

HEALTH *from page 1A*

The result has been a handful of confirmed cases statewide, and zero cases in Lane County and Florence. However, just because there have been no confirmed cases in the Siuslaw region does not mean that the region is free from the virus. Much of this is due to which individuals are being given the test.

Currently, any suspected COVID-19 patient seen at Peace Harbor would be transported to PeaceHealth RiverBend for treatment in isolation pending test results.

“The actual testing of samples is being handled at the state lab and some Quest laboratories. As more test kits become available, we hope to be able to conduct broader community

testing at Peace Harbor,” McGovern said.

When asked specifically how many Peace Harbor patients have been tested, McGovern said, “When and if we have a confirmed patient, we will announce that. For now, we are not sharing details about the location of pending cases.”

Whether or not Peace Harbor Medical Center had any presumptive or suspect-

ed cases that couldn't be tested by labs due to lack of available tests, McGovern said “No.”

As for when actual COVID-19 testing will be available at Peace Harbor, McGovern said, “We are working to finalize in-patient plans among our four Oregon hospitals under a variety of outbreak scenarios. Peace Harbor will be receiving a mobile unit, but it

will be used only as necessary for possible screening and limited care of stable patients, to help control the flow of patients into the Emergency Department.”

Regarding the ability for Peace Harbor to house those inflicted with COVID-19, McGovern stressed that the hospital does have the capability and capacity to care for patients for the time being. If the outbreak were to grow beyond the abilities of the hospital, the Siuslaw Middle School would be used as a triage and care center.

However, as of right now, any suspected patients would be transferred to RiverBend.

Before going to the hospital, a release from PeaceHealth stressed that patients who suspect they have the virus should call ahead first, either to their provider's office or, if they feel they are in need of emergency care, to the Peace Harbor ER at 541-997-8412.

This is so the hospital can “create a care plan that keeps our patients and caregivers safe. We also encourage anyone with concerns to call Lane County Public Health's new coronavirus hotline at 541-682-1380,” McGovern said.

Regarding at-risk populations, including residents who are over 60 — a large population of the Siuslaw region — McGovern said, “We would also urge residents to follow the guidance of Lane County and avoid large gatherings to the extent possible, especially if you are over 60, are immune-compromised or have underlying respiratory or cardiopulmonary health problems.”

Lane County Public Health defined large gatherings as “those voluntary activities that do not allow people the option to main-

tain a distance of 6 feet from others. Large gatherings may include church services, movies, concerts and performances or similar events. We urge residents who meet the criteria above to be cautious about attending any event that brings large groups of people together in a confined area.

“We encourage everyone to make use of technology (FaceTime, video calls and other tools) to stay in touch with senior community members. Isolation can be unhealthy, especially for elderly community members who live alone. Staying in touch can help people remain connected to their loved ones and their communities.”

Lane County is also encouraging all residents to practice respiratory hygiene and social distancing wherever possible.

“Cover your cough,” the Lane County website reads. “Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then throw the tissue away. If you don't have any tissue, cough into your elbow.”

Social distancing means avoiding unnecessary contact by not shaking hands, hugging or kissing as greetings.

“Find other, non-contact ways to say hello,” the Lane County website suggests. “People should maintain a six-foot radius between themselves and others in public spaces, as droplets that may carry influenza and COVID-19 can commonly travel up to six feet.”

Finally, Lane County states, “Think it through. If you would normally reconsider attending an event during flu season, reconsider it now. People over 60 and those with pre-existing respiratory, cardiac conditions, or who are immunocompromised should avoid all large gatherings.”

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