

TDH: PUTNAM COVID-19 CASES STAY AT 6



Putnam County Health Department workers assist patients in a drive-through assessment and testing event for COVID-19 Monday. Testing will be suspended because of the potential for severe weather Tuesday and will resume at 1 p.m. Wednesday.

Ben Craven | Herald-Citizen

Posted Monday, March 23, 2020
BY LINDSAY MCREYNOLDS

The number of COVID-19 cases in Putnam County remains at 6 Monday, according to an update from the Tennessee Department of Health.

That's the same number of cases the TDH reported Sunday in Putnam County.

In a press conference on social media Monday, Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said that number was still very low compared to Putnam County's population, nearing 79,000 people according to the U.S. Census.

However, statewide, the number of positive COVID-19 results went up from 505 Sunday to 615 Monday.

The Putnam County Department of Health continued drive through assessment and testing Monday, when a line of cars stretched from the health department on County Services Drive to Willow Avenue.

The PCHD tested 58 people through its drive-through assessment and testing Monday, Porter said. That drive-through testing will be suspended Tuesday but will resume Wednesday from 1 to 3 p.m.

Cumberland County has two people testing positive for the coronavirus, and DeKalb County has one.

Cookeville Regional Medical Center Director of Media Relations Melahn Finley said the hospital has not received any positive test results from their patients

"Over the weekend, CRMC's Urgent Care tested 20 individuals for COVID-19, while the ED tested 19. We have admitted 11 patients since Friday that have had COVID-19 testing."

Cookeville Mayor Ricky Shelton said, "Social distancing make a significant difference. It needs to be more dramatic than we're currently practicing in Cookeville. It could be in your home right now and you don't know it."

Shelton said he'd received questions about why the city doesn't shut down businesses.

"Our city charter does not allow us to shut down businesses," he said. "Those that did have a different charter. The governor issued an executive order yesterday and another one today. We want to implore our citizens and businesses to further limit social interaction."

Shelton said, "There's misunderstandings that we have 'shelter in place' in Cookeville. Some cities do have that. Knoxville just issued 'safer at home,' to close non-essential businesses. We do not have that in Cookeville, Putnam County, that's not what the governor has issued."

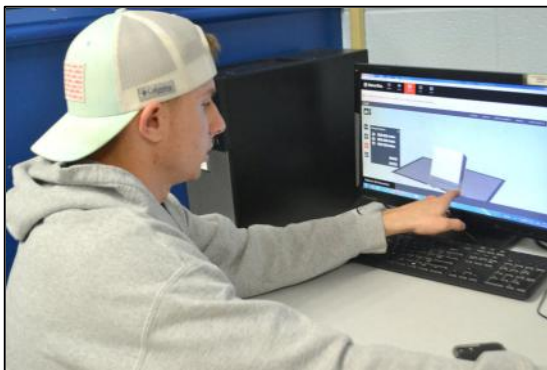
One of the executive orders regarding COVID-19 signed by Gov. Bill Lee prohibits social gatherings of 10 or more people and limits restaurants to take-out, drive-through and delivery options.

"One thing we're still seeing is hoarding of food and supplies," Porter said. "The food chain has not been affected. Trucks are running every day, but people are going in and buying five to 10 times more than what they need. In talking to store managers, all they need is time to restock. We came together so much in the tornado. People were donating tons of food to us to give out."

Porter assured people that emergency services are still operating.

"Your best defense right now, stay at home as much as possible, if you don't have to be out, don't be," Porter said.

CHS STUDENT USING 3-D PRINTERS TO HELP WITH COVID-19



Cookeville High School senior Tyson Williams uses the MakerBot program to input information for a 3-D printer.
Jim Herrin | Herald-Citizen

Posted Wednesday, March 25, 2020

BY JIM HERRIN

A Cookeville High School student is stepping up this week to help with the production of masks needed by health care workers and others in dealing with the COVID-19 virus.

Tyson Williams, son of State Rep. Ryan Williams, said he came up with the idea after hearing his father talk about the need.

"I overheard a conversation that my dad was having with Mr. (Mike) Krause, who is on the governor's Coronavirus Task Force," he said. "And I was like 'hey, the high school has 3-D printers.' I probably could get access to them."

Williams then called his engineering teacher Dave Powell and CHS Principal Max Petett to get the OK.

"Everybody was eager to help," said Petett. "I was really proud of him. It was something that was student-initiated, rather than an adult saying do something. He's taken the leadership role, and that's pretty awesome."

The three printers at CHS are making headbands that will then have face shields attached to them.

It takes about nine hours to get the headbands 3-D printed, although the printers can handle up to eight headbands at a time.

