

INSIDE

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



Annual meal goes pick-up Page 4



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Christmas is about a gift Page 14

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATE



Care facilities face Covid storm

As community spread spikes, centers hit hard

Jana Peterson
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The staff at Sunnyside Health Care Center don't know exactly how the coronavirus got into the long-term care facility: they just know that once it arrived, it spread quickly, sometimes with devastating effects.

Jennifer Capra, director of nursing at Sunnyside,

said it started at the end of October, when community spread of Covid-19 was blowing up across the Northland.

"Once we got one case in here, it went like boom, boom, boom. You couldn't stop it," Capra said. "As soon as October 30th hit, we had positive cases every week. They designated one hall [to be quarantined], then they went to another hall."

And the problem with elderly populations getting Covid is that they are far more likely to get very sick

or die from Covid. So while some people had few to no symptoms there, others didn't make it. Some residents showed gastrointestinal symptoms or low blood sugar, while others had respiratory distress. Many were just so very tired.

"Fatigue is huge," Capra said. "They just lose that ability to eat and drink because they're so tired, and then sometimes they just can't come back."

As of Monday, Dec. 7, there had been a total of 54 Covid cases at Sunnyside,

with exactly half of those staff members and the other half residents. Six residents died from Covid.

Sunnyside isn't the only senior care facility in Carlton County to get hit hard by the virus this fall.

According to the most recent state report on long-term care facilities and Covid-19, as of Dec. 7, Carlton's Inter-Faith Care Center has had a cumulative total of 69 Covid cases, with 22 staff members and 47 residents testing positive. Three Inter-Faith residents

Inside

• State reveals how vaccine will roll out. First death reported at Moose Lake prison.

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• County case numbers hold promise that surge is slowing. But it could be short-lived. **Page 10**

died in the past two weeks from Covid.

Those are the two largest nursing homes in Carlton County.

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PARADE BREAKS OUT FOR 97-YEAR-OLD VETERAN



Longtime Wrenshall resident and World War II veteran Burt Wang got a surprise "quarantine" birthday party Tuesday outside his new home in Cloquet, when perfect strangers along with friends held a drive-by birthday party to celebrate. Covid-19 brought both sadness and joy into Wang's life this year. **Read the story on Page 10.**

Above: Wang is so happy he's crying when old Wrenshall neighbors Carry (pictured) and John Devich show up to wish him a happy birthday Tuesday afternoon. They brought gifts and their dogs to visit the man they said taught them how to garden and could fix anything.

Right: Burt Wang looks adoringly at his best buddy, 7-year-old Brooklyn. The two of them play all kinds of games, from Barbies to Legos to special blocks with gears that the retired mechanic especially enjoys.



CORONAVIRUS UPDATE



Vaccination details emerge

MPR News

Minnesota is expected to receive 183,400 doses of Covid-19 vaccines this month, and they'll be targeted toward health care workers and the state's most vulnerable residents, Gov. Tim Walz said this week.

The vaccines will come from two makers, Pfizer and Moderna, which are seeking emergency use from the federal Food and Drug Administration. The agency was expected to decide on Pfizer's vaccine on Thursday and Moderna's on Dec. 17.

That timeline could position Minnesota to start vaccinating people as early as next week. "It is happening. It is ready," Walz said. "Here in Minnesota, we're prepared for it."

He cautioned that Minnesotans must still do all they can to stop the spread of the disease, including wearing masks in public gathering spaces, socially distancing and staying home if you don't feel well.

The ramp-up of vaccine availability will be slow. Minnesota expects to receive fewer than 200,000 doses of vaccine during the first three weeks of rollout.

"We would expect, if everything goes according to plan, the week of Dec. 21, that people could start vaccinating. Perhaps an early Christmas present," said Kris Ehresmann, the Minnesota Department of Health's infectious disease and control director.

Federal officials are still determining the next tier of people to be eligible to receive a vaccine, but state health officials anticipate that essential workers — including teachers, first responders and others — will be next in line for the vaccine after health care workers and long-term care residents.

People with underlying health conditions who are more likely to become severely ill if they contract Covid-19 are likely to be the next priority for receiving the vaccine, along with people 65 and older.

Only after those groups have been offered the vaccine will the general public be able to be vaccinated. Ehresmann said that's still several months away, likely next summer.

