

INSIDE

This week in Carlton County's only independent, locally owned newspaper.



Pandemic pies take off
Page 3



Fall sports wind down
Page 9



Quilts take spotlight
Page 19

INDEX

Weather	2
History	2
News	3
Opinion	6-7
Obituaries	8
Sports	9-12
Community	15
Puzzles	15
Classifieds	16
Culture	19



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE



SHUTDOWN 2.0

State order ends youth sports; eateries, bars must close to ebb Covid spread

Brian Bakst, MPR News staff
mprnews.org

Gov. Tim Walz on Wednesday rolled out a new COVID-19 order that prohibits all in-person social gatherings with people outside your household for four weeks beginning Saturday morning. It restricts bar and restaurant service to takeout and delivery. Theaters and gyms must close, although retail stores can be open.

Organized sports for youth and adults are on hold. Collegiate athletics and professional sports can continue but with new spectator limits. Places of worship and child care can stay open with the proper precautions in place.

"We're at a dangerous point in this pandemic," Walz told Minnesotans in his address announcing the new restrictions. "How we act, and how this virus moves, will have huge implications on the number of

people who will be hospitalized and, ultimately, those who will lose their lives."

He warned the virus was spreading exponentially now across the state, putting immense pressure on health care workers and hospitals dealing with a surge of admissions tied to COVID-19. Officials say hospital admissions have risen 80 percent the past two weeks.

He expressed hope that these new curbs would save lives until a vaccine was widely available, and that the process of vaccinating people might begin before the latest restrictions ended, but acknowledged that

On Page 14

- Local case totals.
- Information on Covid-19 testing in the area.

wouldn't make the next few weeks any easier.

Among the most painful changes: Weddings, funerals, and other similar celebrations can be held with the current rules in place, but all receptions and gatherings connected to these ceremonies must be canceled or postponed, according to the order.

Continued on Page 14

Living with Covid takes its toll

Covid-19 couldn't happen to us. We were careful. We wore masks. We avoided crowds. We washed our hands incessantly. We carried hand sanitizer everywhere we went. We are homebodies. We only visited with people who we knew are also very careful.

We were wrong. We got Covid. My wife Kim tested positive on Oct. 17. I tested positive four days later on Oct. 21. It's been an emotional and physical rollercoaster.

On Oct. 13, Kim started feeling sick after dinner. We just thought maybe she ate something that was not fresh. She was vomiting that night. The next morning she had diarrhea and called in sick at school, where she is a teacher. The so-called MEA weekend was approaching and she felt if she just had a couple of days to rest, she would be fine for school on Monday. The next few days were not good for her. She could barely get out of bed. Her muscles were weak and she had no energy.

We canceled a trip to see her two boys in Fargo.

Her condition continued to deteriorate. Could it be Covid? We always joked every time we sneezed or coughed or had a scratchy throat that we were getting the virus.

Getting the test

She made an appointment for a Covid test at MedExpress in Cloquet. I drove her to the appointment and sat in the car as the nurse gave her the signal to enter the building. I was not permitted to go in with her. The test results were available in 15 minutes.

She came back into the car, said she had Covid, and began crying. We were both shocked and scared.

This is a virus that has killed more than 240,000 Americans and there is no cure. We both have vulnerable health conditions and compromised immune systems. She is a Type 1 diabetic and I have heart and lung issues.

My mind was racing with negative thoughts. What if she has to be hospitalized? What if she dies? How am I going to take care of her and not get it? Do I already have it asymptotically?

GUEST COMMENTARY



Greg Oakes



Kim Oakes recovered from Covid-19 last month.

Greg Oakes and his wife Kim were being careful, doing all the things we've had drilled into our heads about stopping the spread of Covid-19 and avoiding becoming inflicted with the virus. Then it hit them.

'She came back into the car, said she had Covid, and began crying.'

After a crushing ordeal, testing both their mental and physical capacities, they are recovering. Greg kept a diary of his experiences and shared them with the Pine Knot News.

'Please stay safe everyone. This virus is real.'

Why is it that our mind always seems to think of the worst possible scenarios at a time of crisis?

We drove back home with me consoling her that we would get through this like we have during other difficult times. The odd thing with this killer virus is that you are diagnosed and then just sent home. No medications, no remedies. Just ride it out and go to the hospital emergency room if you have trouble breathing.

