



Breathable bags offer another option for growing plants

HOME AND GARDEN, A4

From here. For here. Since 1846.

VICTORIA ADVOCATE

Need to shred old documents? We shred paper!
Call or come by THE BACK OFFICE
 Document Management Solutions
 (361) 579-9058
 1211 N. Laurent St, Victoria, TX
 WWW.THEBACKOFFICEVICTORIA.COM
 HIPAA FACTA COMPLIANT
 Hours of operation are 8 am - 4 pm Monday thru Friday, even during the lunch hour

Friday, June 26, 2020

VOL. 175, NO. 50, 12 PAGES, ©2020, VICTORIA ADVOCATE PUBLISHING CO.

75¢

COVID-19

Order signed requiring businesses to mandate masks

BY KALI VENABLE, KVENABLE@VICAD.COM

As COVID-19 cases in the region surpassed 1,000 on Thursday, Victoria Mayor Rawley McCoy signed an order requiring all businesses in the city to mandate the use of facial coverings.

In Victoria County, 54 more cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in 24 hours – the highest daily increase since the pandemic began, surpassing Wednesday’s record of 45. Of Victoria County’s 468 cases,

238 were active Thursday, officials said. A total of 222 residents had recovered from the coronavirus and eight had died.

Dr. John McNeill, Victoria County’s health authority, said Thursday evening after the mayor issued his order that he was “really worried” about Victoria and “really worried about it getting worse.”

With the number of cases continuing to rise and hospitalizations



McCoy

surging in larger, surrounding cities, McNeill said the community has to use every tool available to protect itself.

“This (requiring masks in businesses) is just one of the things that we hope will slow the spread of this virus in our community,” he said.

McCoy’s order requires every commercial entity that provides goods or services to the public to develop a health and safety policy

for employees and customers to follow.

The policy must be posted in a conspicuous location so it will be visible to employees and customers, and the business must begin enforcing the policy by 8 a.m. Monday.

At minimum, businesses must require employees and customers to wear facial coverings “when in an area where 6 feet of separation is not feasible or performing an activity which will necessarily involve close contact or proximity

to co-workers or the public,” the order reads.

Starting Monday, city employees and members of the public must also wear facial coverings at city-operated facilities under the new order. Anyone not wearing a face covering may be denied entry or removed from the facility.

In compliance with Gov. Greg Abbott’s executive order signed June 3, no individual will be fined or punished for failing to wear a mask.

SEE CASES, A6

COVID-19

WAITING GAME



PHOTOS BY EMREE WEAVER/EWEAVER@VICAD.COM

Texas National Guard members prepare materials to administer COVID-19 tests to area residents. The City of Victoria, in partnership with the Department of State Health Services and Texas Military Department, hosted the mobile walk-up testing site Thursday at the Victoria Community Center.

Officials test 747 people at Victoria Community Center

BY KALI VENABLE, KVENABLE@VICAD.COM

A line snaked around the side of the Victoria Community Center on Thursday, where the sun beat down on the asphalt and hundreds of people waiting to get tested for COVID-19.

Toward the front entrance, a woman said she had been waiting nearly three hours to get tested for the coronavirus at the site, which was coordinated by the Texas Military Department in partnership with the Texas Department of Emergency Management, Victoria County and the City of Victoria.

As 54 more cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Victoria County on Thursday and cases in the region surpassed 1,000, many people found the wait worth the test.

One woman read a book while shuffling her feet in line. Another sat comfortably in a lawn chair with an umbrella. Toward the back, a few children played

IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** COVID-19 Testing
- **WHERE:** Victoria Community Center, 2905 E. North St.
- **WHEN:** 8 a.m. to noon Friday
- **NOTE:** Testing will be provided at no cost. No appointment is required.

games to keep themselves entertained.

A total of 747 people from Victoria and surrounding counties were tested for the virus at the walk-up testing site on Thursday, said Rick McBrayer, the Victoria County Emergency Management Coordinator.

All were wearing a mask, except maybe a handful to a dozen people, he said.

“We were estimating that there were at least 1,500 to 2,000 out in line, but some people were coming with family members and there might have been four or five people in one family, but only one was getting tested,” McBrayer said. “As



A Texas National Guard medic pulls a swab from packaging to administer a COVID-19 test on the first day of the mobile walk-up testing site at the Victoria Community Center. The testing site will be open for a second day from 8 a.m. to noon Friday.

the heat came on, we also saw some people get tired of waiting and leave.”

The site was open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., but because of the large crowd that showed up, officials decided to halt incoming traffic at 1 p.m. to give time to test everyone who was already in line.

“We quickly knew that we were going to have an influx of people, more so than the

military had seen in other locations they had been at,” McBrayer said.

Orange cones blocked off entrances to the parking lot after 1 p.m.

People tried to park on the side of East North Street and walk up, but were told to come back Friday, when the site will reopen from 8 a.m. to noon.

SEE TESTING, A6

HEALTH

‘A little above water’

Despite pandemic, Citizens Medical Center passes balanced budget

BY CIARA MCCARTHY, CMCCARTHY@VICAD.COM

Citizens Medical Center expects to break even next year in spite of the pandemic, which has left many hospitals and providers struggling after a three-month dip in routine medical services.

The county hospital’s board of managers passed a \$157 million operating budget at its meeting Wednesday, a 3.5% increase from what the hospital is expected to spend this year.

Duane Woods, the hospital’s chief financial officer, initially expected to lose money next year because of the pandemic’s setbacks.

“We’re anticipating this year to come in right about break even, maybe a little under water,” Woods said. “The budget we’re putting forth is a little bit above water, a \$375,000 positive bottom line.”

But a budget is merely a planning document, and with the future of the pandemic unclear, things could change quickly for Citizens and other medical providers in Texas if case counts continue to rise in Texas.

“We haven’t really been able to budget for the what if’s,” Woods said. “If we have another broad shutdown, I’m going to need to come back with some adjusted budget numbers for the board because we just can’t make all of those variables in.”

Although COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly in Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott said Monday that a complete shutdown of the state would be the “last option.”

The initial shutdown in March, when most of the country was



Woods

“We’re anticipating this year to come in right about break even, maybe a little under water,” Woods said. “The budget we’re putting forth is a little bit above water, a \$375,000 positive bottom line.”

But a budget is merely a planning document, and with the future of the pandemic unclear, things could change quickly for Citizens and other medical providers in Texas if case counts continue to rise in Texas.

“We haven’t really been able to budget for the what if’s,” Woods said. “If we have another broad shutdown, I’m going to need to come back with some adjusted budget numbers for the board because we just can’t make all of those variables in.”

Although COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly in Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott said Monday that a complete shutdown of the state would be the “last option.”

The initial shutdown in March, when most of the country was

SEE CMC, A6

INSIDE

Kemp’s ridley sea turtles need protection
 VIEWPOINTS, B2

WEATHER

TODAY
 A couple of showers and a thunderstorm



85

TONIGHT
 Partly cloudy with a thunderstorm in spots



77

GAS PRICES

Walmart
 4001 Houston Highway
 Victoria
 (As of 7 p.m. Thursday. Prices are subject to change.)
 Subscribe 361-574-1200
 Report News 361-580-NEWS

UNLEADED
\$1.74
DIESEL
\$1.87

INSIDE

Around The Crossroads. A2
 Home and Garden..... A4
 Classifieds..... B3-B4
 Comics..... B6
 Horoscope/Puzzles..... B5
 Obituaries..... A3, B3
 Sports..... B1
 Viewpoints..... B2
 Weather..... A6

Texas..... A3
 Markets..... A3

6 66153 12345 6