in non-essential activities like golf or children’s play dates.

“Unfortunately, some of it is very, very difficult to control,” she said.

Health orders, like the one she put out requiring for essential businesses to do basic health screening of employees, need to be based on good science and need to be enforceable, she said.

Will Ingham County need a curfew like Flint? That’s a “crystal ball question,” Vail said — it’s too early to tell.

## Eaton, Clinton counties have different agencies, practices

Greater Lansing is served by three different health departments. Ingham County operates its own, while Eaton and Clinton are part of multi-county health districts that share services.

Before Vail’s Friday news conference, Lansing State Journal reporters had spent several days contacting Ingham County Health Department and emergency services officials seeking updates on preparations for the growing number of people diagnosed with COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus.

They also asked officials with the Barry Eaton District Health Department and the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which serves Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties, why the counties seemed to be reporting less information than other counties, particularly those in southeast Michigan.

The Barry Eaton District Health Department has been releasing the number of positive cases and data on individuals under monitoring for COVID-19 and officials said that is not likely to change, said Milea Burgstahler, a community health promotion specialist with the department.

“We are continuously working to notify and educate individuals who may have been in contact with a confirmed case in order to prevent further spread of COVID-19.”

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department is working on a data map

that will give more detailed information on coronavirus cases, spokesperson Leslie Kinnee said.

“We have run into a few roadblocks but are making steady progress,” she said. “We hope to be able to start sharing data soon.”

## Hospitals here are not releasing info on their cases

Lansing area hospitals are not publicly releasing any information on the number of positive tests and negative tests at their facilities; how many patients are hospitalized because of the virus; or how many patients are being monitored for the virus.

Elsewhere, particularly in Metro Detroit, hospitals are sharing more of that information. Beaumont Health, which has hospitals in suburban Detroit, does daily updates on the number of positive tests, negative tests, pending tests, and whether people diagnosed with COVID-19 have been hospitalized or sent home. Henry Ford Health System also compiles and releases the number of positive COVID-19 cases, the number of negative cases and how many patients are hospitalized because of the virus.

At Sparrow, the numbers are “constantly changing,” said Ilene Cantor, the hospital’s vice president for marketing and communications.

“We are working to use all of our resources and capacity to fulfill the needs of our patients,” she said.

McLaren officials have opted to report all data directly to local health departments and the state.

“To avoid confusion and misinformation, McLaren will no longer provide this same or similar data to any media outlets as it works collaboratively with all health care providers,” spokesman Jon Adamy said.

Vail on Friday said her office will continue to provide updates on the number of county residents hospitalized with COVID-19 and will also add the number of patients who recover from the disease to its updates.

Contact reporter Megan Banta at [mbanta@lsj.com](mailto:mbanta@lsj.com). Contact reporter Craig Lyons at 517-377-1047 or [calyons@lsj.com](mailto:calyons@lsj.com).

# Daily News

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

## Health Department reports first COVID-19 death in Montcalm County

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department

GREENVILLE — The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) is reporting its first death of a Montcalm County resident from COVID-19.

The individual was an elderly male who was hospitalized at Spectrum Health United Hospital in Greenville and died on Monday.

One death related to COVID-19 was also reported on March 31 in Clinton County. No deaths related to COVID-19 have been reported in Gratiot County.

“On behalf of MMDHD, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the family. This is a tragic loss of life and our thoughts are with the family at this difficult time,” said MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham.

As of Tuesday morning,

MMDHD reported a total of 95 positive COVID-19 cases in its jurisdiction: 73 in Clinton County, 16 in Montcalm County and six in Gratiot County.

Residents are urged to continue prevention efforts to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, cover you nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and avoid touching your face. Continue to “Stay home, stay safe” and venture out only if it is absolutely

necessary to get prescriptions, food or other essential services. If you must go out, stay at least 6 feet away from others.

Everyone should take these precautions and assume potential exposure in public places.

Residents can call the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 hotline with questions at 888-535-6136. For additional information, visit [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](http://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) or [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](http://CDC.gov/Coronavirus) online.

### THE MONTCALM COUNTY TIRE AND ELECTRONIC COLLECTION

scheduled for Saturday, April 11 at the Road Commission for Montcalm County has been cancelled.

The next county wide tire and electronic collection will be on Saturday, June 6 at the Howard City Village Office parking lot.