That was our treatment plan. But we had been staying with her elderly mother for the past three days because her husband had to go into a rehabilitation facility in Duluth. He had been feeling weak and was short of breath. Looking back on it now, it was odd that no one in the facility gave him a Covid test upon arrival.

Kim and I had to stay with her mom as she was not able to care for herself.

Living with it

After we got to the house, Kim went to the couch and started texting family members and her employer. She began the long process of telling anyone that she was around in the past few days that they should go and have a test. No one wants to hear that news.

We all wore masks in the house and kept our distance from one another. I made an appointment for myself and Kim's mom to be tested the next morning.

When you are living with a loved one who has Covid, it consumes your thoughts. Days prior we were sharing the same bed, same bathroom, same towels and eating meals together. Do I have it also?

I was feeling pulled in two directions. My family members were telling me to leave and go back to our house. "Don't risk being exposed to the virus." But this was my wife and her fragile mother that both needed looking after. I couldn't leave them alone.

We made the decision that I would go back to our house at night and come over to help them during the day.

Morning came and I went to my appointment to have a nasal swab test. I was feeling good with no fever nor any other symptoms. The test was painless, just a swipe at the outer edges of the nostril.

Continued on Page 13



Alicia Culbert, 5, eyes one of her mother's strawberry-blueberry pies, pointing out where the hot filling was bubbling out of the lattice crust Tuesday morning. Photos by Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News

Cafe tosses pie at pandemic

Jamie Lund
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When the state was ordered to shut down in March, the majority of Cloquet's roughly 30 restaurants adapted by offering curbside service. When the lockdown ended, new social distancing regulations went into effect, limiting indoor seating so customers would not be too close to each other.

Like other businesses, Culbert's Cafe in downtown Cloquet reopened in mid-June. Unlike other restaurants, the small cafe closed about a week later. Owner Heather Culbert said she felt ill and closed the cafe while she waited for the results of a Covid-19 test. She reopened again when the test came back negative.

Due to social distancing regulations, she had only three tables available for customers in her small restaurant because the long counter with its traditional stools was not available for diners.

"It was costing me more money to be opened then closed," Culbert said. "That's when I got creative."

In the kitchen, that is.

Culbert began selling pies to help pay the rent. She posted photos of pies on Facebook and the orders trickled in. She began with a list of berry and cream pies for the Fourth of July and continued to sell pies through the fall.

A list of 18 different pies for Thanksgiving is posted to the Culbert's Cafe Facebook page. It includes both traditional favorites

and unique flavors such as pumpkin pecan, pistachio and a best-seller, peanut butter fudge.

Culbert said she plans to add small pies to her Christmas list. She's also adding fudge and fresh baked bread in the near future.

Additionally, Culbert looked into other avenues of assistance for businesses affected by Covid-19 requirements. She received the Paycheck Protection Program in loan form, which means she needs to repay the money. She also requested a grant through Carlton County and is waiting to hear if she qualifies.

While the PPP loan helped, Culbert still struggled to make ends meet. Selling homemade pies is helping the small business get by until the pandemic ends and the Culberts can reopen their restaurant with enough seating capacity to turn a profit.

"Everything goes into the cafe," Culbert said. "I don't pay myself."

Culbert explained that she baked pies for family holiday meals for many years, but only began experimenting with flavors once she opened the cafe about four years ago.

She said a few groups of guys used to meet for coffee before the shutdown.

"The pie was a part of the reason for going there," Mike Lyes said. "If she had a pie, we ate it."

The 70-year-old Navy veteran said he has tasted most of the flavors over the years. His favorite is blueberry.



Culbert's Cafe owner Heather Culbert is baking and selling homemade pies to pay the rent on the downtown Cloquet restaurant, which had to close (for now) because seating restrictions due to the pandemic made it almost impossible to make any money. She has a list of 18 types of pie available to purchase on the cafe's Facebook page, and is offering small and regular-sized pies.

"I saw guys take up to six pies home at a time during the holidays," Lyes said. He acknowledges that he has purchased a few pies over the years also.

