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Challenging first day of school here

By Doug Keeler
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It was a complicated start to the school year for Taft City School District's elementary schools as teachers and principals dealt with students who didn't know their names and complicated COVID protocols. The principals from all of the TCSD's six campuses reported on the the first day of school at the district's Board of Trustees meeting last week.

Everyone, students and teachers alike, was happy to be back for full-time in-person instruction.

Parkview Principal Heather Ward updates board on start of school.

"There's a few challenges that we have to address but we're happy their back," she said.

Ward said her school has had 320 children enrolled on the first day but they've had as many as 68 children out due to COVID protocols.

Like many schools, the TCSD has been dealing with a shortage of substitutes for teachers that end up in COVID quarantine.

"It was a little chaotic the first couple of days (but) everyday is getting better," she said.



Photo by Doug Keeler/Midway Driller
Parkview Principal Heather Ward updates board on start of school.

Conley has had more struggles.

Principal Lisa Kindred said children coming to school for the first time didn't know their real names -- only their nicknames, and are hard to recognize through masks. Teachers had to look in backpacks to find anything with the child's name.

Kindred's school was hit hard by COVID.

"Honestly we are in survival mode," Kindred said. "We are trying to

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Clinic busy with COVID testing

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The West Side Health Care District is feeling the effects of the rise in COVID-19, said Executive Director Ryan Shultz.

The patient count at the district's West Side Family Health Care Clinic is up significantly since mid summer and more and more people are coming in for drive-through tests.

"I'd say generally our patient volumes are way up right now. They've been increasing since the end of July."

The rise in patients at the clinic coincides with a major increase in cases reported in western Kern County by the Kern County Health Department.

Shultz said it's similar to the summer of 2020 when people came in with symptoms including elevated fever, cough and fatigue.

However he cautioned that there is also another flu bug circulating in the community, so some of the increase may not be related to COVID.

The drive-through test site at the clinic is a lot busier that in was just a couple of months ago.

"On average we are doing 25 to 35 drive-up tests. That is up significantly from June and July when we were doing just two or three tests per day."

Shultz said many of the people who come to get tested take advantage of the rapid testing for possible exposure at work or at school.



Photo by Doug Keeler/Midway Driller
Chelsi Perry from the Taft Chamber of Commerce with Kern County firefighters.



Photo by Doug Keeler/Midway Driller
Taft Chamber of Commerce representative Chelsi Perry presents gift cards to Kern County Sheriff's Sgt. David Rutter.



Photo by Doug Keeler/Midway Driller
Taft Chief of Police Damon McMinn (left) and officers Holly Dewar and Robert Gomes with gift cards received from local restaurants.

Restaurants honor first responders

The Taft Chamber of Commerce visited Taft's first responders, Taft City Police Department, Kern County Sheriff's Department, Kern County Fire Department, and Hall Ambulance, presenting them with gift cards donated by local restaurants for \$125-worth of menu items to enjoy at their respective stations and headquarters.

"It was an honor to visit all of our first responder departments to deliver this thank you. They were surprised and grateful," remarked Chelsi Perry, Chamber Events and Membership Coordinator.

At the request of our Taft Chamber Board of Directors in their most recent board meeting, the Chamber reached out to Asian Experience, Roots Eatery, Route 33 Sandwich Co., The Bank Sports Lounge, and Pizza Factory asking them to help with providing a meal to a group of local first responders. They were pleased to do so.

"The upsurge in Covid cases in Kern County and in our community, specifically, has made a more traditional commemoration of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, impossible. Still, we cannot let this pivotal date go unnoticed—especially at the 20-year mark," stated Kathy Orrin, Chamber Executive Director.

The Chamber thanks those restaurants who helped us to recognize the hard work consistently done by our community's first responders.



STARTING THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2021
West Side Family Health Care will open at
7:00 am Monday - Friday
Holiday and weekend hours will remain 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

NEW HOURS



West Side Family Health

100 E. North St. Taft, CA 92368
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