The rate of COVID-19 cases has continued to go up in Buchanan County, and the trend shows no sign of a drop.

Missouri Life Care reported 57 COVID-19 patients in its system Thursday, with 41 at the St. Joseph location, seven in Maryville, and nine in St. Joseph Health Care System.

St. Joseph Health Director Debra Bradley said she does not expect cases to go down as positive tests continue to arrive from Thanksgiving gatherings. The spike followed the holidays and school letting out for Christmas break likely will result in cases staying high, she said.

Bradley said all cases currently involve the delta variant. The omicron variant has not been seen in Northwest Missouri, although it is in the state and is expected to come into the area as it is more transmissible.

“We want to try to protect people as much as possible from getting seriously ill, from going into the hospital or from unfortunately dying,” Bradley said.

According to a report from the New York Times, while the transmission is high for omicron, there is no firm evidence that it is more dangerous than previous variants like delta. The makers of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines say their booster doses of the vaccine provide antibodies to protect against severe cases of COVID-19 including all current variants.

“The variant in early reports indicates that it may be more easily transmissible but also not as harmful for severe disease, which is good because everyone is going to be in the hospital, they’re not going to die that way,” Bradley said. “It’s better to try to get people out of the hospital or not get sick than to rely on natural immunity.”

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HC Wolf of the Kansas City Chiefs was the special guest at MidCity Excellence’s annual Christmas party. More than 90 kids received gifts thanks to charitable giving from the community.