Prospective customers can order pies by messaging the Cul-

bert's Cafe Facebook page, texting or calling 218-214-9798 or calling the cafe's landline at 218-451-9787. Thanksgiving orders will be taken through the weekend, she said, as they aren't going anywhere for the holiday.

Thanksgiving dinner still set to be picked up, delivered

Jana Peterson
news@pineknotnews.com

In spite of the surge in Covid-19 cases, the annual community Thanksgiving dinner will go on ... in a Covid-conscious way.

All meals will be delivered or picked up from this year's home base at the Cloquet VFW at 210 Arch Street, said Raffy Johnson. Curbside pickup in the VFW parking lot will be available from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 26. Delivery will run from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day.

Anyone who would like to order a meal is asked to call

218-590-4027 by Nov. 24. Leave a message with name, phone number, address and how many meals for delivery. Call ahead for pickup too, Johnson said, but just leave name, phone number and number of meals. They need to know who's planning to eat either way, so they can set the meal count.

"I'm trying to get people to go with delivery because it's easier," he said.

The annual event is sponsored by Chapter 18 of the Disabled American Veterans and the Auxiliary, where Johnson is also treasurer and serves as point person.

In a normal year, they usually serve between 600 and 800 meals,

between the community meal and deliveries. He said the year they had a snowstorm the day before was even busier than normal because people couldn't travel.

"I don't know what's going to happen this year," Johnson said. "With people being told not to get together in big groups, we could be even busier. Who knows?"

In previous years, the sitdown meal was held at Zion Lutheran Church in Cloquet with deliveries run out of the VFW. Volunteers will be utilizing the church kitchen this year, but the operations center was moved to the VFW.

While the DAV has the volunteers to help with cooking or

packaging the Thanksgiving Day meals, they will almost certainly need drivers willing to load up their own vehicles with food, Johnson said. (Call 218-590-4027 to volunteer.) They will have pickup orders in back, and delivery drivers out front of the VFW. Drivers need to be healthy and free from Covid. "We did a better job this year of getting posters up around the county, so I'm expecting orders from all over," Johnson said.

"It's very rewarding for the disabled vets," Johnson said. "And it's a way to thank everyone that has helped with our other events throughout the year."

Former county attorney has died

Pine Knot News

Longtime Carlton County attorney Thom Pertler died Monday after falling ill during a trip this fall.

Pertler worked for the Carlton County Attorney's office for more than 23 years, starting as an assistant county attorney under Marv Ketola, and was well-known for prosecuting Donald Blom in 2000 for the murder of Katie Poirier. He won a conviction, despite a recanted confession and conflicting evidence. He also helped prosecute the Paul Antonich murder case in 1996, a case in which five men were found guilty of kidnapping and murdering a Duluth teenager after he accidentally rear-ended their car. Pertler was also a founding member of the Carlton County Drug Court.

Pertler was appointed as Carlton County Attorney in January 2005, and subsequently elected to serve four-year terms until he was defeated by current county attorney Lauri Ketola in the 2018 general election.

His career was not without its troubles, including a DWI in 2012 and disbarment earlier this year for failing to disclose known police misconduct when he was in office. Pertler chose not to fight the disbarment. He had retired from practicing law.

Find his obituary on Page 8 of this week's Pine Knot News.

Library closed again

Pine Knot News

The Cloquet Public Library closed to the public until further notice on Thursday, Nov. 19 in response to the increase in Covid-19 cases in the region. The library will still offer curbside pickup of requested materials in the lobby as well as kids and adults take-and-make kits and their personal librarian service.

Curbside pickup hours are Mondays 12:30-5:30 p.m., Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursdays 1-6 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m.-1 p.m. The library will be closed on Wednesdays and Fridays. To request materials, use the online catalog at cloquetlibrary.org, or call 218-879-1531.

GUEST VIEW

Make sacrifices to help everyone

Rick Breuer is the CEO of Community Memorial Hospital in Cloquet and wrote this for the Pine Knot News.

This is a hard time for all of us. Last spring, many of us prepared for what we thought would be massive numbers of Covid patients.

That never came to pass, and we have all begun to enjoy some of the “normal” activities of life as we used to know it. But we can see that we will be dealing with this virus for some time, and it can be difficult for us personally and professionally to keep up our spirits and not let our guard down.

