

COVID playing havoc on healthcare system

August 19, 2021



With local health care workers straining to keep up with an unprecedented surge in COVID-19 patients, some community members are doing their best to encourage them to keep going.

According to data from the federal government, Del Norte County is now reporting some of the highest per capita cases of COVID-19 in California, and most places in the U.S.

As of Tuesday, there were 14 deaths in the county linked to the virus, four of those deaths have come in the past week.

During the previous surge of COVID-19 in January, the active case total only reached as high as 165. However, as of Monday the active case count in Del Norte was 378, with 166 of those cases occurring over the weekend, including 18 new cases among incarcerated individuals. There were 21 county residents who were hospitalized due to the virus — another sharp increase from zero hospitalized cases during some parts of July.

About twenty people gathered on the front lawn outside Sutter Coast Hospital on Saturday to sing, dance and offer words of encouragement to the health care workers — both inside the hospital and in the nearby triage tent — which was recently redeployed in the parking lot to deal with the surge.

Their signs read, “Love & Support,” “Thank God for health care workers,” and “You are enough.”

Denise Doyle-Shnacker, a leader with True North Organizing Network, helped organize the event.

“We are hoping that people can bring a little bit of love and light to all health care workers, first responders, and everyone that’s having to deal with this, and to help the community recognize just saying on Facebook, ‘we love you and you’re our heroes’ isn’t going to be quite enough,” said Doyle-Shnacker.

Due to the length of the pandemic, some members of the community may have become complacent about wearing a mask or social distancing, Doyle-Shnacker said.

“I don’t think any of us recognized that it was this overwhelming because we’ve been doing this forever. We kind of assumed people were figuring it out, and that’s not necessarily the case,” she said.

Since July 15, the county has racked up 719 new cases of COVID-19, which represents more than 30% of all cases since the beginning of the pandemic.

At Saturday’s event, Lynn Szabo, a physician assistant at Sutter Coast Hospital, relayed a message from the health care workers inside.

“They’re asking for your kindness, they need your patience. This situation calls all of us to be the best people we can be. Please listen to them, and please vaccinate. It’s that simple,” said Szabo.

So far, 41.6% of Del Norte residents are fully vaccinated and 6.9% are partially vaccinated. The county’s vaccination rate ranks 53rd among 58 counties in California.

During a Monday Crescent City Council meeting, Ellie Popadic, director of operations with Sutter Health, said more than half of the patients at Sutter Coast Hospital are COVID-positive, most of whom are unvaccinated. Additionally, unvaccinated patients account for all of the patients who have had to be ventilated.

“We cannot encourage the community enough to get vaccinated,” said Popadic.

For those wanting a vaccine, see the information below:

Sutter Health

Monday- Saturday 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; Walk-ins Only (Pfizer, Moderna, Janssen)

<https://www.sutterhealth.org/coast/for-patients/health-alerts/covid-19-vaccine>

(844) 987-6115

Local Pharmacies Offering Vaccines (updated on August 6, 2021)

CVS Pharmacy (Moderna) *Walk-in subject to availability.*

<https://www.cvs.com/immunizations/covid-19-vaccine>

Rite Aid Pharmacy (Moderna) *Via Appointment*

<https://www.riteaid.com/covid-19>

Safeway Pharmacy (Moderna) *Via Appointment on Wednesdays only*

<https://www.safeway.com/vaccinations/home>

Walgreens Pharmacy (Pfizer, Moderna, Janssen) *Walk-ins subject to availability.*

<https://www.walgreens.com/findcare/vaccination/covid-19/location-screening>

1-800-WALGREENS (1-800-925-4733)

Walmart Pharmacy (Moderna) *Walk-ins during pharmacy hours.*

<https://www.walmart.com/cp/immunizations-flu-shots/1228302>

Talk to your Primary Health Provider.

Many healthcare offices offer Covid-19 vaccinations. Talk to your Doctor.