

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with a series of small yet significant local notifications for Tuesday, August 25, 2020.

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Jefferson County's COVID-19 case numbers increased dramatically over the last two weeks, with twelve new cases. The current total is 68.

This brings Jefferson's rate to 37.6 cases per 100,000, doubling in the past two weeks.

The ratio of positive tests has also increased and is now reported at 1.9%, but that is still well below the 5% maximum for safe reopening. Fifty four people are awaiting the results which is, coincidentally, the same number of people recovered from the virus. No county resident has died from the virus at this time.

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During his regular Monday report before the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, County Health Officer Dr. Tom Locke said that half of the most recent cases turned up positive while in quarantine, as they were identified before becoming infectious. This curtailed the additional spread of the virus. So quarantine works.

Locke does not believe that tourists are responsible for the uptick in cases. Re-openings, travel, and expansive gatherings have increased disease transmission, he said, and the normal things people do that now have become unsafe. He is concerned about the upcoming Labor Day weekend, hoping to avoid the statewide virus surge that followed this year's July Fourth celebrations.

Locke previously predicted that it could take a year to return to normal, so his opinion that we are now at the halfway point follows a consistent path. He said the psychological aspects of isolation are getting to people and believes this fatigue is driving the risk-taking, especially among the young.

Locke said our behaviors should follow all the things we already know: correct masking and the proper use of a mask made from the best materials, like 3-ply or cotton. Masks including the neck-gaiter type and the one-layer bandannas are not a good substitute.

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As for masks, Director of Emergency Management Willie Bence reports that Jefferson has reached a milestone: 100,000 pieces of PPE have been distributed, with an additional 50,000 pieces being held for strategic reserve. All of this has been paid for from state emergency management and FEMA.

Masks are still a topic of discussion, and DEM is still waiting for child-sized masks to be delivered to Jefferson. In the meantime, community sewists – not to be confused with sewers – are hard at work creating over 200 masks a week to donate to low-income children. The volunteers are making two different sizes. There are now 60 people sewing masks and, to date, they have contributed over 8,000 to the community. To volunteer your skills and learn how you can become involved. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/facemaskchallengept>.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has diverted our attention, but we shouldn't forget the need for other preventive measures. Reflecting this, Jefferson Healthcare has created a drive-up immunization station to give parents and caregivers an easy solution for children to receive needed "back to school" immunizations.

A quick call to a child's primary care provider or a visit to the Washington State Immunization Records webpage (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/ChildProfileHealthPromotion/ForParents/AccessyourFamiliesImmunizationInformation>) can help determine which vaccines are needed. Immunization can always be done during an office visit, but the drive-up option helps to minimize unnecessary trips into an office, alleviate the stress of juggling more than one child at a traditional visit, and just plain makes it easy to keep up to date with needed immunizations.

The drive-up immunization station, offered at the Sheridan Clinic at 915 Sheridan Street, is by appointment by calling 360-379-98031. Some adult vaccinations like measles, Hepatitis B, and pneumococcal will be available. Please be aware adult vaccine cost coverage varies by individual insurance plan.

According to a press release, by vaccinating children on time, we build a community of immunity around vulnerable populations like babies and seniors. The immunization clinic staff can confirm the necessary vaccinations for patients of Jefferson Healthcare. People who are averse to vaccinations may want to check in, just the same.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org).

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.