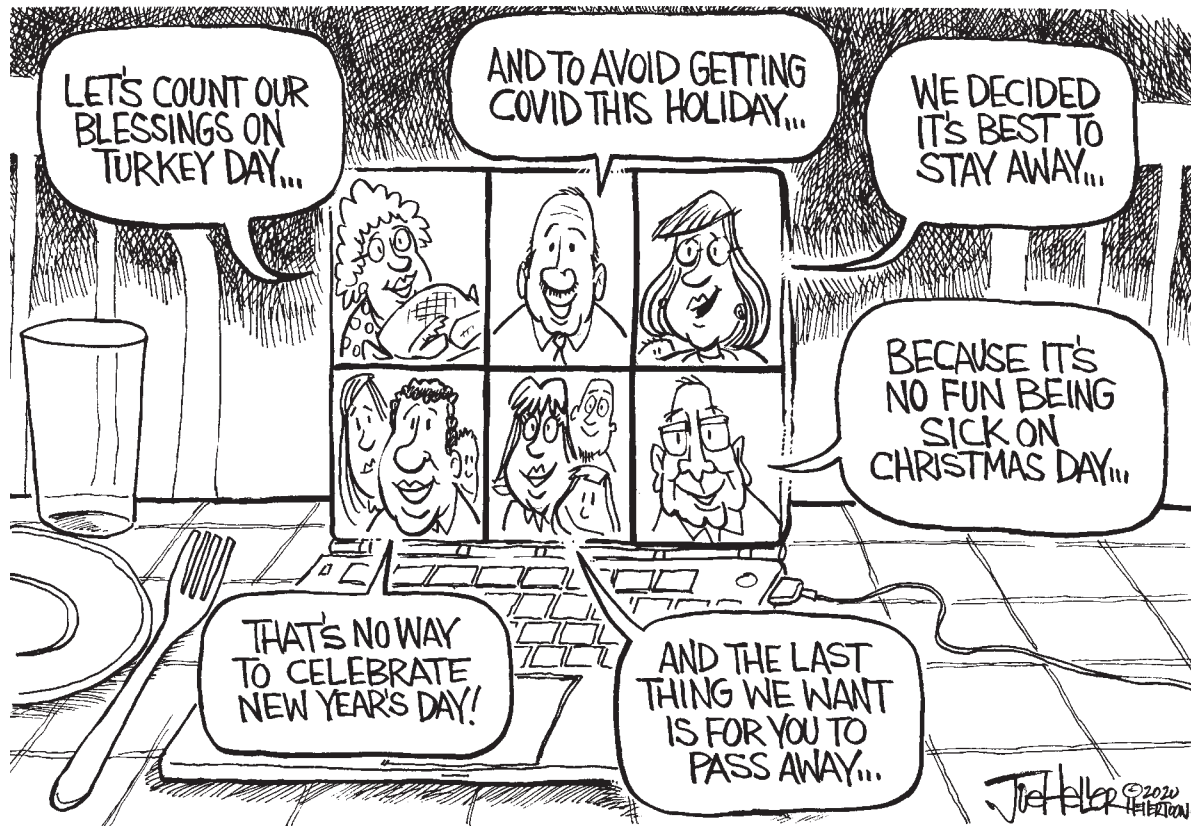


Breuer

The prevalence of Covid has never been higher in our communities. We understand the disease much better, and there are more tools for health care providers to use in treatment. But it would still be best if we all take appropriate precautions with respect to physical distancing and wearing masks.

We can weaken the chain of transmission, but it takes a consistent effort. The holidays we celebrate over the winter with family and friends may look very different. And we still need to remain active for our physical and mental wellbeing. But please, don't be reckless in your decision making. We are taking risks every day in life, with most of them being very small. We can't eliminate every risk. But just be careful, and make the sacrifices we need to make now to help us get through to the other side of this pandemic.

There is no doubt we will be victorious over Covid. But we owe it to every family who has to mourn the loss of a loved one to take all reasonable precautions. I am sad to see how my kids' lives have been altered in so many ways. I am sad to not see my parents in so long. I am very sad to think about not following our traditions with family during the upcoming holidays. But we will survive those sacrifices. And maybe we'll learn to appreciate them even more in the future.