"We made 39 before Tuesday, and I'm starting on the next round," Williams said. After the headbands are produced by the CHS 3-D printers, Williams takes them to Tennessee Tech.

"I give them to Dr. (Michael) Aikens and then he puts the ones that they're doing together with mine, and they take them to the (Upper Cumberland Regional) Airport where they are distributed to Austin Peay, I think, because that's where they put the face shield on the head bands."

Aikens said the statewide goal is to print 10,000 masks, using equipment at the university and other locations. In addition to Williams' work at CHS, he said STEM educators from Prescott Middle, Prescott Elementary, Capshaw and Algood are looking to pitch in, as well as those in Clay, Jackson and Overton counties.

FORMER COOKEVILLE RESIDENT SHARES

COVID-19 EXPERIENCE IN ASIA

Posted Tuesday, March 24, 2020
BY BEN WHEELER

A former Cookeville resident has spent the last two months without a home.



Tyler Dowland has been teaching abroad for the past six years. He works as a first grade teacher in Beijing.

But a planned holiday turned into two months of waiting out the COVID-19 protocols before he can return home.

"Everything started when I was in Thailand on Chinese New Year vacation, I didn't read anything about it there, but then I went to Bali and things started blowing up," Dowland said. "At first I saw Chinese people posting critical things online. It was pretty crazy. No one knew if we were going back to work or anything, and now I haven't been back for two months, and I'm in Cambodia.

"Now it's apparently opening up a bit more, but it has been basically deserted for a while."

Stuck outside of China and teaching his students online, Dowland said teachers have felt the pressure of returning to China in fear that the country will close its border completely and they might lose their jobs.

Dowland didn't plan for a long vacation in Cambodia, so he's been buying his clothing through vendors there.

"People were really (mad) when they found out the government silenced the whistleblower but stuff was so busy at the time, censors didn't take it off WeChat," Dowland said. "It just hasn't been as big a threat in southeast Asia and on islands, I've felt pretty protected but seeing things start to shut down here in Phnom Penh has made me worried."

WeChat is a Chinese social media and online payment company. Traditionally, it's heavily censored by the Chinese government.

"There are some things shut down here, though most life is normal, but they've had lower tourist numbers and everywhere is sanitizer. A lot of people in Cambodia are hurting, like the cart drivers and the vendors on the street are being squeezed."

Dowland didn't realize the gravity of the COVID-19 situation until he started reading articles from western media.

"In a way, it was kind of like the pandemic itself: I heard like one small thing, then two small things and then boom my phone was blowing up with it," Dowland said. "I messaged my sister in January and said to prepare because China was being locked down, and I knew what would happen since thousands of people had already been traveling for a long time."

It was when he got sick that Dowland decided to buy a ticket to return to Beijing. His illness wasn't COVID-19, but food poisoning. Even so, Dowland said he would rather be in a hospital in Beijing than in Cambodia where he knows no one. If Dowland passes his medical test in Zhengzhou, he will be able to return to Beijing.

He says he has heard that the test for Covid-19 takes roughly four hours to produce results, where in the U.S. those result wait times may vary. In the Putnam County Health Department drive through assessment center, those results can take up to four or five days to return.

Dowland expects to be back in Beijing as of this publishing, should he pass the health test, and go through a mandatory 14-day quarantine before life returns to a form of normalcy, but the journey has taken a toll financially.

"Fifty percent of my brain wishes I had just extended my visa and would stay in Cambodia but I have to get back for my dog," Dowland said. "I'm going to be broke. I have to pay rent and pay for my dog being in dog school for two and a half months, but it'll be nice to be home."

"It's made me thankful to the people of southeast Asia, made me hopeful to a degree because I see the expat community being super helpful towards each other in China. Personally, I guess it's pretty unnerving as well to know there could always be a second wave while I'm here."

CORONAVIRUS CAUSES SKYROCKETING UNEMPLOYMENT

By Ben Wheeler

More than 3 million people in the U.S. filed for unemployment last week, including 39,000 Tennesseans, as restrictions continue to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



That's compared to 2,702 claims filed in the state for unemployment the week prior to March 21.

Manager John "Beard" Barrow normally serves behind the bar at Father Toms Pub, but as COVID-19 protocols remain in place the business is just one of many trying to shift services to curbside.

As one of the hardest hit industries, restaurant and service businesses try to pivot their business to curbside service. Management have been trying to help staff file for unemployment as many are forced into temporary layoffs.

Like many restaurants in town, Father Tom's Pub has become takeout only following the executive order by Gov. Bill Lee.

