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County

County.

As of Sept. 3, Aitkin County had 52 cases and one death, Kanabec County 69 cases and six deaths, Morrison County 124 cases and one death, Pine County 158 cases and zero deaths, Isanti County 183 and zero deaths, Crow Wing County 320 cases and 16 deaths, Chisago County 327 cases and one death, Benton County 414 cases and three deaths, Sherburne County 939 cases and 13 deaths, Stearns County 3,365 and 22 deaths.

Congregate care facilities reporting an exposure from a positive COVID-19 case in a resident, staff person, or visiting provider in Mille Lacs County reported one

case at Sterling Pointe Senior Living facility in Princeton.

Nastrom reported that all of the counties have increased in total case numbers. With the number of daily cases increasing since the July 25 Minnesota mask mandate by Gov. Tim Walz, this reporter asked Nastrom what the Minnesota Department of Health says regarding the intention of the mask mandate to “slow the spread” and the appearance it hasn’t been effective.

“I do know that masks are not hundred percent effective,” responded Nastrom. “Not everyone is following the recommendations.”

Mille Lacs County Community and Veterans Services Director Beth Crook



PHOTO BY T.A. LEBRUN

Public health update

Mille Lacs Community Health Services Administrator and Supervisor Kay Nastrom addresses the Mille Lacs County Board of Commissioners during the Sept. 1, 2020 meeting last week remotely via video feed, as she has done for the last several months due to COVID-19 concerns and Gov. Walz’s executive order, stating that “if you can work from home, you should work from home.”

added that they believe the spread has been caused by private gatherings where people are not adhering to COVID-19 recommenda-

tions.

Nastrom stated that of the 1,823 deaths in the State (as of Sept. 1), 1,340 are from long-term care or as-

sisted living facilities. Mille Lacs County Administrator Pat Oman added that approximately 80% of the deaths are of those over the age of 65 with pre-existing conditions and asked Nastrom if the CDC reported that only 6% of total deaths were of COVID-19 alone. She said that was her understanding.

Assistant County Administrator Holly Wilson asked Nastrom if a quarantine was required if someone may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Nastrom responded that the current guidelines state that there is no quarantine for a possible exposure but that they take into consideration during contact tracing the length of exposure or if they had a mask on. “If you have no symptoms, there is no quarantine,” said Nastrom.

Mille Lacs County Commissioner Phil Peterson asked, “How does all of this end?”

Crook responded quoting epidemiologist Michael T. Osterholm saying, “It comes to an end when herd immunity is reached (approximately 70% of the population having had the virus) or there is a vaccination developed.”

Oman added, “I really like hearing about herd immunity. What’s happening at the federal and state level will not get us to that because we’re doing everything we can to not infect each other.” Oman gave the disclosure that he is not a public health official, but, in his opinion, to achieve herd immunity would require individuals who don’t have a predisposed medical condition be in the community working with businesses opened back up.

“Those people over 65 with health concerns should be distancing as they normally would,” said Oman. “The original goal was to not overpopulate the hospitals. We are getting push back from so many businesses saying they just want to be open. Here, we have tried to be open. I think there is a disconnect, but that is just my opinion as an administrator.”

Oman added that he is proud of what the county staff has done to embrace the mandates and safety precautions. “Whether we have an opinion or not, we have embraced the rules and have low cases.”

A new COVID-19 dashboard has been created on the Mille Lacs County website and can be found at <http://www.co.mille-lacs.mn.us/>.

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Amish

The whole group seems to be faring well under the pandemic.

Mr. Hershberger is asked how they’re doing and what impact the pandemic has had on their community.

“It affects us as far as it’s something you try to avoid, but at the same time, it’s in God’s hands,” says Hershberger, who prefers to leave his first name out of the story as to not draw attention to himself. The community is one of the more conservative groups of Amish who prefer not to be photographed as some other Amish groups are now allowing. Hershberger says it’s important to stay humble, citing the Bible as his source of authority.

He says he first learned of COVID-19 from his neighbors, who keep him informed. He later read about it in the Messenger. He says they read a lot.

Being removed from the constant bombardment of societal unrest via social media, television and Internet has its advantages.

