



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 2, 2020

Active COVID-19 cases in Garland County staying low

HOT SPRINGS – As northern parts of the state are experiencing spikes in COVID-19 cases, Garland County and most of the southwest quadrant of the state seem to be fortunate as active cases are remaining low.

To maintain low numbers, the continuation to test, contact trace and quarantine positive cases was again stressed at the Hot Springs/Garland County COVID-19 Task Force’s virtual meeting on June 1. At the time of the meeting, there were only three active cases in Garland County, down from six active cases from the previous week, according to the Arkansas Department of Health’s COVID-19 dashboard at healthy.arkansas.gov.

Garland County Health Officer Dr. Gene Shelby said that data from the week of May 24-31 shows that the county had 328 COVID-19 tests with three positives, making the positivity rate at 1%. Fire Chief Ed Davis, COVID-19 Task Force coordinator, applauded the efforts of the local healthcare community and government officials for the early and continued efforts to mitigate the virus, saying that Garland County has fared well in comparison to other counties of comparable population.

With the summer travel season underway and visitors coming in to the lakes, downtown and other area attractions, it is not possible to completely mitigate the spread of the virus within the county. Shelby encouraged area hotels, motels and vacation rental locations, as well as local visitor centers, to make available or provide guests with a list of COVID-19 testing sites within the county so that visitors will seek out testing if they begin to experience symptoms or have concern about possible exposure. The Greater Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce and the City of Hot Springs has distributed the list of testing sites to the hotel/motel/rental operators last week, and the flyer is available to download, print and display/share at bit.ly/HSGC-testing-sites. The flyer includes the update that as of Monday, June 1, the three HealthStar testing sites are being consolidated to the First Care Walk-In Clinic at 120 Adcock Road, meaning the Fountain Lake and Lakeside locations will no longer be offering drive-thru testing.

Call levels have remained low at the Hot Springs/Garland County Call Center (501-760-4307). They reported having a call from an out-of-town visitor, who they directed to a local testing site. Also, following a call from a veteran, the question arose about the best way for a veteran to get tested if the individual is not able to get to the Little Rock VA Hospital. Shelby and Susan Lester, of the Garland County Health Unit, both said the testing site at the local health unit, 1425 Malvern Avenue, would be a good option. Although appointments are preferred by calling 501-624-3394, drive-ups are also accepted, and there is no out-of-pocket expense.

The Garland County Sherriff's Office shared that Lake Hamilton traffic was less than the previous holiday weekend. While they were ready to remind visitors of the governor's social distancing recommendations, everyone seemed to be abiding by the guidelines.

The United Way of the Ouachitas (UWO) is continuing to distribute 50-pound food boxes. The UWO office is staying busy as those in need are calling or coming by their office starting each day at 8 a.m. There are funds available to assist, and the application for individuals and families who have suffered loss of employment or income as a result of COVID-19 is online at <https://www.unitedwayouachitas.org/covid-19-application>. Applicants can choose for assistance in several categories, including food, rent, utility bills, medical/prescription costs and costs for gas or public transportation. They are also still providing free income tax preparation assistance by appointment.

To donate to the COVID-19 Relief Fund, visit www.bit.ly/UWO-COVID, call 501-623-2505 or send a check by mail at 233 Hobson Avenue, Hot Springs, AR 71913.