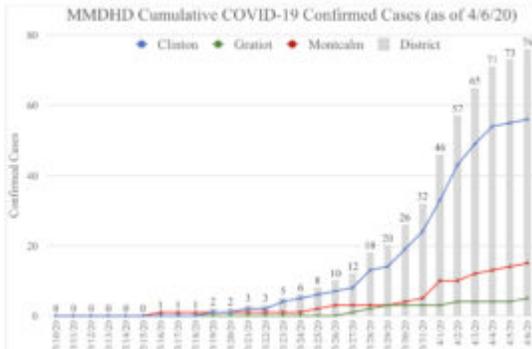
*Please contact the Montcalm Conservation District for questions at (989) 831-4606 or email: [dixie.ward@macd.org](mailto:dixie.ward@macd.org). Please visit [www.montcalmcd.org](http://www.montcalmcd.org) for updates.*



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# COVID-19 Cases On The Rise In Gratiot, Neighboring Counties

Posted on Wednesday, April 8th, 2020 and is filed under [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.



This graph tracks the spread of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Mid-Michigan District [Health](#) Department (MMDHD), starting with the date of the first reported cases in Michigan and showing data through Monday, April 6. The bulk of the cases in the jurisdiction are currently in Clinton County, but the MMDHD warns that there are many undiagnosed cases throughout the counties. (Courtesy MMDHD)

## DEATHS REPORTED IN CLINTON, MONTCALM

**By Emma Selmon**  
**Herald Staff Writer**

COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the middle of the mitten.

Since Gratiot's first positive case was discovered on March 27, five more individuals have been diagnosed with COVID-19. The county now has a total of six confirmed positive cases, according to the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD).

And though Gratiot has not had a COVID-19-related death as of press time on Tuesday, neighboring counties are not so lucky. Clinton and Montcalm counties, who join Gratiot to make up the MMDHD jurisdiction, each have reported their first death due to the Novel Coronavirus within the past week.

The MMDHD reported a rapid rise of cases in the jurisdiction on Wednesday, April 1, only hours before the first death was confirmed. As of the early afternoon that day, the MMDHD reported that Clinton County's positive cases had risen quickly to 31, Montcalm's had doubled overnight to 10, and Gratiot's had risen as well to three positive cases.

Since those 44 positive cases in the MMDHD jurisdiction were reported on April 1, the confirmed positive cases in the area have already more than doubled.

As of press time on Tuesday, Clinton County's confirmed positive cases had more than doubled, with 73 total reported, and Montcalm's had risen substantially to 16, leaving the MMDHD with nearly 100 positive confirmed cases and counting.

In the April 1 press release announcing the rapid rise in cases, MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham said that people should assume that the virus is present when they go out in public. He said there is no doubt that there are several undiagnosed cases yet in the area, and that the number of confirmed positives will continue to

rise.

“We really want to stress that even though we are reporting 44 cases in our jurisdiction [as of April 1], we know there are many, many more cases not yet diagnosed,” he said.

Despite the uptick in cases, MidMichigan Medical Center – Gratiot is not currently facing any critical or immediate strain on resources. Marita Hattem-Schiffman, regional president of MidMichigan Health – Central Region, confirmed that as of press time on Tuesday, the medical centers in Gratiot, Mt. Pleasant and Clare were still “operating well within the parameters of [their] resources.”

The MidMichigan Health system as a whole — including locations in Midland, Alpena, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Mt. Pleasant and West Branch — has tested nearly a thousand individuals for COVID-19 as of Tuesday, up from 689 individuals the week prior.

Of the 996 tests that have been completed throughout the system, 865 came back negative, 44 came back positive and 87 are awaiting results, according to Millie Jezior, public relations manager for MidMichigan Health. She said the data about COVID-19 recoveries within the health system is not yet available.

Updated information about how many individuals have tested for COVID-19 in the MMDHD jurisdiction or are awaiting results was not available at press time.

As the pandemic hits close to home, Hattem-Schiffman continues to ask the community to do their part to slow the spread. To truly follow social distancing, stay home whenever possible and don’t gather in groups, even if you stay six feet apart.

# COVID-19 numbers keep climbing

## Ingham, Clinton both report new deaths

**Sarah Lehr**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

It was another deadly day in Michigan, with 117 new COVID-19 deaths reported statewide on Thursday plus a new death each in Ingham and Clinton counties.

Ingham County now has four known COVID-19 deaths, with the three latest reported this week.

On Tuesday, the county's Health Officer Linda Vail announced a man found dead in his home had tested positive for the virus postmortem.

Then, the Ingham County Health Department reported a man's death Wednesday evening, followed by a woman's death on Thursday.

The woman's death has not yet been included in a statewide tally which the Michigan Department of Human Services releases each afternoon based on what local health departments submit before 10 a.m. that day.

