



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2020

COVID-19 Joint Press Communication Update

The Crisis Communication Team would like to report that, at the time of this press release, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Macon County. Thus far, ten tests have been completed in Macon County, with eight negative test results and two test results pending. Additionally, three Macon County residents have been tested outside of Macon County, with two negative test results and one test result pending. These numbers reflect all people tested in Macon County, regardless of the county in which they reside, as our health systems and providers serve residents from various counties. There is also a possibility that a provider has submitted and/or will submit a test to a private lab and the MCHD may not be notified, therefore unable to track that submission. If a private lab test is confirmed positive, the MCHD would be notified at that time. It remains true that Macon County will inform the press and public as soon as possible at the time of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a Macon County resident.

Because testing is not widely available to the general public, it is ***imperative*** that community members, whether feeling ill or well, implement social distancing best practices to limit the spread and contraction of COVID-19. This means staying home and away from as many people as possible as often as possible.

If you experience symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, do not present at a hospital emergency room or doctor's office immediately unless it is a true emergency. Please first call your primary care physician. If you do not have a primary care physician in place at this time, you may call DMH Medical Group at (217) 876-2856, Crossing Healthcare at (217) 877-9117 or SIU at (217) 872-3800. HSHS Medical Group Family Medicine Forsyth is operating a regional respiratory hub. Their hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please call your primary care provider if you have any questions. Memorial Health System is operating a respiratory screening clinic at its DMH Express Care East location to screen people for the COVID-19 virus. The clinic at 4455 U.S. Route 36 East will operate seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. People coming to the respiratory clinic should call (217) 876-1200 before they arrive. Patients and visitors to healthcare facilities should be prepared to be screened before entering.

Daily PSA: An Urgent Plea from the Red Cross and Some Q & A Regarding Donations

The American Red Cross Blood is hosting a blood drive every Tuesday from 12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at Decatur's American Red Cross Chapter on 2674 N. Main St. in Decatur, IL. The American Red Cross now faces a severe blood shortage due to an unprecedented number of blood drive

cancellations during this coronavirus outbreak. Healthy individuals are needed to donate now to help patients counting on lifesaving blood. For an appointment, please visit RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

Q: Public officials are telling people to stay home, but you're encouraging people to go out to give blood. Why are you contradicting that guidance?

A: Like a hospital, grocery store, or pharmacy, a blood drive is essential to ensuring the health of the community, and the Red Cross will continue to hold blood drives during this challenging time to help meet patient needs. During a crisis, we see the best of humanity when Americans step up and help their neighbors. In the midst of this coronavirus emergency, we are asking people to take this responsibility seriously by practicing social distancing and donating blood. These two activities—which are not mutually exclusive—will go a long way in keeping community members healthy by slowing the spread of the virus and by ensuring that patients across the country receive lifesaving blood. In practice, we recommend people leave home only for necessities—be they health care, groceries, or blood donation. In fact, the U.S. Surgeon General has said, “You can still go out and give blood. We’re worried about potential blood shortages in the future. Social distancing does not have to mean social disengagement.” We understand that people have concerns right now about all aspects of public health but want to stress that donating blood is a safe process and people should not hesitate to give. It’s important to note that blood drives have highest standards of safety and infection control—and do not fall in the category of “mass gatherings”. We are also spacing beds, where possible, to follow social distancing practices between blood donors and are looking at staggering donor appointments further apart to reduce the number of people at a drive at any one time.

Q: Is it safe for older people to come out and donate?

A: In many areas of the country, public officials are asking older individuals to limit public interaction as much as possible. We encourage all donors to follow the guidance of their local health officials. Please note, however, that our Red Cross blood drives have the highest standards of safety and infection control - and do not fall in the category of “mass gatherings”. Depending on the severity of the outbreak in a particular community and an older donor's particular circumstances, some older donors may choose to postpone their donation appointment to a later date.

Mask Drive

There will be a mask drive at the Decatur Civic Center on the next three Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. All masks collected will be distributed to both hospitals in Macon County. We are suggesting putting them in Ziploc bags in quantities of 25. More details about the mask drive and a formal release are forthcoming. Thank you to the community for your help!

Is My Business Considered Essential? Here Is How You Find Out.

If you are unsure whether your business is considered an essential business and can continue operating, contact the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity by phone or email to learn more. They can be reached by phone at 800-252-2923 or by email at ceo.support@illinois.gov.

Please Keep Sharing: Agencies Continuing to Need Volunteers

A message from the United Way and the agencies seeking volunteers: “Agencies need volunteers under 59. We ask all volunteers 60 and over to take a break and stay well because we are going to need you when this all ends!”

To volunteer at the Good Samaritan Inn: Please contact Francie at (217) 429-1455 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Volunteers will help with meal preparation only. Good Samaritan staff will hand meals to patrons in order to minimize volunteer contact. If you don't get an answer, please try back, or simply drop by to see if help is needed. You can also schedule your volunteer time by emailing Francie at Volunteercoordinator.goodsam@gmail.com. Due to the shift in meal delivery, The Good Samaritan Inn is operating on reduced staff and hours. Your patience is truly appreciated.

To volunteer at Northeast Community Fund: Northeast asks that you go to their website, northeastcommunityfund.org and register through their volunteer portal. Once signed up, volunteers can schedule themselves online for one or two 2.5 hour shifts (9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays). Please select "food pantry" when self-scheduling.

For United Way of Decatur & Mid-Illinois: Please use the Get Connected: Volunteer in Mid-Illinois portal at https://volunteermidillinois.galaxydigital.com/agency/detail/?agency_id=111106.

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For more information, please contact:

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