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COVID-19 CASE COUNTS UP

Hospitals seeing virus-related patient increases

BY KELLIE HOUX
kellie.houx@mycouriertribune.com

CLAY COUNTY — Two of Clay County's largest hospitals that have patient beds and emergency rooms, Liberty and North Kansas City, continue to see an increase in COVID-19 patients.

North Kansas City Hospital

At North Kansas City Hospital, COVID-19 cases are also spiking, said Chief Medical Officer James Stewart. While not giving exact numbers, Stewart reported from Oct. 9 to Nov. 9, the hospital had a 53% increase in its daily COVID-19 census.

"We have converted existing patient care spaces and adjusted our workflow to keep more beds available. We continue to have capacity," he explained.

NKC COVID-19 patients continue to come via ambulance as well as walking into

the emergency room.

"Our inpatients are hospitalized until they are healthy enough to return home, but it's not unusual for COVID-19 patients to be admitted for 20 or more days. Many patients are also admitted to Acute Rehab to regain their strength before going home," Stewart said.

While the length of stay varies, so does the need for life-saving measures.

"We intubate patients when it's medically necessary, but we've also implemented effective, less invasive treatments such as proning (positioning that helps patients with acute respiratory distress) and methods that deliver high-flow oxygen without intubation," he said.

Stewart said in preparation for a surge in COVID-19 cases, North Kansas City Hospital spent the last eight and a half months proactively securing the resources needed to keep staff safe as they care for these patients.

Liberty Hospital

Liberty Hospital staff said in mid-October the hospital had 17 COVID-19 patients and one in ICU with none on the ventilator. By mid-November, there were



METRO CREATIVE

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38 patients hospitalized with COVID, three patients in ICU and two on a ventilator.

Patients are arriving equally by ambulance as well as self-presenting. The hospital reported individuals arriving by ambulance tend to be older.

According to the hospital, when extreme life-saving measures are needed such as intubation, it is and has been used.

Currently, Liberty Hospital staff have adequate amounts of personal protective equipment.

As coronavirus cases continue to rise, Liberty Hospital is also preparing for an increased need to manage the expected convergence of flu season with COVID-19.

St. Luke's

While St. Luke's North didn't respond to calls and emails for comment on its virus-related caseload, the health system's website is full of information on COVID-19.

In a release from the site, a recent patient count at St. Luke's Health System in

Kansas City showed a quarter of its COVID-19 patients come from outside the Kansas City metro area.

Two-thirds of the patients coming from rural areas need intensive care and stay in the hospital for an average of two weeks, said Dr. Marc Larsen, who leads COVID-19 treatment at St. Luke's.

"Not only are we seeing an uptick in those patients in our hospital from the rural community, they are sicker when we get them because (doctors in smaller communities) are able to handle

the less sick patients and we get the sickest of the sick," said Larsen in a release on the site.

In a video on the site, Andrew Schlachter, a critical care doctor with St. Luke's, said he and his fellow physicians are optimistic about the coming vaccine, but urged people to be cautious.

"We still need people to wear masks, wash hands, keep physically distanced and get a flu shot," he said.

"As the winter months approach, we don't know how bad the respiratory flus will be. Right now there is an increase in COVID cases and a consistent need for ICU beds."

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Liberty's 2020 Hometown Holidays reimaged

LIBERTY — Following the Clay County Public Health Center guidelines limiting mass gatherings and events, the city of Liberty, along with Historic Downtown Liberty Inc., will not host Hometown Holidays in the typical way.

The festivities kicking off Thursday, Dec. 3, as Historic Downtown Liberty, Inc. will have a special activity running through Dec. 5 to help the community explore downtown Liberty.

Those interested in participating can

pick up a passport card at the HDLI office, 117 N. Main St., Suite B and use the map to stop in at participating businesses and complete all eight of the challenges.

Those who participate can head back to HDLI to turn in the complete passport by 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5. They will be entered to win gift cards and prizes from downtown merchants. Winners will be notified the week of Dec. 7.

Along with the passport, the community is invited to vote in the Gingerbread House

Contest. Area businesses have gingerbread houses in display windows. Voting takes place at historicdowntownliberty.org.

Santa's mailbox and a North Pole photo opportunity will be set up next to the giant tree at Liberty City Hall starting later this week at 101 E. Kansas St. Santa will also be reading letters in the Hometown Holidays Facebook event and may respond to letters as time allows.

Liberty Mayor Lyndell Brenton will share a pre-recorded holiday message via

social media.

There also will be a Facebook event on the Visit Liberty, MO page where families can share holiday traditions.

Additionally, the city is compiling a holiday lights tour. Families can submit their address online. The city's GIS team will compile locations for a Liberty-wide holiday lights tour.

Submit home addresses at libertymissouri.gov/FormCenter/Public-Relations-Forms-9/Holiday-Lights-Map-357.

Kearney Turkey Trot raises \$16,000

BY KELLIE HOUX
kellie.houx@mycouriertribune.com

KEARNEY — Kearney School District's ninth annual Thanksgiving Turkey Trot took on a different look this year as the run/walk fundraiser went virtual due to the pandemic.

Dan Holloway, who sits on the school board as well as the education foundation, said he is proud of the community support in spite of COVID-19.

"I am grateful for all those who participated as well as those who served as sponsors," he said.

All registration fees help fund teacher innovation grants, special classroom projects, scholarships and the high school cross country team.

At the evening packet pick-up the night before Thanksgiving, Holloway, his wife, Michelle; and



KELLIE HOUX/STAFF PHOTO

Kearney School Board member Dan Holloway and junior Luke Bailey, who runs cross country, worked on checking in runners and walkers for the Turkey Trot.

junior son, Ashton Holloway; along with Luke Bailey, a junior on the cross country team, helped hand out T-shirts and packets.

The trot united 375 runners and walkers and netted a bit more than \$16,000.

For the Bomar family, Thanksgiving morning started with a new tradition.

"We got up and got us running," said Angie Bomar, the family's mother.

"It was a little chilly, but we went round the trail. Then we had Corner Café cinnamon rolls. I truly believe this is going to be our new tradition every year."

Bomar said her husband, Paul, and she took their time, mixing running, walking and talking at their own pace while watching their daughters run ahead. The couple has three daughters: Gracie, 14; Maggie, 12; and Averie, 10.

"All my girls are athletes and my oldest decided to run cross country this fall," the mother said. "Gracie made the decision and it was a good decision for the family. I had heard about the trot and the foundation."

Bomar, who is a kindergarten teacher in the district, knows about the Kearney School District Education Foundation and the help the foundation gives teachers.

"It really has been a nice family event," she said. "I didn't know how a virtual event would take place. When we went on the trail, we ran into other families. The nice thing is that there were still people out and about. While it didn't have the feel of a traditional race, it was fun. I can't wait to see what next year will look like when, hopefully, we can all run and walk together."

Candyland Christmas lights up Smithville

SMITHVILLE — The annual Candyland Christmas returns to downtown Smithville from noon to 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 and again from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11.

Guests will be able to send a letter to Santa through the Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce office, 105 W. Main St., and if they include a return address, may receive a response.

Families can also pick up a Candyland Christmas map and head out on an adventure to find holiday treats around downtown.

At 6 p.m. Saturday, there is the annual Mayor's Christmas Tree lighting followed by the Lighted Christmas Parade starting in the 100 block of Main Street.

For a printable Santa letter, visit smithvillechamber.org.

Connect

MAIN NUMBER:
816-781-4941

DELIVERY:
816-628-6010 Kearney
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816-532-4444 Smithville



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