Walz and public health officials urged people to be patient, to remain vigilant, and to continue to practice protective measures like mask wearing and social distancing.

"We're committed to

Two doses are needed

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccinations require two doses within three to four weeks of each other. You must get both doses from the same developer. Public health officials are considering strategies to make sure people who get their first shot come back for their second on time.

Health officials estimate that it takes about six weeks from the time of your first dose before you achieve full immunity.

Other vaccines that are currently undergoing trials could do away with the two-dose requirement, including a vaccine candidate being developed by Johnson & Johnson. But it's unclear if or when a one-dose vaccine will be approved.

The speed with which these vaccines have been developed — 11 months, compared to the several years it has taken vaccines in the past to be approved — has created a ripe environment for concerns over safety.

The process has been accelerated in part because the companies making the vaccines have recruited clinical trial participants more quickly, and have also shown federal regulators their vaccine testing data in real-time instead of after the testing process is complete.

— Minnesota Public Radio News

getting the vaccine to every Minnesotan that wants one and should be vaccinated," said Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm.

Front lines

Health care workers working at hospitals and long-term care facilities, and residents of long-term care facilities, including nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities, will be the first to get the vaccine.

That follows a recommendation made last week by a federal advisory group to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which voted during an emergency meeting to prioritize those two high-priority groups once a vaccine is approved.

Because supplies of the vaccines will be ramped up slowly, not all people in the first tier will be able to get vaccinated immediately. So state officials have divided that group into different levels of priority to receive the vaccine.

The highest priority is people who have direct contact with individuals who have Covid-19, including staff working in hospital Covid-19 units and at skilled nursing facilities, workers testing people for Covid-19 and people administering the vaccine.

The second priority is other health care personnel in hospitals, urgent care centers, and staff and residents in assisted living facilities.

What's out there

Nationwide, as many as 40 million doses could be available by the end of December, with 5 million to 10 million available each week after that.

In the first week, Minnesota expects to receive 46,800 doses of the Pfizer vaccine. In the second and third weeks, the state expects to receive 94,800 and 41,800 doses of the Moderna vaccine.

Minnesota's allocation was determined on a per capita basis, Ehresmann said. She said it's "likely" the state gets more doses in the first few weeks of rollout, but she said officials wanted to be conservative in their estimate because the numbers have been changing so rapidly.

The state expected to hear today about additional doses of vaccine it may receive from Pfizer.

The initial 183,400 doses will be administered to that many people. The vaccine developers are holding back the second dose until they are needed.

Both vaccines need to be kept cold, especially the Pfizer vaccine, which needs to be stored at a temperature of at least minus 70 degrees Celsius. That could pose a logistical issue for rural areas of the state, where cold storage space to protect the vaccine may be scarce. Pfizer says it has developed its own packaging designed to safely store the vaccine for a few weeks using dry ice.

Wheeling it out

State officials laid out a "hub and spoke" plan, in which the vaccines would be delivered directly to 25 hubs around the state, mostly large regional health centers that already have ultra-cold storage facilities in place.

From there, the vaccines will be distributed to 118

different "spokes" throughout the state, consisting mainly of smaller health care facilities.

Health care workers will be vaccinated at their workplace; likewise, long-term care residents will also receive the vaccination where they live.

Once the vaccines are distributed widely, they will be administered in a variety of settings, from pharmacies and doctors' offices to health clinics and special vaccination sites.

Studies have shown that both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are about 95 percent effective after both doses are administered.

Ehresmann said it will take about six weeks from an initial vaccination for adults to develop resistance to Covid-19.

There is no mandate to take the vaccine. Walz said he's asking Minnesotans to understand that the vaccine "not only protects you and your health, but protects your neighbor," much like masking and social distancing.

PANDEMIC NOTES

Moose Lake prison reports first death

A client at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake died Dec. 2 of Covid-19. It was the first Covid-related death among clients or staff at MSOP facilities.

Nearly 740 civilly committed clients receive treatment at MSOP facilities in Moose Lake and St. Peter. There are currently 18 active cases of Covid-19 in MSOP facilities.

All facilities have implemented stringent infection-prevention and control measures.

Staff are screened daily for fever and other Covid symptoms before they begin their shifts and are required to wear surgical masks while on duty.

