

Working together to get through COVID

September 12, 2021



Del Norte County's weekly COVID-19 update on Thursday began with a plea from Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Vosburg, "We must work together to fight this terrible monster."

Vosburg used Walmart as an example of a business hard hit by the virus. Of 277 Walmart employees in Crescent City, only 150 are able to come to work. The rest are in some state of carrying the COVID-19 virus or are in quarantine.

"They're trying their best, so be kind to them," she pleaded with shoppers, "Show them some respect by wearing a mask."

Next up in the report presented on the Crescent City Facebook page was Mitch Hannah, the chief Executive Officer at Sutter Coast Hospital. "We're concerned about staff shortages but this isn't something Sutter imposed, this is something the state is demanding," he said of the September 30 deadline for all medical staff to be vaccinated.

If an employee has not had their first shot, they won't make the deadline to be fully vaccinated, that may cause a ripple affect in terms of staffing, but they're doing their best to track it.

Hannah released the latest statistics: 87% of those stricken by COVID are unvaccinated, 92% in critical care and 95% on ventilators.

Vaccination numbers are, however, increasing: the week before 42% of Del Norte County was vaccinated, the number is now 48%. In August alone, 610 people used the Sutter drive through to be vaccinated.

Hannah reminded the audience all testing and vaccination can be done in the drive through without an appointment at no cost.

The only time an appointment is necessary is for the Monoclonal Antibody Treatments which are for people who are COVID positive in order to prevent symptoms from worsening. Hannah said 198 people accessed that treatment at Sutter.

Doctor Aaron Stutz, a Sutter physician reported that he's seeing younger, unvaccinated patients with a higher level of severity, including a 30-year-old who died from the virus last month. 15% of those tested reported a positive diagnosis. "That's an enormous positivity rate."

"Don't go out if you're positive. Don't pick up prescriptions or go shopping. If you don't have any other way, use the drive thru - but don't go out. It's not right." Stutz pleaded.

Jeff Harris, superintendent of Del Norte Schools reported a solid opening to the school year with students consenting to wear masks with little to no pushback.

But he also pointed to the risks of even a few COVID positive students attending school. Three students who test positive, according to Harris, can cause the quarantine of 300 students and teachers who come in proximity.

Harris also discussed sports, saying at this point participants need to wear a mask because distancing isn't possible. As to attendance at games - "When you come to a school sporting event, wear a mask. At the last event, I noticed only a few people in the stands with masks. Everyone else was unmasked and in close proximity. If we can't get people to wear masks, we'll have to limit the number of people who can attend games. We don't want to do that, so wear a mask."

Finally, both Harris and Stutz spoke to the need to keep kids in schools despite the risks.

"We have second graders whose last experience of school was a semester of kindergarten. And now they're supposed to be doing grade level work. They've missed out on milestones, and we need to do everything we can to keep them in school," Harris said.

Doctor Stutz reiterated, "The long term impacts of children not being in school, of parents not being able to work and provide a stable home are enormous. We need to do everything we can to keep our children in school."

Del Norte County provides a COVID update every Thursday.

“We’ll do it for as long as we have to. We hope one day we won’t have to anymore” said Vosburg. “But in the meantime, we’ll be here with you.”