

# Marion officials continue to prepare for future

By Sean Douglas

With Indiana beginning their return to normalcy, Grant County officials, in their seventh weekly press conference at Sunnycrest Baptist Church, again updated the Marion community on what can be expected in the coming weeks and months.

At the Grant County EMA, Director Bob Jackson stated that the organization's priorities have begun to change with Go. Eric Holcomb's announcement of his five-stage plan to reopen Indiana back on May 1.

"We are looking at shifting gears a little bit, more from a response to recovery as we move forward now that the governor has given us a road map to try to reopen the county and the state," Jackson said. "We are shifting gears a little bit. However, we are always at the ready for response, and we will continue to do that when needed."

As has been the case all over the country, Grant County continues to be short on PPE, or personal protective equipment. But as the state continues to move towards a return to normal life, the EMA will work to build their stockpile



Brandy McClanahan speaks at a recent press conference concerning COVID19. Photo provided.

in case there is a resurgence of COVID-19 in the coming months.

Grant County Commissioner Mark Bardsley continued to praise the community for their adherence to social distancing protocols, stating that their diligence has helped to both curb the spread of the novel

coronavirus and allow for speedier recoveries for those who have been infected.

"The less interaction, the less exposure. The less exposure, the less contamination. The less contamination, the less infections," Bardsley said. "We have positively been

working through this over the last few weeks. I do believe we are moving in the right direction, and we can celebrate the fact that some who have tested positive in the past weeks now have gone through their isolation and their treatment...and now are testing negative."

Bardsley then went on to discuss Stages 2 and 3 In Stage 2 of Holcomb's plan. Beginning on May 4, Stage 2 began in most Indiana counties minus a few. Social gatherings are permissible in groups of 25 or less. Travel restrictions have been lifted, but people are still being asked to adhere to social distancing. Personal services, like hair and nail salons, will start opening up on May 11, while restaurants and bars will move to 50 percent capacity.

Holcomb continues to ask older and more at-risk individuals to stay home and take care of themselves despite the lifting of restrictions across the state. In Stage 3, which begins on May 24, social gatherings of up to 100 people with no travel restrictions, retail stores up to 75 percent capacity, and gyms and recreational buildings will begin opening back up to public.

The plan is subject to

change, depending on how well the virus has been contained.

Marion Mayor Jess Alumbaugh, making his first appearance in two weeks, reminded the community that public transportation is still running throughout the city, but individuals must give 24-hour notice to be able to use the service. Additionally, the buses are to be used for essential purposes, like trips to the grocery store or medical appointments. They are not to be used to go visit friends and family.

Passenger numbers on the buses will continue to be limited due to social distancing guidelines, and plexiglass is being installed in every bus to protect the city's drivers.

Furthermore, with summer just around the corner, Alumbaugh hopes that the Splash House, one of the main attractions for the city's youth during the summer months, will be able to open, albeit with a limited capacity.

"The children have gone through a really difficult time. It's been tough on all of us," Alumbaugh said. "Our seniors have lost their graduation and their prom. If we get the Splash House open, safely, it will be done

with a much smaller gathering. We will shoot for around 500-600 people. That's something I'm discussing with Dr. [David] Moore and try to figure out."

Marion General Hospital representative Sarah Evans reminded the community that several elective surgeries resumed on May 4, while testing is still being conducted on those who have COVID-19 symptoms. Evans also encouraged those who think they may need surgery to speak with their primary health care provider first to weigh the pros and cons.

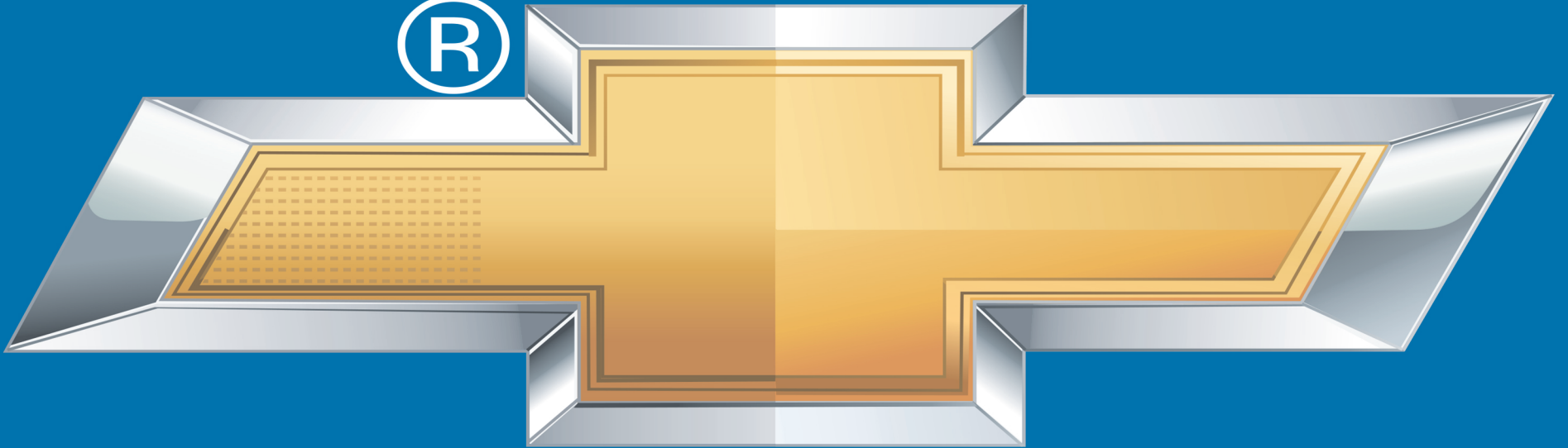
For those patients scheduled for outpatient appointments for outpatient, MGH asks for everyone to stay in their cars until close to the time of their appointment to keep waiting room numbers down. MGH will call those patients with instructions on how to prepare and what steps to take.

Marion Community Schools Superintendent Dr. Brad Lindsay encouraged the Marion community to stay connected, and to check the school website's daily for any updated news.

In other school related news, Marion's Virtual

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