Food shelves adapt, fill gaps

Due to higher numbers of Covid-19 cases and the tight quarters at the National Guard Armory in Cloquet, Ruby's Pantry will not distribute this month in Cloquet. Ruby's Pantry

serves about 200 people on the fourth Wednesday of each month in Cloquet. It hopes to have a better distribution location by January.

The Second Harvest Mobile Food Pantry comes to the Our Savior's Lutheran Church parking lot in Cloquet to distribute food 10:30-11:30 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month. Drive up, and volunteers will load food into vehicles.

The Salvation Army food shelf is open every Tuesday 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-2:30 p.m. It's also a drive-thru service. Call 651-746-3407 to find out more about the different Salvation Army programs to help people in need.

B&B Market and the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency have been distributing boxes containing produce, dairy, meat and milk starting between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. every Thursday afternoon until supplies run out. Check the B&B Facebook page for details each week.

More local Covid-19 news can be found on **Page 10**.



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PHARMACY

Thrifty White Pharmacy

selected to administer

future COVID-19 vaccines.

With the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the COVID-19 vaccines on the horizon, Thrifty White Pharmacy announces that it will be part of the public vaccination solution.

As part of the first initial wave of available vaccine, and in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Thrifty White pharmacists will be able to provide safe, convenient access to COVID-19 vaccines to help our most vulnerable elderly patients located in the long term care facilities we serve in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

"Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been Thrifty White's first priority to be there for our communities to provide the medications and supplies, along with the care and counseling our patients need," said Bob Narveson, president/CEO of Thrifty White Pharmacy.

Narveson added, "Similarly, when vaccines are authorized and made available to the general public, Thrifty White pharmacists will be able to administer them following federal vaccine prioritization guidelines. Given our pharmacies already have systems to track our customers and medication adherence, we have built-in capabilities to track vaccine uptake just like we do a health insurance claim. This is key given Pfizer's and Moderna's vaccines require two dosages weeks apart and customers may need to be reminded to come back for their second vaccination.

We are proud of and thankful for the efforts of our pharmacists and pharmacy support personnel. They are 100% committed to supporting our communities on the front lines and are helping to provide over 50,000 other immunizations yearly such as Influenza, Zoster Shingles, Pneumococcal, Hepatitis B, Human Papillomavirus, Meningococcal, MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), TDAP (Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis), and Hepatitis A. We know they stand ready to do the same thing when the COVID-19 vaccines are made available to the general public. Initial supplies may be limited, so we are working closely with the CDC and local health departments to ensure our most vulnerable populations are prioritized. Follow us on Facebook for more information about vaccine availability and roll-out. With us working together, we can help bring this pandemic under control."



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CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

County wave of Covid shows signs of cresting

Thanksgiving cases may spike the numbers again

Jana Peterson
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Covid-19 numbers appear to show that Carlton County is on the downside of the latest and strongest surge of Covid-19 infections since the pandemic began, according to daily numbers provided by the Minnesota Department of Health. However, Carlton County Public Health officials pointed out there is usually a 14-day lag in data, so the effect of Thanksgiving won't show up for another week or two.

For the second week in a row, the state reported fewer new positive cases in Carlton County than the previous week, with 224 new cases from Dec. 2-9, versus 327 new cases from Nov. 25-Dec. 2 and 407 new cases from Nov. 18-25. The total cumulative Covid cases in the county was 2,228 as of Wednesday, Dec. 9. Deaths attributed to Covid-19 in the county increased by four from Dec. 2-9, to a total of 21 deaths since the pandemic reached the county in March.

Numbers of new Covid cases for individual Carlton County communities are down slightly this week for most places, although still high.

The state's Dec. 3 report by zip code showed Carlton with a record increase of 55 cases, going from 140 cases reported on Nov. 27 to 195 in the Dec. 3 report. Over that same time period, the numbers in the Cloquet zip code went from 825 to 946, an increase of 121, down from its own record-setting jump of 186 cases the previous week. Esko increased to 283 cases, a jump of 37 cases in a week. Moose Lake was up to 245 cases, a jump of 40 since the week before. Barnum showed 139 cases, an increase of 23. In less-populated areas, the numbers are lower: Cromwell went up to 56 cases, up by eight from the week before. Wrenshall and Kettle River each report 28 cumulative cases (up by seven), with Holyoke at 25 (plus two) and Sawyer holding steady at eight cumulative cases for the fourth week in a row.

