

Weekly COVID-19 Update from the CEO

November 25, 2020

I cannot stress enough that people should not be traveling during the holidays, which continue from now through the New Year. If you do decide to travel out of county or out of state, I urge you to quarantine yourself at home for 14 days when you return, to avoid the possibility that you might bring the virus back into our local community. We are stressing this to our staff and join our local health officials in recommending it to everyone, to keep our local disease levels as low as possible.

Although schools have not been the source of any local outbreaks, out of an abundance of caution the Sequim school district and the Port Angeles schools decided to revert to all remote learning.

The virus continues to surge locally, state-wide, nationally and internationally, with over 170,000 new cases being confirmed daily in this country. And still, some people do not believe that we are in a health crisis. We are! Until the vaccine is widely available, "disease suppression" can only occur if people follow the mitigation protocols of wearing a mask and staying socially distanced whenever they are in contact with people outside of their household, avoiding travel, and washing hands frequently.

Last Friday, Jamestown Family Health Clinic launched a drive-through COVID test site in the rear of the south parking lot, to allow a ramp-up of parking lot testing that is safe for staff. This will accommodate a higher volume of testing for clinic patients and Jamestown employees. Olympic Medical Center is facing staffing challenges with their Port Angeles test site, and we are in discussion with OMC and the Clallam County Department of Health leadership regarding extending our testing capacity to the community at large.

Among public health officials, the reason for the huge push for mitigation protocols is to avoid overwhelming medical capacity. We were successful in the springtime in bringing disease levels down, and we can do this again! It isn't just a matter of whether we will have enough hospital beds for those who are seriously ill; it is more a matter of whether in our rural area, we will have enough staff to take care of all patients who require medical care, and to keep up with the increasing levels of testing needed.

In fact, shortages of trained personnel are already occurring at long term care facilities that have had COVID-19 outbreaks among staff and residents. Jamestown Family Health Clinic is working with other local medical facilities to help fill in staffing as needed.

As more people have COVID, everyone's chances of contracting the virus increase. Please stay vigilant and find new ways to enjoy the holiday season.

Happy Thanksgiving (11/26), and Native American Heritage Day (11/27)!

With my sincerest gratitude for all who are making sacrifices for the benefit of our entire Olympic Peninsula Community,



W. Ron Allen, Council Chair/CEO