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"If you're not tech savvy, like me perhaps, and need a little help, we have people that will walk you through," said Heather MacArthur.

Once online, patients will be asked a series of pre-screening questions, just as they would do through a regular office visit.

"And once they're ready, they get a notice about 30 minutes before the appointment," MacArthur said.

Before the provider meets with the patient, they pull up all relevant health information, from medical charts to scans. They then start the session, taking special care in how they present themselves to patients.

"We make sure we're looking at the patients directly, bringing the charts close to the camera," said Posegate, who has been utilizing the service for the two weeks. "I try to be intentional. I always say, 'Let me look something up,' if I'm looking away from the camera. That's so they know I'm not surfing the web. We have video-side manner now."

The sessions can be used for a whole host of visits, including follow up exams and checkups.

"They can check their blood pressure at home for me, or rashes even," Posegate said. "You have that visual component, so you can see a lot. You can see if someone is having a hard time breathing. You can look down their throat. You can be a little flexible."

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, telehealth helps by allowing patients to stay at home while still being able to get needed medical help. In the long term, the technology has the opportunity to fix long standing issues with the isolated Siuslaw region.

"It's going to be huge, being able to interface with specialists in Eugene," Posegate said. "That could really help people who are driving to Eugene or have transportation issues."

Whether or not Peace Harbor will see a widespread adoption of the technology is still left to be seen.

"I think we have an older population that likes being in our office," Posegate said. "They're hard of hearing, or sometimes it's difficult to use a video."

And telehealth would not replace hospital visits entirely, with patients still needing to come in

for blood work and yearly physicals.

"But I think once people start doing it, they'll get comfortable," Posegate said. "They can be in their pajamas and talking about their lab. It will probably change the way we do healthcare, and I think really, for that benefit, I think it's a good thing."

Telehealth was only one part of the hospital's response to a possible outbreak of COVID-19 in the region.

Because of Peace Harbor Medical Center's association with the PeaceHealth network in Alaska, Washington and Oregon, the western Lane County hospital was able to get an inside view of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 early on in the pandemic.

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Chief Administrative Officer Jason Hawkins said, "We were able to see things in Washington at other PeaceHealth facilities a month or so in advance. It really afforded us the opportunity to get out ahead. We were learning a lot from those facilities."

Such insight included how shortages of supplies in Washington were affecting hospitals and what was needed to properly quarantine COVID-19 patients along with general patients.

"And if we needed a protocol with all the data requirements that was happening, being part of that network allowed those things to be done by the system for us," Hawkins said.

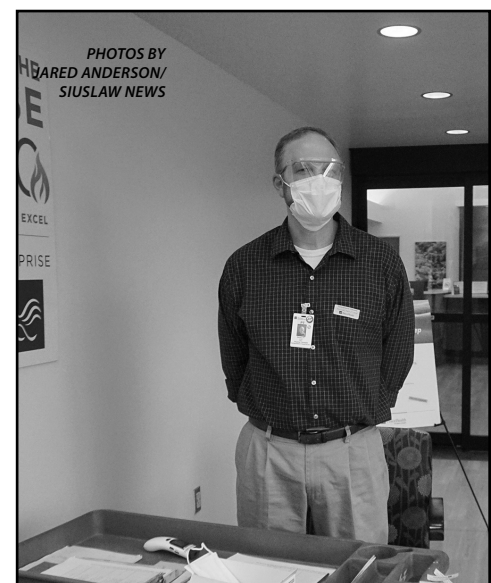
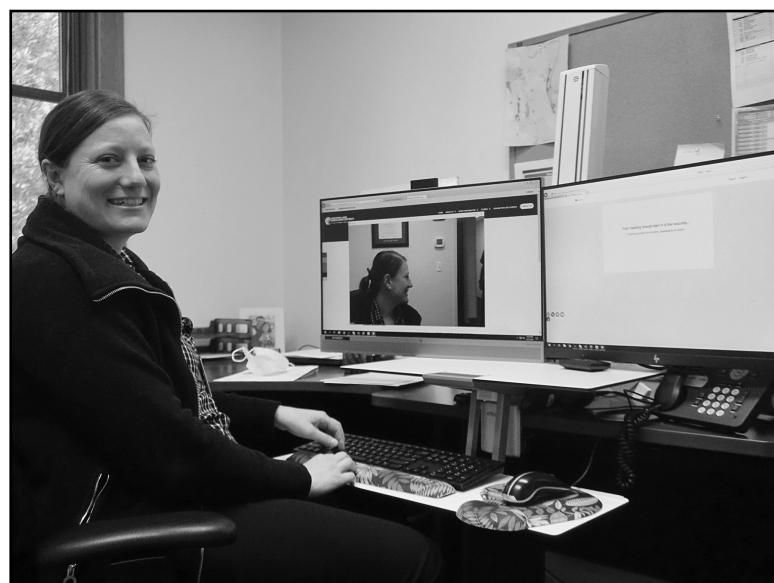
PeaceHealth set up an incident command structure that is still being used today.