The two latest deaths in Ingham County were both African Americans over 50 with pre-existing conditions, said Amanda Darche, a spokeswoman for the Ingham County health department.

On Tuesday, the health department released data showing the rate of known COVID-19 cases was three times higher for black Ingham County residents compared to white residents.

### **New Clinton County death reported**

Also not included in the statewide tally was a Clinton County death reported Thursday evening.

In Clinton County, there are 88 known cases of the virus, five more since 10 a.m. Wednesday, according to

**See NUMBERS, Page 4A**

# Numbers

Continued from Page 1A

a Thursday evening update from the Mid-Michigan District Health Department.

Cases of people testing positive for the virus jumped by 1,158 across Michigan since Wednesday, according to

MDHHS, and in the Lansing area new cases were in the double digits.

Ingham County reported 228 COVID-19 cases as of 5:30 p.m. Thursday, an increase of 16 cases compared to nearly 24 hours before.

On Thursday, Eaton County reported two new COVID-19 cases since the day before at 69 cases total. At least three people from the county have died after contracting the virus.

Also on Thursday, Lansing City Council voted in a virtual meeting to extend the mayor's local state of emergency through April 30. The declaration unlocks added executive powers and helps qualify the city for federal disaster-relief funding.

Michigan, too, is operating under a state of emergency as are myriad local communities in mid-Michigan, including East Lansing. A "stay home, stay

safe," executive order from the governor was extended Thursday until April 30, with additional restrictions added.

To prevent coronavirus transmission, wash your hands frequently and avoid contact with people outside your household.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the upper part of your sleeve if you cough or sneeze.

# A silver lining?

Mid-Michigan health dept.  
says COVID-19 death total  
will likely be on lower  
end of projections

**ELISABETH WALDON**  
ewaldon@thedailynews.cc

STANTON — Deaths in Michigan related to COVID-19 will likely be on the lower end of the projected spectrum, according to a health officer with the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD).

Health Officer Marcus Cheatham posted a 15-minute video on the health department's Facebook page Monday explaining the department's role during the ongoing pandemic.

The MMDHD covers Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties. Of that area, Clinton County has the most positive cases with 90 and three related deaths, while Montcalm County had 20 cases and one death and Gratiot County had six cases as of Friday afternoon. Ionia County, which is overseen by the Ionia County Health Department, had 14 positive cases and two related deaths as of Friday afternoon.

"Clinton actually has an outbreak in terms of the percentage of the population affected that's similar to nearby urban areas like Lansing and Grand Rapids, so that's very concerning," Cheatham said in his video. "Also Montcalm has a boundary with an urban community with Greenville right next to Grand Rapids and then 131 going up to the Panhandle, so we think Montcalm is going to take off soon (with more positive cases).

"Healthcare providers have started diagnosing cases without tests because there aren't enough tests," Cheatham noted. "Experts say there's probably two to four times more cases out there than the health department knows about."

The good news? Cheatham said forecasts for deaths related to COVID-19 in Michigan have ranged anywhere from 9,000 to 150,000, but projections are now indicating the lower end of the spectrum.

"Right now it looks like we are headed for that lower bound, it does look like we're going to be more like 9,000," he said. "That's a good thing. That's way too many deaths but it's a lot better than the alternative. The bad news is it does look like at the peak the healthcare system will be overwhelmed. That means there will be people who need a hospital bed and will

# Health dept. says death total will likely be on lower end

Continued from Page 1A

not be able to get one and that's going to be a terrible experience for us to live through. This is why it's so important for us to keep sheltering in place and for us to follow the governor's emergency orders. We need the other states in the midwest to have similar kinds of emergency orders and be doing the same thing as Michigan is so they're not giving us their COVID cases. If we all do that, we will have much fewer deaths than we would have otherwise."

Cheatham said the health department's main objective during this pandemic is helping slow the spread of COVID-19 via contact tracing.

"Contact tracing is the main way that health departments fight pandemics," he said. "This is done by our highly skilled communicable disease nurses."

All positive COVID-19 test results from any lab in the state are electronically submitted to the Michigan Disease Surveillance System by county.

"We use that as our work queue to contact those positive cases and advise them on what steps to follow for quarantine," said Sarah Doak, community health and education division director for the MMDHD. "We get a list of any contacts they had, and make contact with all of those people and ask them to quarantine and talk with all of them, every day, to assess for symptoms."

Another objective of the health department is to engage with government and community partners and enforcing emergency orders with the help of law enforcement officials and prosecutors.

