

COVID-19 fight trending in right direction

By Sean Douglas

With Grant County officially in orange status, and with the vaccine continuing to be administered at an effective rate, local medical leaders updated the community on the positives, and remaining concerns, in the continued fight against the COVID-19 virus.

After seeing a large increase in cases around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, cases in Grant County are continuing to trend downward, according to Grant County Public Health Officer Dr. David Moore. If that trend continues, Grant County will enter yellow status, which will lead to the lifting of more restrictions. Additionally, the Health Department is administering 600 vaccines weekly.

To keep moving in a positive direction, however, Moore urged the Marion and Grant County community to continue to do their part by wearing their masks and practicing safe social distancing protocols. People who are asymptomatic remain the biggest cause of the spread of COVID-19, and until more are vaccinated, Moore stated that continuing to adhere to those guidelines is crucial.

“Until we get up to a point where this isn’t an issue, then mitigation strategies are going to be important for us,” Moore said. “We are heading in the right direction, but we can’t let our guard down. We do not have this thing tamed yet. We have to continue to do those safety steps to keep our community healthy until we get to that point where we do have enough vaccinations to have herd immunity.”

Marion General Hospital (MGH) continues to see a decrease in patients admitted due to COVID-19, according to MGH Administrative Director Patrick Kolb, and that is a trend that most hospitals are seeing across the state.

“There has been a rapid decrease in the number of hospitalizations and how many patients are being treated currently in hospitals over the last three weeks,” Kolb said. “They are continuing, by day, to trend downward.”

Additionally, Kolb stated that while vaccines are currently being administered only to those 65 or older, it should be opening to those

60 and older in the coming weeks.

While there are a plethora of positives, significant concerns regarding COVID-19, still remain particularly with the multiple variants, which have sprung up over the last few weeks.

The different variants, which include strains from England, South Africa, and the state of California, can even affect those who have already had the virus. Dr. Shinkaran Srikanth stated, however, both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines seem to be effective against the English and South African strains, according to recent studies.

“None of these vaccines are ineffective against these strains. Their killing power is different,” Srikanth said.

“We all need to get the one that is easily available, because they all protect us against something.”

Additionally, due to the higher contagiousness of the variants, the CDC is strongly recommending that people wear two masks, although that is not required at this juncture, according to Srikanth.

Two more major concerns were also addressed. One, teachers, who consistently put themselves at risk in an enclosed environment, are not listed as a high enough priority to receive a vaccine, and two, because of the quarantine and the subsequent increase in children being home during the week due to remote instruction, child abuse cases are up significantly in Grant County, according to Family Service Society Director Lisa Dominisse.

Moore believes that because of the health risks that teachers face every day, they should be prioritized to get the vaccine. Furthermore, Moore thinks this step will allow children to return to school, a safer and more secure environment for some.

“I personally feel that if we are going to ask our teachers to go into a lion’s den...that we ought to make them a priority,” Moore said. “If it’s important for us to push them, then I think we also protect them.”

The next COVID-19 Update will take place on Thursday, Feb. 25 beginning at 3:30 p.m.

Police reports

- Week of Feb. 8-14**
- Monday, Feb. 8**
- Jermaine Aldon Smith, 40, was served a warrant in the 200 block of East Fourth Street, Marion.
 - Anthony Emaun Ross, 24, was served a warrant in the 200 block of East Fourth Street, Marion.
 - Wesley Allen Thompson, 34, was preliminarily charged with dealing in methamphetamine in the 200 block of East Fourth Street, Marion.
 - Jhamel Lee Koonce, 23, was preliminarily charged with reckless driving, driving while suspended, and speeding in the 200 block of East Fourth Street, Marion.
 - Michael Lee Barnett, 39, was preliminarily charged with criminal trespass to business and possession of paraphernalia in the 1600 block of West Spring Drive, Marion.
- Tuesday, Feb. 9**
- James B. McKinney, 55, was preliminarily charged with driving while suspended during a traffic stop at Chapel and Wabash, Marion.
 - April Shawntal Rardon, 41, was preliminarily charged with check deception at 1200 South and State Route 9, Marion.
 - Rick Allen Phillips, 56, was preliminarily charged with driving under the influence and operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangering a person at State Route 15 and Harreld, Marion.
 - Jordan Allen Costner, 26, was served a warrant in the 200 block of East Fourth Street, Marion.
 - Jordan Michael Best, 31, was preliminarily charged with operating a vehicle with a Schedule I or II controlled substance or its metabolite in the blood in the 200 block of East Fourth Street, Marion.
- See Police , Page 12**



Schedule

Coming to Dinner,” Taylor University Mitchell Theatre, 236 West Reade Avenue, Upland. Presented by the Taylor University Theatre Department. Sunday matinee 2pm only. In this popular play, a couple’s attitudes are challenged when their daughter introduces them to her African-American fiancée. \$7 students, \$12 faculty, staff, alumni, \$15 adults, \$8 seniors and children up to age 12. Call the

box office at 765-998-5289 to reserve tickets or email boxoffice@taylor.edu.

Saturday, Feb. 20

- 1:30 p.m. – Eagle Watch at the Salamonie, Salamonie Reservoir, 9214 West Lost Bridge West, Andrews. Meet us at the Salamonie Interpretive Center at your pre-registered time slot, and we’ll caravan to the eagle roost – small amount of walking involved. Times available 1:30pm, 3pm, and 4pm. Fill your gas tank and dress for the weather. Bring your binoculars, cameras and spotting scopes – we’ll watch the bald eagles fly in for the night. Bring your snacks, drinks, and dress for the weather. We are asking one non-driving participant per vehicle to have a cell phone available.

Each caravan will be able to have a program by free group call. Donations accepted. All roosting, foraging and nesting sites are protected by federal law. Registration requested 260-468-2127.

- 7:30 p.m. – The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, see Feb. 18.
- 7:30 p.m. – Taylor University presents “Who’s Coming to Dinner,” see Feb. 19.

Sunday, Feb. 21


- 2 p.m. – The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, see Feb. 18.
- 2 p.m. – Taylor University presents “Who’s Coming to Dinner,” see Feb. 19.
- 10 p.m. – Quilters Hall of Fame Exhibit, Quilters Hall of Fame, 926 South Wash-

ington Street, Marion.

Florida Quilt Study Group: Antique Quilt Block Challenge. The challenge was to take an antique block and incorporate it into a small quilt measuring 24”x24”. Artists were allowed to use the block whole, cut it up, or dismantle it. They could add vintage or new fabrics; whatever it took to create a quilt of their own design and creativity. Admission \$4, \$3 for seniors and students, \$1 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6 years of age. Tuesday – Saturday.

Wednesday, Feb. 24

- 10 a.m. – Quilters Hall of Fame Exhibit, see Feb. 23.
- 10 a.m. – Quilters Hall of Fame Exhibit, see Feb. 23.



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