So-called voter mandates are subject to interpretation

While the latest election was pretty decisive (about 51 percent for Biden, 47.3 percent for Trump), the fact remains that nearly half the voters preferred the Republican candidate over the eventual winner. That's not insignificant and can hardly be called a “mandate” by the winner.

But of course, people do call it a mandate. “The people have spoken,” they say, forgetting that nearly half the other people spoke, too.

Grandpa Newby used to say that more people vote against a candidate than vote for a candidate, meaning that people vote for the other guy because they can't stomach voting for the first guy. I've been watching this phenomenon for years: roughly a third of the voters will vote for the “other guy” even when that candidate isn't a serious contender. Put “Al Bundy” on the ballot and a third of the people will vote for him. Even a popular president like Ronald Reagan got only 58.6 percent of the vote, an impressive number, but 37.5 million people still voted for Mondale to Reagan's 54.4 million. Clearly, there are quite a few Americans who feel Biden does not have a mandate from the people.

President George W. Bush announced after his second win that he had earned political capital and that he intended to spend it. A clever phrase, certainly, but it sounds like he planned to completely ignore the wants and needs of the 59 million people who preferred John Kerry's politics.

Bush did spend some of that capital but, thankfully, wasn't successful in privatizing Social Security. Can you imagine the disasters for people who could have lost all their retirement funds in the several stock market crashes we've seen in the past couple decades? Still, even with Republican control of both the House and the

Senate for four years while Bush was president, substantial Republican-based policy wasn't enacted. Bush wasn't particularly successful at “shaking things up” but did a pretty good job of running the country, which is actually a better result. Major changes are disruptive. Even when Bush spent his political capital, things didn't change all that much.

Along came Barack Obama, seemingly unstoppable in his quest for the presidency, winning 52.9 percent to McCain's 45.7 percent. He had been a U.S. Senator for only about four years before he became president,

a little light on experience and in over his head for the first few years but getting a lot done, with the help of Democrats who held both the House and the Senate for the first two years. Major initiatives such as Dodd-Frank (reforming financial institutions after multiple collapses led to the Great Recession), the Recovery Act to stimulate the economy after the recession, and the Affordable Care Act (i.e., Obamacare) were all passed in Obama's first term. But I doubt Obama would have been so successful in his first two years if he hadn't had the financial crisis — big problems often take big solutions. If Obama had inherited a decent economy, I'm not sure even Obamacare would have passed. As it is, Obamacare had a lot of problems, and still needs substantial tweaking before it's truly effective.

But we know Obama's “mandate” really ticked off quite a few moderates, who then voted in a whole crew of new Republicans in the first midterm election, gaining control of the House. The people spoke again, I guess, telling Obama that he did too much, too fast.

So, even with a mandate, it's hard to get a lot of things done.

Believe it or not, that's a good thing. We don't want wild swings every time a new president is

We don't want wild swings every time a new president is elected.

We want stability, and predictability.

elected. We want stability, and predictability. For example, you're not likely to buy a nice house with a 30-year mortgage if you are not confident your job will still be around after the next election. Similarly, if every new president makes huge, substantial changes to the way we operate our country, no one will invest in long-term economic growth. No factories, no shopping developments, certainly no pipelines. Can you imagine Sappi closing down every four years to ride out a wild change in the White House? Our community would be devastated.

Joe Biden has claimed he'll be a president for all Americans, even those that didn't vote for him. I believe him. George W. Bush said the same thing. In his own way, while I wasn't pleased with Bush's more divisive policies, he mostly kept his word. I suspect many Republicans will not like Biden's \$15 minimum wage or his stimulus package. But don't expect wild swings in policy after Jan. 20. Just as it should be.

Pete Radosevich is the publisher of the Pine Knot News and an attorney in Esko who will host the talk show Harry's Gang on CAT-7 again soon. His opinions are his own. Contact him at Pete.Radosevich@PineKnotNews.com.



Pete Radosevich

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Send your thoughts to:

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A CORONAVIRUS DIARY

Oakes ...

Continued from Page 1

Then you are alone with your thoughts for what seems like an eternity. It was 15 minutes. There were lots of prayers being said in that room. I was negative.

I was told the tests were 85-percent accurate. I thanked the Lord for answering my prayers and headed back to my mother-in-law's house to share the great news.