"The MMDHD Environmental Health Division has received 10 complaints in Mont-



**Mid-Michigan District Health Department Health Officer Marcus Cheatham gives a video update about how the health department is responding to COVID-19 in Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm counties. — Screenshot**

calm County that we have investigated relating to companies and businesses allegedly not adhering to social distancing or employee health polices and screening," said Liz Braddock, environmental health division director for the MMDHD. "We have not received any calls regarding residents allegedly violating the order."

The MMDHD issued a reminder to local "essential" businesses on Monday regarding complying with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive order. The health department noted that Whitmer's order did not include details about how businesses should go about screening employees, so the health department issued its own executive order, stating that all employees who are considered essential must be screened before coming to work. If they display any respiratory or fever symptoms, they may not work. First responders, health care personnel, pharmacies and others working to mitigate COVID-19 are exempt from this and can work after a potential exposure as long

as they are monitored for symptoms.

Any employers with questions about the health department's order or employees who would like to file a complaint may call the health department in Stanton at (989) 831-5237.

The MMDHD sent a letter to Montcalm County Prosecutor Andrea Krause on March 2 explaining some of the authority granted to health officers by the Michigan Public Health Code.

Krause told the Daily News the health department has been a "huge factor" in monitoring local compliance and assisting law enforcement officers. She said she has not received any reports for review and no local citations have been issued to date.

"From the time the 'Stay Home' executive order went into effect, I have fielded many calls from both law enforcement and the public regarding whether certain activities or businesses can continue," Krause said. "Our law enforcement agencies have done a great job responding to calls. From the beginning we adopted the following approach: Determine if the complaint alleges conduct or activity that could be a violation of the executive order, investigate the alleged violation, if a violation is occurring then law enforcement will explain the scope of the executive order and give the offender an opportunity to comply. If clear no compliance, then the offender could be cited or law enforcement can submit to my office for review. We have had good compliance once law enforcement explained the executive order."

For more information about the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, visit [mmdhd.org](http://mmdhd.org) or search for "Mid-Michigan District Health Department" on Facebook.

# COVID-19 deaths higher in Eaton, Clinton

**Sarah Lehr and Megan Banta**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Subsequent testing revealed the first Ingham County resident believed to have died after contracting COVID-19 likely died of something else, county Health Officer Linda Vail said Friday.

Meanwhile, Eaton and Clinton counties each reported a new death on Friday.

Ingham County now reports three COVID-19 deaths instead of four.

The Ingham County resident was tested twice before the person died, with one test negative and one positive, Vail said during a media briefing Friday afternoon.

The Michigan Bureau of Laboratories ran a postmortem test and it confirmed the negative result, Vail said, adding that county health department does not do in-house testing.

The incident highlights fault lines in rapidly changing data published by the state health department, as well as the shortcomings of COVID-19 testing, which can return both false positives and false negatives.

"The county and the state strive to share timely and accurate information with the public," Vail said in a statement. "Although great care is taken, the

data is by its very nature preliminary."

A news releases from the county points to "other severe pre-existing conditions" as the likely cause of death.

Access to testing remains a major problem across the nation. Vail has previously urged people with mild symptoms who haven't been tested to self-isolate under the assumption they have the virus.

## Clinton County is now at 3 deaths

Confirmed cases in Greater Lansing continue to rise even as testing is limited.

Clinton County on Friday reported 90 confirmed cases of the virus, an increase of two since the day before.

Clinton County is now reporting three deaths.

The latest, reported Friday, was an elderly man, said Leslie Kinnee, a spokeswoman for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department.

On Thursday, Clinton County reported the death of an 88-year-old woman who had not been hospitalized but did have underlying health issues, according to Kinnee.

## Eaton County reports 4 deaths

Eaton County now reports four

deaths.

The latest death, reported Friday, was a 52-year-old Eaton County woman who died on Thursday, according to a spokeswoman for the Barry-Eaton District Health Department.

Eaton County's case count is at 69 with no new cases reported since Thursday.

## Ingham County cases highest near Lansing

On Friday afternoon, Ingham County reported 240 confirmed COVID-19 cases and a total of 293 people being monitored for the virus. That's 12 new cases since Thursday evening.

Of the 240 cases, Vail said, 60 have recovered, meaning they've been symptom-free for 72 hours or it has been seven days since symptoms started, whichever is longer.

Another 23 county residents were hospitalized, including one person who's been hospitalized for around a month and four people who are in the Intensive Care Unit, she said.

A zip code analysis for Ingham County shows most of the cases are in the Lansing area, with the highest frequency in three zip codes: 48823, 48910 and 48911.

The 48911 zip code, part of Lansing's

south side, has a larger percentage of residents in poverty and more African American residents, Vail said. Those demographics are more susceptible to the virus, she noted.