Although good news, the decline in most numbers is a snapshot in the war against Covid-19, which could shift again as some of those who gathered for the Thanksgiving holiday and caught the virus will be getting sicker in the days to come.

"Stay strong" is the message from Dave Lee, director of Carlton County Public Health and Human Services. "This pandemic has lasted longer than any of us had hoped and many of us are worn out both physically and emotionally," Lee said. "However, as we look at the rise in the positivity rate and hospitalizations in our communities, we encourage community members to continue the ultra-marathon of protecting themselves and others — please wear a mask, social distance and wash your hands."

Lee stressed that people should continue to follow the governor's executive order, and not gather with people from other households (including family from other households). The reasoning behind this is based on concrete data gathered through contact tracing, that gatherings of any size (from a get-together with a few friends to a large wedding) have been a way Covid-19 has been spreading at the highest rates. Many community members look forward to family gatherings and

celebrations over the next month.

Lee said people need to be mindful that "our bubble" is bigger than we think when we start to interact with people outside our immediate family.

"The ripple effect of potential exposures and additional spread from these gatherings with a subsequent increase in cases hits us hard in smaller communities that have limited backup for health care, EMS, fire, teaching, and other essential services staff," he said.

For those who want to support health care professionals during this time — the best way is to follow the guidance so our health care workers are healthy if and when you or your family need them.

The percentage of positive cases also dropped last week. Carlton County has a cumulative rate of 5.8 percent: that's the average rate of positive cases per 10,000 people since testing began this spring. However, a snapshot of recent testing and percent of positive cases from Nov. 15-21 put the county at an 8.2 percent positive rate, down from 13.10 percent positivity rate the week before. In May, the World Health Organization recommended that the percent positive should remain below 5 percent for at least two weeks before governments consider reopening.

"I know Carlton County residents truly care for their neighbors because of the way community members have stepped in and cared for each other during past disasters and stressors," Lee said. "We want to express our gratitude to everyone for their continued diligence in fighting this virus."

Mental health help

Because of many closures including gyms, sports, etc., and move to virtual gatherings for faith communities, many residents, of all ages, in the community have been experiencing loneliness and isolation at higher rates, and many experiencing feelings of depression or anxiety for the first time.

"This is an extremely difficult time where people have to rely on coping skills and supports they may not have had to use before, or for quite some time. Remember to breathe, take time to focus on yourself, sleep, and develop a system to care for your well-being," said Brenda Carlson, supervisor with the Children's Mental Health Unit with Carlton County PHHS. "There are multiple confidential resources in our community available — even if you only need them once in your life. They are here to listen and help any way they can."

Some of the available resources include:

- Crisis Text Line: Text "MN" to 741741 (24/7)

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 (24/7)

- SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline: Go to <https://www.disasterdistress.samhsa.gov> (24/7)

- Minnesota Mobile Mental Health Crisis Line: Call **CRISIS (**274747) from a cell phone 24/7. Call 844-772-4724 from a landline in Carlton County.

- Wellness in the Woods: Peer-to-peer telephone support (warmline): 1-844-739-6369, 5 p.m.-9 a.m. daily

- Mental Health Minnesota: Volunteer staffed telephone support: 1-651-288-0400/1-877-404-3190 or text "Support" to 85511, 12-10 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

- NAMI MN Virtual Support Groups, namimn.org/support/nami-minnesota-support-groups.

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They came by with flags and signs to honor World War II veteran Burt Wang on his 97th birthday Tuesday.

A parade for Burt

Jana Peterson

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World War II veteran Burt Wang found an unexpected silver lining in 2020, in part because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He found a new home and family with Theresa Bridge and her daughters, and a new lease on life with all the busyness of life in their Cloquet home this summer. And he got his first drive-by birthday party on Tuesday, when he turned 97 years old.

Wang was alternately delighted and moved to tears to see old neighbors turn up on his birthday, then flabbergasted when a parade of cars cruised past the home on 22nd Street, waving signs and flags, honking horns, and dropping off balloons and even some gifts for the veteran.

He cried when the Disabled American Veterans van came by and two vets hollered "Happy birthday, Burt" out the window. He petted a couple of canine friends, Bonehead and Shadow, who visited from Wrenshall. He buried his head in the neck of a former neighbor, overcome with emotion at seeing her. He laughed as a line of about a dozen cars rolled by twice, and gazed adoringly at his new family members, especially his best buddy, 7-year-old Brooklyn.