Kim's mom also had a negative test. We wondered aloud how Kim was the only family member to have it. It was assumed at the time that maybe she picked it up from someone at her school as the positive cases were starting to escalate there.

She was still very weak — to the point that she passed out and fell on the kitchen floor. Her only movements were traveling from the bed to the couch. She had body aches and headaches. Advil was her only relief. And now she had lost her sense of smell and taste.

My turn

On Oct. 20, after helping out at the inlaws' home, I went home and started feeling like I was getting the flu. Body aches, chills, weak and tired. I just figured I was getting worn down. The next morning it was worse. My legs didn't want to move and I had a hard time walking down the stairs. I didn't have an appetite and again thought I was getting the flu. I couldn't have Covid because I just tested negative for it. Right?

I talked to Kim and we decided that I needed to go to the hospital and be retested. I was too weak to drive so a friend picked me up and dropped me off at the Essentia Health-St. Mary's emergency room in Duluth. The test was much different as the swab goes a lot farther up in the nasal passage and it takes an hour to confirm the results.

I was positive. I, too, had Covid. As tears welled up in my eyes, Dr. Amanda Carlson put her hand on my shoulder and told me she was sorry. Healthcare providers know too well what a sad moment it is to tell someone that they have a deadly virus for which there is no cure. I will never forget her compassion.

I called for a neighbor to come pick me up and sat in the back seat as far away from him as possible. I felt like a leper.

What were we going to do next?

We soon found out that Kim's 78-year-old dad had just tested positive. Now he was isolated in his room. Was he the one that gave it



Greg and Kim Oakes celebrated with a honeymoon trip to the Brainerd Lakes area in August. Last month the couple struggled with Covid-19. *Contributed photo*

to the two of us? The fear kept spreading.

Then we got the tragic news about Jeff Walther, pastor of St. Matthews Lutheran Church in Esko. He had died after a month-long battle with Covid. He was Kim's pastor and she knew his kids when they were students in Esko. We watched the online funeral service. It was so emotional for us. I wept as I listened to his kids saying goodbye.

I am the same age as Pastor Jeff and I felt a connection as we both had Covid. Could this virus take me also? I pictured my daughter having to give my eulogy and how hard that would be for her.

Rest in peace, Pastor Jeff.

Silver lining

We both continued to be weak, tired and had a cough and runny nose. I also lost my sense of taste

and smell, for about five days. How strange. One good thing that came out of all this that Kim and I could now live together. We didn't even have to wear masks while we were isolated at home. We didn't have to worry about infecting one another. We could actually kiss one another again, hug and hold hands. That was so comforting.

Covid makes you feel so alone and so dirty. No one wants to be around you as it is so contagious and potentially deadly.

We realize how important family and friends are in times of need. We had so many people bring us meals and calls to check up on us. Kim's son stayed with her mom until her husband was able to come home from the rehab facility. The bond with family and friends strengthened.

The odd thing with this killer virus is that you are diagnosed and then just sent home. No medications, no remedies. Just ride it out and go to the hospital emergency room if you have trouble breathing.

I was positive. I, too, had Covid. As tears welled up in my eyes, Dr. Amanda Carlson put her hand on my shoulder and told me she was sorry.

I pictured my daughter having to give my eulogy and how hard that would be for her.

Covid makes you feel so alone and so dirty. No one wants to be around you

The next thing to happen is a call from the Minnesota Department of Health. The hospital has to report all positive test results to the state. I was interviewed for 45 minutes on my whereabouts for the past week. Did I travel? Did I visit any assisted living homes? Did I frequent any bars or restaurants? All of the contact tracing questions.

I learned that you can still test positive up to 30 days after your initial diagnosis but you are not contagious for that entire period. And then you are given a date when you are allowed out of isolation. It is 10 days after your first

symptoms.

So my first day out of quarantine was Halloween. I was so happy to be able to pass out candy and feel like I was a part of society again.

On the mend

Now we are both feeling much better. My wife missed four weeks of teaching. I am just getting back to doing some of the things I used to do. We still haven't fully regained our strength. We still have endurance problems. We need to sit more and rest more. And I worry that we may get it again, especially with the cases on the increase.