A map of Ingham County cases will be coming soon, Vail said, but officials are waiting for more data because disclosing a single case per zip code could present privacy issues.

While cases continue to increase, modeling shows the rate of the increase should slow in some areas of the state as people follow social distancing orders, Vail said.

"What that tells us is when we come out of the stay home, stay safe order and the sheltering orders, we are going to have to reopen gradually," Vail said.

The re-opening process "will not be everything going back to normal," she said, adding case counts likely will not completely diminish until there's a vaccine.

To prevent coronavirus transmission, wash your hands frequently and avoid contact with people outside your household. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the upper part of your sleeve if you cough or sneeze.

Contact your health care provider if you believe you have the virus. Symptoms include fever, coughing and shortness of breath

# 10 new cases in Ingham County

## Total number of positive tests increases to 250

**Carol Thompson**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING – Ten new cases of the coronavirus were identified in the Lansing area in the last day, according to the latest updates from state and local health departments.

All of the new cases were Ingham County residents, the mid-Michigan county hit hardest by COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

In its Saturday update, the Ingham County Health Department reported 250 residents have tested positive for the coronavirus. Three have died, 25 are hospitalized, 60 have recovered and 304 are being monitored for their symptoms.

Saturday coronavirus figures were unchanged in Eaton County, where 71 people are confirmed to have contracted the virus and four people have died, according to the Barry-Eaton District Health Department's Saturday update.

Forty-two people in the county have recovered from the disease, which means they were released from isolation because their symptoms have improved, do not have fevers and sufficient time has passed since symptoms began.



**Sparrow Hospital staff wave to motorists honking horns and waving during a parade of cars in a show of support April 4.** ROBERT KILLIPS/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department, which serves Clinton, Montcalm and Gratiot counties, had identified 90 cases of COVID-19 in Clinton County on Friday. Three people in the county had died of the disease.

In Michigan, 23,993 people have tested positive for COVID-19 as of Saturday. Of them, 1,392 people have died.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services posts daily updates about coronavirus cases and deaths at [Michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus). Those numbers often are different from local health departments' figures because of lag-time in the reporting process and other issues.

The coronavirus is a highly contagious virus that spreads from close personal contact and contact with infected services. Symptoms of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, in-

clude fever, coughing and shortness of breath.

Michigan residents are ordered to stay home unless they are conducting essential, life-saving or life-sustaining business like grocery shopping or working in certain fields, like health care and law enforcement.

People who develop symptoms should isolate themselves from others within and outside their households. Those who develop severe symptoms, live in institutional settings, have underlying health conditions, are health care workers or first responders or are over 65 are prioritized for testing.

People who suspect they have coronavirus should call clinics before they arrive for testing or medical care.

Contact Carol Thompson at (517) 377-1018 or [ckthompson@lsj.com](mailto:ckthompson@lsj.com). Follow her on Twitter @thompsoncarolk.

# Daily News

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

## Virtual support

Addiction support meetings are available 24 hours a day online

By [Karen Bota](#) | on April 15, 2020

Abiding by the mandatory stay-at-home order due to the coronavirus pandemic is stressful for everyone. For those in recovery — especially those newly in recovery — maintaining sobriety while not being able to get out of the house to attend meetings can feel overwhelming.



Patricia Wentworth

Fortunately, the sobriety community created online support groups years ago, and it's a great way to attend meetings virtually while having to stay home physically, according to Patricia Wentworth, a peer recovery coach for addiction at The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and Wellness in Ionia.

"There are chatrooms, Messenger, Zoom — a variety of ways you can enter a meeting. It will say on the site what time it opens," Wentworth said. "You have to be savvy on the internet, but most people are these days."

Much of the online support community that has been around a while is affiliated with the national organizations of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon and more, according to Meg Mullendore, executive director of the Montcalm Alano Club (MAC), a nonprofit organization in Greenville that provides an alcohol and drug-free environment where support meetings and special events are held.

The MAC is currently closed for business, but it is helping to promote local addiction support groups that have been moving online.

"Due to the situation of not being able to meet in a group, and since Zoom has been introduced, there's been an uptick," Mullendore said. "It's too important to have those meetings to share and discuss what's going on. A lack of social interaction can really harm them in recovery because it's so important for them."

As soon as Mullendore and the MAC Board anticipated the building's closure as a nonessential business due to the governor's executive order, they started to explore other options and they were ready to go online before the first order came out.