“I can see where it would stress a guy out,” he says, “watching social media or the Internet. We get the weekly paper and we, we’re not really worried. We just take it as it comes. The kids aren’t aware. We adults talk though. The only time we realize there is something going on is when we go into town.”

Hershberger and other Amish community members, such as Ammon Miller who was also spoken with while he worked at the lumber yard, say the work keeps them bus-



PHOTO BY T.A. LEBRUN

Work horses

A hay wagon with horses awaiting their next command.

ier than ever. “We’ve been able to keep working and it (the pandemic) hasn’t affected us much ‘cause we work close by,” says Hershberger.

Economically speaking, the pandemic hasn’t affected the community much. “It hasn’t affected us as far as business, and we’ve had as much as we can do. We work together three days, sometimes more, sometimes less. We have other work, and right now we’re behind. We do roofing and a garage down the street ... also pole barns,” says Miller. “The only thing different is we have to wear a mask when we go certain places. Our traveling has also been affected. We don’t want to get it, but we’re also not as worried as a lot of people are.”

The group, consisting

of six different families with some living closer to Malmo, moved here over a year ago in April of 2019 from Harmony, Minn.

“We were looking for cheaper and more land and looked in Mora and Onamia first and then found the place we really liked on Hwy. 18,” says Miller. “When we moved up here, we got our materials for the houses from them (Isle Discount Supplies, Inc.), and he kind of hired us up.” Since then, the men have been building sheds, ice houses and handcrafted cabins out of the lumber yard. These items are also for sale at the Isle business.

The women stay back home with the children for the most part and do canning along with other household chores. A teenage boy is seen in the field

on a horse drawn combine of sorts. Some of the boys go to town and help work at the lumber yard or out on a job site.

As far as their views on the new Mille Lacs community, Miller says, “We don’t really like the fishing regulations and will often fish other lakes. But I like the area ... we think the people are more friendly,” says Miller. “We go to Onamia and to the cities to the doctor with a disabled daughter. We usually don’t go to the doctor unless we know there is something wrong though.”

Hershberger says, “We tell them (the children) try to keep a little distance and be respectful to people.” He adds that they haven’t noticed any unusual illnesses other than the common flu. “But maybe we had it and didn’t know it.”

Hershberger is thankful for his neighbors. “We have good neighbors, and they’ve been very helpful. If we need emergency transportation, they’re the ones that take us. They let us know where it (COVID-19) is going on the most and where the numbers are highest,” says Hershberger.

He speaks on other attributes of the community, “People are more laid back. The people here have more time for everyone, it seems like. The one thing we really enjoy here for the kids is the fishing – it’s the highlight for the kids.” They use a paddle boat, he says.

“The people, the neighbors ... sometimes you feel like they treat you better than you can treat them back,” Hershberger adds.

ISLE SCHOOL DISTRICT #473

VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ANNUAL NOTIFICATION

Isle school district offers a variety of vocational opportunities through the Business Education, Industrial Technology and Family and Consumer Science Departments. The purpose of this notice is to inform students, parents, employees and the general public that these opportunities are offered regardless of race, color, national origin, sex or disability. Admission in the specific courses is determined by grade level, and in some cases, completion of prerequisite courses.

The district has designated the following individuals to coordinate compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972.

<p>Section 504 Coordinator 7-12 Principal 730 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 25 Isle, MN 56342 320-676-3101</p>	<p>Alternate Section 504 Coordinator Superintendent 730 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 25 Isle, MN 56342 320-676-3146</p>
<p>Title IX Coordinator 7-12 Principal 730 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 25 Isle, MN 56342 320-676-3101</p>	<p>Alternate Title IX Coordinator Superintendent 730 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 25 Isle, MN 56342 320-676-3146</p>
<p>Human Rights Officer Superintendent 730 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 25 Isle, MN 56342 320-676-3146</p>	<p>Alternate Human Rights Officer School Board Chairperson 730 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 25 Isle, MN 56342 320-676-3146</p>

A brief summary of program offerings include industrial technology, consumer sciences, etc. and maybe found on the school website at www.isle.k12.mn.us.

Notice of Non-discrimination
The Isle School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.