The department of health interviewer said once a person has the virus, you may have three months of immunity before being able to be infected again. But no one knows for sure. Doesn't that seem to be the pattern of this virus?

No one knows for sure what is going to happen. We feel so fortunate to be here in the present and to be able to tell our tale of survival. I know we will be first in line when the vaccine is offered.

Please stay safe everyone. This virus is real.

Greg Oakes is a freelance writer for the Pine Knot News.

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CORONAVIRUS ROUNDUP

County Covid cases still rising rapidly

Carlton County broke another Covid-19 record last week, jumping from a cumulative total of 937 positive cases on Nov. 11 to 1,013 on Nov. 12, an increase of 76 new cases in a day.

From Wednesday to Wednesday, Nov. 11 to Nov. 18, the total number of cases in the county jumped by 313, from 937 to 1,250, and the number of deaths attributed to Covid went from seven to nine in that same seven-day period. By comparison, on Oct. 7, the cumulative cases in the county were at 320, with just one death.

More detailed numbers in the Nov. 12 weekly report from the state (released every Thursday) were equally grim.

The state's Nov. 12 report by zip code showed Covid cases climbing across the county, even in more rural parts of the county. From Nov. 5 to Nov. 12, the numbers in Cloquet went from 311 cases to 478, an increase of 167. Esko increased to 154 cases, a jump of 43 cases in a week. Moose Lake was up to 124 cases, an increase of 38 since the week before. Barnum showed 82 cases and Carlton 81, an increase of 25 and 24, respectively, since Nov. 5. In less-populated areas, the numbers are lower: Cromwell went up to 34 cases, up by nine from the week before. Wrenshall sits at 16, Kettle River at 14, Holyoke at nine and Sawyer at eight.

The news for schools was also bad. Nearly all Carlton County schools are either already doing distance learning or switching by the end of the month. The average number of positive cases per 10,000 people in the county (a specific measurement provided by the state for the schools) jumped from 20.26 in early October to 38.55 on Nov. 5. It doubled over the next week, coming in at 78.22, in the Nov. 12 report.

Cloquet schools superintendent Michael Cary said the school numbers from the state are about 10 days old by the time they're released, so the district has been trying to predict the numbers by looking at current cases. They can come pretty close — although the schools aren't privy to as much testing data — and he's expecting the Nov. 19 number to be well over 100.

State order ...

Continued from Page 1

Schools will continue to operate under the current guidance, which allows district to shift between in-person, distance, and hybrid learning depending on the local conditions of the virus.

The new restrictions are set to kick in at the close of business Friday, so the dine-in prohibition would start Saturday. Gym closures would kick in midnight Friday.

The order and its restrictions will end on Dec. 18.

Walz and state public health leaders said they understood the pain the new curbs would cause but that the pandemic's alarming trajectory demanded a response.

The state was running about 2,400 new cases daily on average



Covid-19 testing was available at the FDL school Tuesday for Fond du Lac community members, patients, clients and employees through the Community Health Services. *Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News*

Augustana Mercy Care Center, Inter-Faith Care Center, New Perspective Cloquet and Sunnyside Health Care Center are on the list of Carlton County senior living facilities that had or have Covid-19 exposure. Exposure is defined as a person diagnosed with Covid who either visited, worked, or lived at a congregate care facility while they were contagious. It doesn't necessarily mean that any residents were infected with the coronavirus.

Testing ramps up

There are two types of diagnostic tests in use across Minnesota: PCR tests and antigen tests.

PCR — which stands for polymerase chain reaction — tests are the nose-swab tests or the saliva tests and they are very accurate. They require specialized lab equipment to process the samples, so it takes some time — often days — to get results.

Antigen tests, or "rapid tests," use either a nasal or throat swab to collect samples. They can deliver results pretty quickly, some as quickly as 15 minutes. The tradeoff is that antigen tests aren't quite as accurate as PCR tests, especially in people who aren't

at the start of November. The most recent trend line has the state averaging nearly 7,000 new cases daily, a massive leap in the last two weeks.

Left unchecked one model suggests Minnesota could hit 20,000 new cases per day by the start of the new year, Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm told reporters.

"Two weeks ago, I thought a 5,000-case day was horrific," she said. "Now, that looks like a good day."