Meg Mullendore

But even if they could remain open, they knew their space wasn't large enough to permit people to sit 6 feet apart, and they weren't in the position to limit the size of groups to 10. Some groups meeting at the MAC have 25 attendees. "As the MAC, we felt it best to shut the doors. Right now is a horrible time to tell people you can't congregate. It's so essential to go to a meeting and be held accountable by other people in the meeting," Mullendore said. "My heart breaks for them simply because I fear some of them are going to relapse, and that's heartbreaking."

Mullendore said she is promoting the meetings on the MAC Facebook page ([facebook.com/montcalmalanoclub](https://www.facebook.com/montcalmalanoclub)) and local community partners are sharing the information as well. She said the online meetings seem to be going well. Participants can choose meetings where they have the option to join with video and audio or just audio. They have to decide what they want from the experience, according to Wentworth. They can be heard and not seen if they wish, which is different from an in-person meeting. This can be a preferred way for someone who is hesitant about trying out a meeting, or a person who has a dual diagnosis of mental illness and a substance use disorder.

"They can pass (their turn) and just listen. They don't have to say something, but they can sit and learn. It's been effective for the introvert," Wentworth said. "Or, you have a mental health illness and you can't go out of the house yet you want to be in recovery. (Online meetings) are just a necessity now."

On the other hand, online support meetings potentially create the same hazards as any other online gathering. Unless it's a local group facilitated by a gatekeeper, like the ones associated with MAC, the other participants are likely unfamiliar, so Wentworth suggests using caution about sharing personal information.

"You don't know what you're going to get," she said. "I advise you don't give any personal information out — not your last name, city, address or phone number."

Mullendore said group leaders are careful with Zoom meetings for that reason.



John Kroneck

"With Zoom it requires an email and a code and an invitation, which is good because of hackers," she said. "We've been pretty cautious about that."

Beyond virtual meetings, another benefit to so many groups and organizations being online is that there are now a vast number of resources available to read online. Not only will participants learn, but passing some time in this way may help in a moment of frustration or sadness when someone might be tempted to relapse. Wentworth used this technique one Saturday when she was having a bad day.

"No relapse, I just was feeling terrible. I got online and researched anxiety and depression, I read a couple of articles, and by the time I was done, I felt better. I got out of my head," she said. "It's amazing what's out there."

As useful as online support meetings are, Wentworth predicts they will never replace in-person gatherings.

"I've come to hear that people miss going to a meeting with that interaction with a group of people that get where they're coming from," she said. "I think that as soon as we get done with this (stay-at-home order), they're going to be done with online and return to face-to-face meetings, with the camaraderie with people that have walked their shoes."

Some people are more comfortable online, but it's a different experience than meeting in person, noted John Kroneck, a substance use disorder supervisor for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department.

"For me, there is something powerful about being in the presence of another person. When sharing my story it's nice to feel the other person connecting. I see their actions, I feel the other person, I hear a voice that says, 'I get it, I understand,'" Kroneck said. "For me, face to face is a more powerful way to do it."

Geoffrey Jones, a minister and former clinical social worker who co-founded the MAC and is in recovery himself, agrees. There is the element of a person-to-person connection that he doesn't think can happen online. Jones mentioned a quote: "God reaches out through the long heart of a friend."

"That's what happens when you're there for a while, you make friends. They know something about you because they've been there before," Jones said. "I have walked into these meetings where people probably know me better than I know myself." Online meetings won't be replacing the meetings held in person at the MAC. As soon as they can open back up for meetings, they will, Mullendore said.

But for now, when the option is online or nothing, the online option makes it easier than ever to seek help. No one is ever alone, Mullendore said. There are meetings 24 hours a day online.

"And anybody locally that's struggling can reach out via the MAC Facebook page, and one of the chairs will get back with them," she added.

Wentworth has been sober for eight years. She recognizes that some people, like those she works within the Ionia Treatment and Sobriety Court who are in early sobriety, from zero to one year, are struggling. She lets them know that everybody is having a hard time right now, whether they have a substance use issue or not.

"I try to normalize the situation, so substance use doesn't become the avenue to deal with it. Given the substance use person's mind, we will use something to relapse. Of course, COVID-19 is my perfect opportunity," she said. "If you normalize it — this is what's going on in life right now, it doesn't become an excuse to use. That's been very powerful in people I serve."

Kroneck agrees. Being in recovery is one of the additional stressors caused by social distancing, but it's not "an anchor on them," he said.

"We're social beings. Now we can't, and the distancing piece is counter-intuitive to human nature," Kroneck said.

"Whether you're in recovery or not, it's important to make an effort to connect with somebody."

Wentworth's advice is the same, whether someone is struggling in recovery or simply struggling.

