

Supervisors honor healthcare workers

July 17, 2021



After the state dropped most COVID-19 restrictions last month, the county is celebrating the local health care workers who led the charge against the virus.

During its first in-person meeting since the onset of the pandemic, the Del Norte Board of Supervisors honored Heather Snow, director of health and human services, and other public health employees, for their work in battling the crisis, including testing, contract tracing and ongoing vaccine efforts.

“There’s been many in our public health department and DHHS who have stepped up during the last year and a half, and this board feels it’s extremely important,” said Supervisor Chris Howard.

In addition to coordinating testing, tracing and vaccination efforts, Snow kept the public informed with weekly public statements regarding the virus’ spread at the beginning pandemic. Dr. Warren Rehwaldt was also instrumental in those efforts, however, he recently retired from his position of public health officer. A farewell luncheon was held for Rehwaldt last weekend, and the county is still searching for his replacement.

Howard said the impact of public health workers was especially felt in a county with less people than many public universities.

“Our community; we’re small. We are under 28,000 people, but everybody knows everybody. When everybody knows everybody, it’s more than just a community, these are your friends and neighbors you’re talking about providing service to,” said Howard.

Despite the celebration, vaccination rates in the county rank remain among the lowest in the state, which could be an issue with the new Delta variant circulating in California, according to news reports. As of Monday, 32.7% of people in Del Norte County are fully vaccinated, and 37.2% of residents have received at least one dose. The county also reported 12 new cases, totaling 1,514 confirmed cases since the beginning of the pandemic, and eight deaths.

Nevertheless, Supervisor Gerry Hemmingsen was positive about the county's position.

“We’ve got a little ways to go yet, but we’ve made the turn and hopefully things get better.”