Wang is her best friend too, someone she can play Barbies or Legos with, someone who will hang up her drawings and share stories.

"I make him laugh. And I like to make him pictures," she said, adding that she prefers having him live in their house because



Theresa Bridge and Burt Wang delight in a car parade in his honor Tuesday in Cloquet. Bridge and her three daughters invited Wang come and live with them when they could no longer visit in person at the assisted living facility when the pandemic hit. *Jana Peterson / Pine Knot News*

she gets more time with him.

Although they aren't related by blood, Wang has strong ties to Theresa Bridge and her three daughters, so strong that Bridge invited him to come and live with them when they could no longer visit in person at the assisted living facility when the pandemic hit.

"After March 18, he was basically locked in his room, and we could only visit by looking through the window," said Theresa, who was a private-duty nurse for Wang for three years before he had to go into a nursing home

and then an assisted living facility. Before that, she and her two youngest daughters, Brooklyn, and Amaya, 17, would often pick him up and take him to the River Inn for a burger and beer and to visit her oldest daughter, Amber, who worked there.

Then Covid hit and long-term care facilities shut down all visits unless it was someone's end of life. Theresa said Wang and her youngest daughter would basically just cry from opposite sides of the glass. "He really declined, and told me he had lived through the war, but he didn't want to live like

this. So I asked him if he'd like to come live in our home.

"He told me, 'I thought you'd never ask,'" Theresa said with a big laugh.

But first, Wang had to get stronger, and went through therapy so he would be strong enough to navigate the stairs in their split-level Cloquet home. He moved into their basement apartment July 1 and fit right in: he gardened with Theresa, played all kinds of games with Brooklyn, and the whole family took a camper almost every weekend to state parks in Minnesota and

Wisconsin until the weather got colder. "He usually goes to bed at 7, but he'd stay up late just to find out who won the cornhole tournaments," Theresa said. "He just had to know."

Since the cold weather arrived, things have been a little tougher for Wang. He worried when the kids went off to school, or when Amaya had to quarantine because of Covid. Theresa said she knows he's been missing his friends, who are avoiding in-person visits so they don't infect the vulnerable veteran (who says he's not worried about Covid, he's lived through worse). So she posted on the Cloquet Neighbors Facebook page, asking if anyone had ever held a drive-by birthday party and it "blew up" with responses from people eager to make a birthday a little brighter.

She didn't tell Burt what was up, just that a couple friends might drop by so they had to go outside. Almost a dozen cars drove by with signs and flags and smiling faces, and one walker waved and wished him a happy birthday too. Former neighbors came — Carry and John Devich, Jack Dahl — and spent time talking outside on a day that wasn't too cold.

"I think he thought I was crazy when I said we had to go outside for his birthday," Theresa said. "I'm so glad we had such a good turnout."

"He's so happy here," said longtime friend Suzie Hall, who said she's known Wang for more than 60 years. "This is the best thing that's happened in a long time."

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Facilities ...

Continued from front page

Other Carlton County senior care facilities included in the Dec. 7 report include:

- Augustana Mercy Care Center in Moose Lake, with eight total cases (seven staff, one resident, zero deaths);

- Augustana's Kenwood and Oakview facilities, each reporting one staff member and one resident positive, and no deaths;

- Villa Court in Cromwell, one staff member, one resident positive;

- New Perspective in Cloquet, nine cases, with two staff members and seven residents testing positive and one death so far;

- Diamond Willow in Cloquet, two staff and two residents test positive, zero deaths;

- Evergreen Knoll Assisted Living, which reported seven staff and two residents testing positive so far, with zero deaths;

- Suncrest Senior Living, with one staff member testing positive, with zero deaths.

The vaccines are a distant light at the end of the tunnel, Sunnyside medical director Ken Ripp said. Right now, Carlton County and the rest of the Northland need to get the

current surge of Covid that's spreading — in many cases — through unknown community contact under control.

"Covid is not a battle, it's a war," Ripp said. "We need everyone in the community to do the right thing as far as wearing masks, washing hands, avoiding crowds, and not gathering outside of your household for now."

The problems here extend statewide and across the country, as cases surge due to colder weather and people moving indoors, exacerbated by those who refuse to wear masks, or wear them incorrectly, sometimes spreading the disease without even knowing they're sick.