"What I would hope for everybody is you're having a rough time, having a rough day, reach out and ask for help," she said. "When we're feeling very low, it's hard to reach out and ask for help. But do it."

#### FREE ONLINE MEETINGS, VIRTUAL PLATFORMS AND RESOURCES

- 12 Steps.org ([12step.org/social/online-meeting-calendar/](https://12step.org/social/online-meeting-calendar/)): Listing of online 12-step meetings on various platforms.
- AA Grapevine ([aagrapevine.org/we-are-here-to-help](https://aagrapevine.org/we-are-here-to-help)): Free access for a limited period to the 2020 Grapevine (January through May) and La Viña (Jan/Feb through May/June) print issues.
- Adult Children of Alcoholics ([adultchildren.org/quick-search/?audiobt=Click+Here](https://adultchildren.org/quick-search/?audiobt=Click+Here)): Phone and online Meetings.
- Al-Anon Electronic Meetings ([al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/](https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/)): This forum and recovery chat room for Narcotics Anonymous members features voice chat, Skype, and text chat meetings connecting people from around the world.
- Alcoholics Anonymous Online Intergroup ([aa-intergroup.org/directory.php](https://aa-intergroup.org/directory.php)): Listing of online meetings from AA Intergroup.
- Bridge Club Virtual Meetings ([jointempest.co/bridge-club-events?tag=Virtual%20Events](https://jointempest.co/bridge-club-events?tag=Virtual%20Events)): Meetings that are specifically focused on women and LGBTQIA+ folks who are sober or interested in sobriety.
- Cocaine Anonymous ([ca-online.org](https://ca-online.org))
- Families Anonymous Virtual Meetings ([familiesanonymous.org/meetings/virtual-meetings](https://familiesanonymous.org/meetings/virtual-meetings)): Online meetings for parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses, significant others, other family members and friends of those with a current, suspected or former drug problem.
- In The Rooms, Online Meetings ([intherooms.com/home/](https://intherooms.com/home/)): An online platform supporting a wide range of 12-step and non-12 step meetings.
- Life Ring Recovery ([lifering.org/online-meetings](https://lifering.org/online-meetings)): Listing of online meetings.
- Montcalm Alano Club ([facebook.com/montcalmalanoclub](https://facebook.com/montcalmalanoclub)): Visit for an updated list of local meetings on Zoom.
- Montcalm County Recovery and Integrated Services of Care ([montcalmrisc.org/](https://montcalmrisc.org/)): Recovery resources.
- My Recovery ([myrecovery.com/online-meeting/](https://myrecovery.com/online-meeting/)): Online 12-step meetings.
- Nar-Anon ([naranon.com/board/viewforum.php?f=1](https://naranon.com/board/viewforum.php?f=1)): Look in "Topics."
- Narcotics Anonymous ([na.org/meetingsearch/](https://na.org/meetingsearch/)): Listing of online meetings provided by NA.

- NMSAS Recovery Center ([nmsasrecoverycenter.org](http://nmsasrecoverycenter.org)): Is presenting virtual conversations about recovery with a variety of speakers from Michigan and beyond. These “Virtually Inspired Recovery” conversations are an opportunity to learn, connect with others, share resources, and offer support, each weekday afternoon, from noon to 1 p.m. For more information and instructions on how to connect to the meeting, visit [bit.ly/3evscq6](http://bit.ly/3evscq6).
- Refuge Recovery Online Meetings ([refugerecovery.org/meetings?tsml-day=any&tsml-region=online-english](http://refugerecovery.org/meetings?tsml-day=any&tsml-region=online-english)): Listing of daily online meetings.
- Smart Recovery ([smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php](http://smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php) and [smartrecovery.org/smart-recovery-toolbox/smart-recovery-online/](http://smartrecovery.org/smart-recovery-toolbox/smart-recovery-online/)): Message board, chat room, online meetings, and online library.
- Sober Grid ([sobergrid.com](http://sobergrid.com)): A free online social networking platform for people in recovery. Available in mobile app stores.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration ([samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)): Search for treatment options and many other resources.
- The Temper ([thetemper.com/online-recovery-meetings-groups/](http://thetemper.com/online-recovery-meetings-groups/)): An online publication/site that explores life through the lens of sobriety, addiction, and recovery. Includes links to resources.

