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Saturday, March 28, 2020

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Beltrami County has first coronavirus case

By Matthew Liedke
mliedke@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — The coronavirus made its way to Beltrami County this week with Sanford Health announcing the first positive case on Wednesday.

Sanford Health of Bemidji announced that the patient had a positive test of COVID-19 in a release sent out on Wednesday morning. The patient is believed to have become ill after



Wilcox

being exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus while traveling internationally.

The patient is under self-isolation at their residence since returning from travel and has been experiencing mild symptoms of the virus. According to Dr. David

Wilcox, vice president medical officer at Sanford, the patient reached out to their primary care provider on Monday, March 23.

“This couldn’t have gone any better in terms of community spread,” Wilcox said. “The person was suspicious upon returning, isolated, waited until a business day and called on what to do next. They went through a screening process and

didn’t come to the clinic.”

Sanford has advised the patient to stay home, except to receive medical care. They’ve also been asked to separate from other people in the home, limit contact with pets and animals, and wear a face mask when around others when entering the facility.

In the release, Sanford officials stated they will continue to follow up with the patient

regarding their symptoms and determine whether additional care is needed. The patient is going to remain under self-isolation until they are no longer contagious, meaning they have not had a fever for at least 72 hours and other symptoms have improved, and at least seven days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

BELTRAMI: Page A8

FILLING THE GAP

The United Way and Bemidji Community Food Shelf have teamed up to keep the food shelf running during the coronavirus pandemic. Pictured from left: Shannon Lee, United Way of Bemidji Area director of marketing and events; Mary Mitchell, Bemidji Community Food Shelf executive director; and Denae Alamano, United Way of Bemidji Area executive director.

Annalise Braught / Bemidji Pioneer



Organizations work together to meet community needs

By Annalise Braught
abraught@bemidjipioneer.com

Everyone needs to eat. That’s why organizations around the Bemidji area have rallied together to ensure everyone in the community is fed, and those at risk are able to stay safe at home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Many members in the greater Bemidji community rely on organizations like the Bemidji Community Food Shelf to get through the month. And according to Mary Mitchell, executive director at the food shelf, having access to food

is more important than ever, as so many are without work right now.

But with more restrictions and safety precautions being put in place on an almost daily basis, it became imperative that older volunteers who usually help keep the food shelf running needed to stick closer to home. This posed some major problems.

“As things began to escalate, Mary started evaluating her staff and their risks and even her own age and risks, and she began thinking that they may even have to close,” said Denae Alamano, executive director of the

United Way of Bemidji Area.

So, the two organizations came together and formed a better solution – swapping out the older volunteers for younger people from around the community.

Even some of the staff has been switched out, so that older staff members can stay safe at home. Shannon Lee, director of marketing and events at the United Way, began working at the food shelf on Monday filling in for Debbie Johnson, the volunteer coordinator at the food shelf.

“Shannon is still doing her regular

job duties for the United Way,” Alamano explained. “But she’s also training in volunteers from here and helping out in whatever way she can.”

Lee said she hasn’t minded combining her two jobs for the time being. “It’s been really nice to be able to help the food shelf in this tough time and fill that gap with resources at the United Way. It’s kind of like a no-brainer,” she said. “If I can train in volunteers and work remotely here to be able to keep food shelf staff safe and healthy, then I’m all in.”

TOGETHER: Page A8

City declares emergency to streamline COVID-19 response

By Matthew Liedke
mliedke@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — The city of Bemidji on Friday joined the state and federal governments in declaring an emergency in response to the coronavirus.

In passing a resolution over a telephone meeting, the

Bemidji City Council established a local emergency. In doing so, the city manager, the emergency management director and other designated officials are authorized to bypass existing city policies and procedures if it means a better response to federal or

state coronavirus directions.

Additionally, all of the city’s departments and staff are directed to operate and support the response to the emergency, under the coordination of the city manager and the local emergency management team. This can

include implementing new employee protocols and staff strategies, as well as operational strategies and processes to ensure that public services are maintained.

The resolution, approved unanimously by the council, also authorized Bemidji

Mayor Rita Albrecht and City Manager Nate Mathews to approve any necessary agreements, contracts or related documents necessary to implement corrective action to the emergency.

EMERGENCY: Page A8



Mathews



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123 Years Number 218
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218-333-9200
news@bemidjipioneer.com

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LIFE.....C1-C6
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