"I think another big advantage of being a system is, we had a system-wide incident command, and then each network had an incident command," Hawkins said. "And each hospital within the network had an incident command."

Peace Harbor's command center is set up in a conference room next to the cafeteria. The walls are filled with charts and maps, planning out a possible rise in COVID-19 cases.

"Every day, we're meeting here and working five, six hours a day, working on different projects, different meetings. We had a correspondence board, we have situational stats that we're working through," Hawkins said.

The command structure has finance and administration chiefs looking at the variety of forms that needed to be filled out for



(Left) Nurse Practitioner Heather Posegate demonstrates Peace Harbor's new telehealth system while (right) a medical center staff member welcomes patients to the hospital with a temperature check.

FEMA funding. They broke the hospital into different sections, creating surge plans for the emergency department, walk-in clinic, primary care and palliative care.

Hawkins also pointed to a large picture of the city, which has different areas sectioned off.

"If we had a community surge, they are going to have providers in the city of Florence and serve the community in certain hotspots," he explained.

There are constant discussions on PPE (personal protective equipment), testing swabs, putting together confirmed COVID-19 units, along with the suspected COVID-19 unit.

"And then we would look out how we would operationalize them, in terms of staffing, position, supplies, PPE, pharmaceuticals. Just go down through the whole list," Hawkins said.

Hawkins and the Peace Harbor staff frequently visit with local governmental agencies, as well as create partnerships with various other agencies to bring in volunteers and needed supplies.

In addition, the hospital's conference room has been turned into a sewing unit so workers could make masks, while PeaceHealth created its own interconnected network to keep supplies going.

"If we were short on a particular item, maybe certain size gowns or masks, maybe RiverBend had an excess they could allocate to us," Hawkins said, referencing PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend, located in Springfield. "There were things we shared with them. It was really good to be part of a network that

could share PPE when we had pinch points."

A triage center has been placed outdoors, allowing for suspected COVID-19 patients to safely check in without infecting other patients.

Indoors, the hospital has a closed-off section of rooms specifically for suspected COVID patients. As of right now, there are only two rooms, "but they could move this wall out and have it be four rooms down here," Foster said.

Ventilators were increased from four to nine, and "we even kicked up our food inventory, if by chance food inventories became a problem," Hawkins said.

Patent flow is strictly regulated.

Robin Allen, director of clinical services, said, "If they had respiratory symptoms, they wouldn't be crossing paths with patients that were coming in that were not respiratory patients. We made sure that we had a plan to make sure that those patients weren't crossing paths."

Strict policies are in place for healthcare workers, with daily temperature checks and requirements to wear masks. Anyone walking into the facility is also subject to a temperature check.

Plus, if PeaceHealth hospitals in Eugene were to overflow, Peace Harbor created plans to take on more patients.

"If RiverBend was unable to take anymore, we had a plan that would turn our (post-anesthesia care unit) into a nine bed COVID unit," Allen said.

Peace Harbor also created a labor resource war room to ensure the labor pool was utilized.

"When areas got slower, instead of asking people to go home,

we saw there was other work that needed to be done," Hawkins said.

"So caregivers and managers said, 'Hey, we've got some extra help, what do you need?'"

In the last month, lists of available employees, from caregivers to physicians, were posted on the walls of the war room, allowing certain sections of the hospital to match people to needed areas. Physical therapists were now taking temperatures at the front door. Caregivers were serving food in the cafeteria.

PeaceHealth also created extra sick time for employees, 80 hours if they were to fall ill to COVID. Pay is protected through April, and partnerships with organizations like the Siuslaw School District allowed employees to have childcare, further maintaining the workforce.

"Nobody was furloughed, nobody was laid off," Allen said. "They might have not been busy with their normal job, but they were doing other things. PeaceHealth has made sure that we have not lost any income due to the COVID crisis."

While the hospital meticulously planned for a surge of COVID-19 patients in the initial phase of the pandemic, the Siuslaw region, and Oregon as a whole, has largely been spared at this point.

"I don't think we saw a huge rush of people with COVID symptoms," Foster said. "We saw people with shortness of breath, cough and fever. Before, we would have thought it was pneumonia or the flu. Now we just added COVID onto that list. But it wasn't a huge number more that came in, at least to the emergen-

cy department and the clinics. I think Florence has been relatively spared, as has Lane County and Oregon."

Does this mean that Oregonians essentially avoided COVID-19?

"We're not sure," Hawkins said. "We need to watch and learn as we wade back into this. The first step is how do we take care of more of our patients, how do we start to live in a new normal. I think we'll learn from each step. We learn, we pause, and then we take the next step."

Instead of preparing for a surge, the hospital is now preparing to mitigate flare ups that could occur. As to if/when those flare ups will occur, and how severe they could be, it's anybody's guess. The only certainty is that COVID-19 will be with the world for some time to come.