#### PHONE CONTACTS

- Michigan 211: Dial 211. An easy way to connect with help of all kinds.
- Montcalm Care Network Crisis Line: 800-377-0974
- The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and Wellness Crisis Line: 888-527-1790
- SAMHSA National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357)
- Wedgwood Christian Services: (616) 255-6334
- Transitions Counseling Services: (616) 754-9420
- North Kent Guidance: (616) 754-2364
- Community Hope: (616) 225-8220
- Cherry Health Leonard Street (Grand Rapids) Counseling Center: (616) 954-1991
- Arbor Circle: (616) 459-7215 (Grand Rapids)
- Alternative Counseling Center: (989) 831-9111
- Belle Tower Group: (616) 835-9292

# 4 deaths at senior facility reported

13 other residents, 2  
staffers test positive

**Ken Palmer**

Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

Seventeen residents and two staffers at an assisted-living facility near DeWitt have tested positive for COVID-19, and four of those residents have died, health officials said.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department said all group activities at Gunnisonville Meadows Senior Assisted Living have been canceled, and the residents who tested positive for the disease are isolated in their rooms. The two staffers who tested positive are self-quarantined at their homes.

“(Facility staff) took extensive measures to prevent this virus from infecting their residents and staff, but unfortunately, it still made its way into their facility,” Sarah Doak, MMDHD’s community health and education director, said in a news release.

“It’s evident that COVID-19 can spread quickly within a medically vulnerable population and cause severe illness and death. That is why it’s so important for everyone to stay home.”

Clinton County on Wednesday reported its fifth death from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. It was not immediately clear if the latest death involved a resident at the assisted-living center.

Ingham County also reported its fifth death from the pandemic, bringing the area’s total number of deaths to 15.

The Ingham County death involved a man in his mid-60s who had serious underlying medical issues, Health Officer Linda Vail said.

State health officials reported 153 new deaths on Wednesday, bringing the state’s death toll to 1,921. The total number of cases grew by 1,058 for a total of 28,059.

The tri-county area added 14 cases on Wednesday as the number of new positive tests continued to moderate, both in the Lansing area and statewide.

Henry Ford Health System and Beaumont Health, both in southeastern Michigan, reported another drop in COVID-19 patients.

“While the number of deaths is higher today, all the data we’re seeing from the hospitals continues to go a

**See SENIOR FACILITY, Page 4A**

# Senior facility

Continued from Page 1A

positive direction,” Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan said. “The number of patients are down and the number of patients on ventilators are down significantly.”

Vail said the number of new infections is “definitely on a downward trend.” The highest daily increase – nearly 2,000 cases – came in early April, she said.

“They are gradually getting lower,” she said. “Today’s number is comparable to what we saw on March 30, when we were on the way up.”

Gunnisonville Meadows has 20 beds in one building and six at an adjacent facility on East Clark Road, near Wood Road, according to the center’s website.

In response to the COVID-19 cluster, staff have closed all communal spaces, quarantined residents in their rooms and barred all “non-essential visitors,” among other measures, officials said.

“The staff took aggressive steps to mitigate the virus, however despite our best efforts at exhaustive precautions, COVID-19 demonstrated it could still invade a fully prepared building,” co-owner Tim Brannan said in the news release.

“The virus showed you cannot prepare enough to safeguard your residents and staff – our Gunnisonville family.”

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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## 2 Lansing-area residents die from virus, bring total to 17

**Ken Palmer** Lansing State Journal  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

The Lansing area recorded two new deaths from COVID-19 Wednesday as the number of new cases continued to rise at a moderate but steady rate.

Clinton and Ingham counties each reported one new death for a total of six each. Including the five Eaton County residents who have died, the area's death toll stood at 17.

The tri-county area had 14 new positive tests on Wednesday, local officials said. The number of new infections appears to have leveled off across the state.

In its daily update, the state Department of Health and Human Services reported 1,207 new cases as of Wednesday morning, pushing the total to more than 29,200. That's up slightly from the day before but well below numbers earlier this month.

The state also reported 172 new deaths – about 20 more than Wednesday – but said that total included 65 previously undocumented COVID-19 deaths discovered from a review of death certificate data.

On a weekly basis, the DHHS is now reviewing death certificate records that identify COVID-19 infection as a contributing factor and comparing them to lab-confirmed cases in the Michigan Disease Surveillance System, the agency said in a news release.

If a death certificate is matched to a confirmed COVID-19 case and that record in the disease database does not indicate a death, the MDSS record is updated and appropriate local health department is notified, the release stated.

No details about the two new deaths in the Lansing area were released Thursday, and it was unclear if either were among the 65 deaths added to the state total.

Four of the six Clinton County residents who died from the disease were residents of an assisted living facility near DeWitt, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department said.

In all, 17 residents and two staff members at Gunnisonville Meadows Senior Assisted Living have tested positive for the new coronavirus, the agency said. The surviving residents are quarantined in their rooms, and the staffers are isolated at their homes.