



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2020

Garland County has increase of 20 new active COVID-19 cases

HOT SPRINGS – With a one-week jump from six active cases to 26, Garland County is trending in the wrong direction; but the area’s increase in cases has not translated to a rise in COVID-19-related hospitalizations.

Garland County Health Officer Dr. Gene Shelby shared updated statistics with the Hot Springs/Garland County COVID-19 Task Force at the June 15 virtual meeting. Along with the 26 active cases, there is an additional individual who the state is monitoring as they had close contact with a positive case. Of the 27 total, the age group with the highest number is 25-44, with 10 cases. Following that group, there are nine cases in the 65-and-older age group, four in the 45-64 and four in the 25 and below age group. The majority of the county’s active cases, 23 of the 26, are in Hot Springs; two are in Hot Springs Village; and one is in Percy. At least one new case is from a nursing home. There was an increase in tests done during the week of June 7-14, with a total of 527. The positivity rate was 4.2%, which higher than what the county had been experiencing, but it still lower than the state’s recent rates.

Shelby said that the data he has access to does not point to any specific reason for the increase in cases in Garland County, but he reminded the group that asymptomatic individuals can definitely transmit the virus and that wearing a face mask and social distancing are critically important to mitigating the spread.

County Judge Darryl Mahoney said that although he expected case counts to go up with the reopening of businesses, he believes “Hot Springs and Garland County have done really well with the number of visitors we have had.” He said that they are keeping in close contact with area hospitals and are thankful the rise in new cases has not resulted in hospitalizations. In reiterating Shelby’s comments about the importance of masks, Mahoney said that he has noticed that “a percentage of the public feels like this is over and done, and we know it’s not.”

City Manager Bill Burrough said he carried disposable face masks to offer to the demonstrators on Central Avenue downtown last week. He said of those not wearing a mask, probably half of them had a mask in their pockets. Many “were in the younger age group that still feel invincible, but with this virus they can spread it to someone who is not invincible.”

Susan Lester, administrator of the Garland County Health Unit, said they performed around 50 COVID-19 tests last week. For the full list of Garland County test sites, visit www.cityhs.net/covid-19. There will also be free drive-through testing events hosted by Healthy Connections at Hot Springs Mall, 4501 Central Avenue, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on June 19, and at Hot Springs Village, 121 Cordoba Center Drive, from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on June 23.

Lester also informed the group of tele-health support groups for Arkansas residents who have tested positive for COVID-19. Garland County residents can call 479-785-9480 to register. According to the Arkansas Department of Health website, “These groups will offer support for Arkansans in an anonymous, secure setting, while they remain in the safety of their homes. Our hope is to allow a safe place for participants to share their fears and anxiety as well as gain strength and encouragement from each other.” Registration is free, and the meetings do not offer medical advice or any type of mental health diagnosis or treatment.

The Sheriff’s Department and Hot Springs Police Department (HSPD) both reported business as usual. HSPD has had its first employee test positive, but the officer was exposed by a family member while off work. The officer has been in quarantine, and only has a mild case.

The United Way of the Ouachitas (UWO) is still experiencing high volumes of requests from community members for assistance. They continue to work with partner agencies and use available funds to help those in need. 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.