"How do we live amongst the virus without a vaccine?" Hawkins asked. "What's the impact going to be in the way we're living our life? I think those are things we're all going to have to measure and understand. I think we all need to realize that our actions can affect other people."

The one thing that Hawkins is sure of is that the staff of Peace Harbor is prepared.

"We've done a lot of hard work here," he said. "The staff, they know it's a calling. They're very resilient."

In the next edition of the *Siuslaw News*, Foster and Hawkins will discuss the overall science of COVID-19, what is known, what isn't known, and the controversies and questions surrounding opening up society in the age of a pandemic.

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downturn of the state could put the financial futures of all state schools in jeopardy.

**Online participation**

Grzeskowiak began the discussion during the school board's teleconference by giving details on how distance learning was working for the district. For the past two weeks, the school has been holding online classes after the state closed in-person classes for the rest of the school year.

The majority of the elementary school, between 70 and 75 percent, were participating in the digital platform, though one grade stood at 60 percent.

"There's a larger number of elementary kids whose parents have elected to go with the paper equivalent for the district's learning packet," Grzeskowiak reported. "We've had them returned and are sorting them out, but we don't have a hard count on that."

Middle school was seeing higher participation with digital, with grades logging on in the mid-80 percentile. Around 12 percent of students were using paper options.

High school has seen the largest online participation rates, with 95 percent of students checking in at least twice a week. Five percent of students (18 in total) requested paper options.

However, there have been a few students who have not been in contact with the school since the shutdown began.

"We need to know if they're in town or out of town," Grzeskowiak said. "Are they in town but occupied with family commitments? I know some of our kids are watching siblings, some that had part time jobs are now the primary breadwinner for the household. They're lacking some sort of access or are missing contact calls."

District staff has begun knocking on doors to track down the status of these few remaining students.

"This brings us into the next part of our contact in distance learning, which is internet access," Grzeskowiak said. "Staff has called all the families at least twice, and some of them four times. After our initial survey of the district, we had 119 students,

over 94 households, who said they did not have access to the internet."

However, there was some confusion on what "access to the internet" actually meant.

"Some kids log on at work, and we didn't have any contact with them the first rounds of calls. So they have access," Grzeskowiak said. "After the follow up contact, that list went down to 79 students and 69 households."

The district has already begun offering to subsidize the internet for these households on a short-term basis, using funding from the CARES act to ensure students had access to internet in their homes.

But in the long term, Grzeskowiak said, "We do have those kids that have financial hardships we're going to need to look at if we're going to talk about distance learning, or even regular learning, and having equitable access for all kids."

**The proposal**

The discussion then turned to Wright, who spoke about the company and the proposal.

"The last couple of years, we kicked off the fiber to the home project," said Wright, describing how Hyak had already begun laying fiber optics and providing internet for the Pacific View Business Park on Kingwood Street. Hyak has also begun to buy property in the city to act as hubs, bringing fiber optics to homes.

"We're just finishing Park Village now and running down Kingwood Street, down toward Dairy Queen," Wright said. "We're obviously a local company. (Co-owner) Neil Ecker went to high school here, my wife went to high school here. I've been pretty involved in the community for a while."

Hyak and the school district studied the landscape of where fiber existed, and where students in need were.

"Where our main fiber area exists today, it's pretty central to the city," Wright said. "We looked at ways of easily trying to get to other high-density areas of the city that had a ... high percentage of students. For instance, we're probably not going to try and do service in Fawn Ridge, where there might only be a handful of

students."

But Hyak and the district were able to locate four areas they identified as "critical areas" immediately around the school district.

"It's all within a mile of neighborhoods that have high density of students. That might be on the lower income scale or have a little bit less of an ability to afford internet," Wright said.

One area would run most of the length of Oak Street, from the elementary school up to the Siuslaw Dunes apartments by Les Schwab.

"There's quite a few kids up there," Wright said. The next section encompasses Siano Loop, Skookum Drive, and a few other streets just north of the business park.

"Right up here, you have about 190 homes, with 31 of those homes containing students," Wright said.

Apartment complexes such as Siuslaw Dunes and Oak Terrace would be connected, as well as a large area around Nopal and 13th, "which includes some of the other subsidized housing," Wright said.

However, there are areas that cannot get fiber.

"They're way out in Ada or up in Tiernan, and they just don't have access to it," Wright said.

Installation of any non-satellite internet to individual homes runs into the thousands, but grant funding is limited.

"There is funding for outlying areas that are extremely challenging to get to," Wright said. "They just kicked off the Rural Opportunity Fund, which is going to start coming together in October of this year. That is something we are going to be working with another nonprofit to see if there's other opportunities for that in places way out in the North Fork, way out on the East side of Siltcoos, and some other pretty challenging places. Unfortunately, things like this don't have a lot of grant opportunities."

According to Grzeskowiak, "Rural broadband stalled in the state legislature two years ago and hasn't picked up again. How that gets managed, I don't know yet. There isn't even a special session for the legislature schedule."

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