Minnesota Department of Health commissioner Jan Malcolm and Gov. Tim Walz held a press conference Friday to address the effect of the Covid-19 surge on all congregate care facilities, which include nursing and assisted living homes, group homes, mental health and substance abuse facilities and more.

Malcolm referred to the state's five-point plan — which includes expanded testing and support, adequate personal protective equipment supplies, adequate staffing and public/private partnerships — as a "floodwall" built to keep the disease at bay.

It worked pretty well

over the summer and early fall, she said, and even after the state started seeing a rapid acceleration of cases.

"Unfortunately, even the strongest floodwalls aren't sufficient if the waters are high enough," Malcomb said. "We knew all the efforts to ensure safe visits and keep long-term care facilities safe could all be undermined by continued out-of-control community transmission."

The statistics have proved her right. In the two-month period from September to the end of October, new cases in the overall population of Minnesota increased 73 percent while cases in long-term care facilities increased only 15 percent. As the surge continued from the beginning of October through November, cases in the general population and long-term care facilities both grew by more than 400 percent, she said.

The floodwall has been breached, Malcomb said.

At Sunnyside, for now at least, things are getting better, said Capras. Although residents and staff are still being tested twice a week, cases are down. They're trying to figure out what they can do differently, and looking forward to the vaccines being available to residents and health care workers.

She worries that other

facilities in Carlton County are now reaching the point where they were three weeks ago.

"They're in the starting phase and we're kind of hitting the end peak here, but again, it goes in waves," she said. "We're seeing people recover, staff coming back and we're in a good spot. But that could change at any minute."

Stronger together

It's not just the residents who are affected by the virus. Staff members get Covid too, often while they're out in the community. They see residents they know and love, people they've cared for over years get sick, and even die.

Capras said they are trying to stay on top of staff physical and mental health. They offer an employee assistance program that provides therapy when needed. And constant communication helps, she said.

"A lot of them had Covid themselves and they're dealing with the repercussions of that. Many have anxiety after Covid. Plus there's just the unknown — you don't know what you don't know. We are just trying to be available for them, and give them the resources they need."

At the same time, Capra said the pandemic also showed how phenomenal the staff is at Sunnyside.

"They treat these people like they are their own family members: they're dedicated, they're loyal," she said. "The one positive I can take out of this whole [ordeal] is that it has brought my team closer together."

Cloquet's Jody Acers, whose mother got a mild case of Covid but recovered, had high praise for the staff at Sunnyside.

"They really do care, and they are doing everything they can to keep it out but it's blowing up everywhere," she said. "The whole staff have been working so hard, and they've been nothing but transparent and supportive with families. I can't say enough about the place."

During Friday's press conference, Gov. Walz said community members can and should do their part to protect those staff members, pointing out that some people suggest the answer is putting up a barricade around residents and staff of long-term care facilities so the rest of the population can get on with life as usual.

"Folks have to care for [our elders] ... whether it's preparing food, changing linens, or being there to help with programming, all of those things," Walz said. "Those people don't live there, they live in your communities. They stop

on their way home to pick up their children from daycare. It's those places, if you're not wearing a mask or your child gets it and passes it on and it goes to that person and they take it into a care facility. The crisis starts to become what if everyone who works at a care facility isn't there to work?"

The state is also trying to help with facilities that run low on staff. Some 270 Minnesota National Guard members have been trained as temporary nursing staff and assigned to 11 different teams that are rolling out to facilities across the state when they're needed. Another 100 trainees are coming up the pipeline, Maj. Gen. Shawn Manke said. So far they've supported 17 different long-term care facilities across the state.

"I know I'm safe to say no one imagined performing care in long-term care facilities when they volunteered for the National Guard," Manke said during Friday's press conference.

While they might not have imagined it, they tackle it with the same commitment they show to other missions, he said, sharing a quote from a soldier who told him: "Training for my wartime missions was one thing, but helping people in our communities is why I serve in the National Guard."



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Keeping communities, our employees and contractors safe is our top priority.

You will see increases in truck traffic, heavy equipment and more people around town. For your safety and the safety of others, please use caution when driving near construction activities and do not enter our work areas.

We are following robust COVID-19 Safe Work Protocols and practicing strict construction safety procedures to ensure everyone arrives home safe. Our employees and contractors are advised to follow local COVID-19 guidelines while in your community.

We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

For more information, visit enbridge.com/line3US.