Covid all over

The tough new curbs come as Minnesota struggles to get control of a rapidly worsening outbreak not limited to just one region or demographic group, like earlier in the pandemic.

Caseloads, hospitalizations and deaths are climbing largely unabated. The Health Department on Wednesday said 67 more Min-

nesota had died, a single-day record that pushed the state's pandemic death toll above 3,000.

Another; there were 5,102 newly confirmed or probable cases. Officials believe many of the current outbreaks are being fueled now by the kinds of informal get-togethers with friends and family that multiply during the November and December holidays.

State health investigators have identified bars, restaurants, fitness centers, gyms, youth sports and social gatherings as sources of COVID-19 transmission in the current outbreak.

Still, news of the new restrictions fell hard on the state's restaurant, bar and hospitality business, which was still reeling from restrictions earlier in the pandemic.

Hours before the announce-

ment, though, leaders of the state's hospitality industry were already pushing back, warning many bars and eateries won't survive the monthlong restrictions.

"Today's action will push many small restaurants, food service and other hospitality businesses over the cliff," Liz Rammer, CEO of the trade group Hospitality Minnesota, said in a statement.

She called on Minnesota to provide immediate financial aid "or these businesses will not be here in four weeks."

State officials said later that they were preparing to meet an expected surge in unemployment needs but noted that much of the federal aid that eased the pain earlier in the pandemic was either not available now or expiring at the end of the year. Walz called on Congress to act quickly to provide more aid.

order and results can arrive in two or three days; lines can be long. While it is open to walk-ins, people are encouraged to register in advance and make an appointment at mncovidtestingapp.com/schedule.php.

• The University of Wisconsin-Superior is hosting a rapid results testing site that can provide results in as little as 15 minutes. The temporary testing site is open from 2-6 p.m. Monday through Friday in the Mertz Mortorelli Gym in the Marcovich Wellness Center. Abbott BinaxNOW antigen tests that provide a result in about 15 minutes will be used, along with PCR confirmation tests for those who need them. The testing site is open to Minnesota and Wisconsin residents 5 years of age or older, whether or not they are experiencing symptoms. Registration is required and can be done at doineedacovid19test.com. A limited number of spots are available daily on a first come, first served basis.

• Additionally, all Minnesotans can now request a free, at-home saliva testing for Covid-19. Order online at <https://learn.vaulthealth.com/state-of-minnesota>

City offices closed again

Pine Knot News

As a result of the spike in Covid-19 cases in this area, public access to Cloquet City Hall and other city facilities was suspended starting Wednesday, Nov. 18. The city will still offer all core services, including police, public works, building and zoning permits, inspections and applications and more.

City administrator Tim Peterson said the closure will inconvenience some residents, but city officials believe the decision is in the best interest of the community as a whole. The city has also struggled with staff missing work due to either being sick or having to quarantine, so closing City Hall will also help with that.

Staff will still be working, either from home or in their offices. Front office staff will continue to answer phones, along with the finance and other city departments. City council meetings will continue to be conducted virtually and livestreamed on the city website at www.cloquetmn.gov. They also appear on the CAT-7 cable access channel.

Here's how to contact various city departments:

- City Hall, general inquiries: 218-879-3347 or info@cloquetmn.gov

- Cloquet police: Call 911 for emergencies, or 218-384-4185 for non-emergencies. For permits, ATV licenses and other services call 218-879-1247.

- Public works, including sewer and water: Call 218-879-6758 during normal business hours and 218-624-0391 for emergencies after hours. During the pandemic, the city has suspended disconnections for residential customers.

- Library: To request materials, use the online catalog at cloquetlibrary.org, call 218-879-1531 during curbside pickup hours, or email illmcq@alslib.info.

- Finance: Payments can be deposited into the drop box on the US Bank frontage road or mailed to City Hall at 101 14th St., Cloquet MN 55720. Utility payments can be made via phone at 877-885-7968 or online at cloquetmn.gov. Call 218-879-3844 with billing questions.

- Building and Zoning: Call 218-879-3347 to schedule inspections, questions or to make payment arrangements. Contact building official Matt Munter directly at 218-391-3745.

- Economic Development: email [hhansen@cloquetmn.gov](mailto:hansen@cloquetmn.gov) or leave a message at 218-879-2507, ext. 4 or visit