Sunday, Manager John "Beard" Barrow and Chef Steve Ford helped their coworkers file for unemployment.

"Jennifer and Tom, the owners, came to us and basically besides us and Michael Anderson, we had a temporary layoff so we could get them assistance that way instead of waiting," Barrow said. "We tried to wait it out but be proactive also."

Ford said they began working on a plan to address the loss of sit-in business a few weeks ago in preparation for how bad it could get.

"We were trying to get ahead of all of it. Our staff are pretty fortunate for Jennifer and Tom making a plan to make this work," Ford said. "We set up a plan to make sure the employees are taking care of and can pay their rent. Part of that is taking care of the people that are important to us, but also when this is over, we want our people back.

"As a pub, half of the experience is being here in this atmosphere, but sadly we can't provide that for now."

The pub has a plan in place to make it until June, but if COVID-19 protocols continue past that time, they will have to reassess.

"I haven't heard from everybody on this side of town, but most everybody has gone to curbside with limited staffing," Barrow said. "With the governmental help, it's taking a little bit off of our back."

Ford said the unprecedented situation that is unfolding after the deadly March 3 storm has been difficult.

"There's no way to know how long this lasts," Ford said. "I think we hope more decisive measures are taken so that we can all get back to normal quicker."

The rise in unemployment has inundated the American Job Center with calls.

"We try to keep a call log for our records, but with this we just can't due to the volume of calls," said Becky Hull, Executive Director of Upper Cumberland Workforce. "We have staff that are shifting their job duties to solely focus on unemployment."

"It seems to change by the day and sometimes hour-by-hour, we're being as reactive as we possibly can."

According to the Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development, 877 new unemployment claims were filed in the Upper Cumberland region last week. The majority of the new claims in the state have been in the northern middle Tennessee region, which includes Metro Nashville.

Hull said Upper Cumberland Workforce has been working with employers on layoffs due to COVID-19 and employees who are facing unemployment. The team is utilizing its Facebook, Upper Cumberland American Job Centers, to post job openings that are still available during the outbreak.

As much as they are trying to do for citizens, with the shifting landscape of employment during COVID-19, Hull said they have been blessed by the team of county mayors.

“Even if you are prepared, how can you be prepared for something like this? We crafted contingencies quickly, and we’ve had to be nimble and reactive to this,” Hull said. “We’re trying our best to serve our fellow citizens. Be patient with us, because we’re trying our best during this. I knew we had a good team, but I’ve learned what a genuine group of county mayors we have.”

Those who need to file for unemployment can do so online through the state at <https://www.tn.gov/workforce/unemployment>.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: March 26, 2020

CORONAVIRUS TAKES TOLL ON WORKERS

Haley Hunter with a client's dog, Nelson, and her small dog, Bentley.



By Paige Stange

The COVID-19 pandemic is hitting workers where it hurts — their pockets.

Putnam County resident Haley Hunter, who owns a business as a groomer, pet sitter, dog walker and trainer, hasn't had many clients this month.

“Many of my clients are elderly,” she said. “So I can’t go to see many of them because they’re at higher risk of catching the virus, and I don’t want to increase the chances of them catching it from me somehow.”

A lot of her weekly appointments have also been canceled because people are practicing social distancing.

“Many of my weekly appointments have been cancelled because nobody wants anyone from the outside coming into their home for anything because the virus causes them

concern,” she said. “These are appointments that I make my income from. I’ve lost a lot of money just in the short time my clients and I have been quarantined.”

Pet stores having to adjust business hours also has had an effect on her business.

“Many of the pet stores are closing or changing hours,” Hunter said. “That makes it difficult for me to do ‘socialization’ training, which most of the time, I do in pet stores or at parks.”

Despite the bleak outlook, some businesses are hiring during the outbreak.

Dollar General officials plan to hire up to 50,000 new employees to support operations by the end of April. Both temporary jobs and long-term careers are available. For more information, visit the Dollar General website at <https://www.dollargeneral.com/>.

Walmart officials hope to hire 150,000 new workers across the U.S. Jobs initially will be temporary, but can change to permanent roles over time. Learn more at careers.walmart.com.

For more employment opportunities in the area, call Express Employment at 854-1900 or Qualified Staffing at 303-0026.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN March 28, 2020

NURSING HOME HAS FIRST COVID-19 CASE

Signature Health Care of Putnam County has received confirmation of its first patient to test positive for COVID-19. Area senior facilities are having to address the virus with changes to operations.

By Ben Wheeler and Lindsay McReynolds



A nursing home in Putnam County has reported its first positive case of COVID-19.

A patient at Signature HealthCare in Algood tested positive for COVID-19, an official with the nursing home announced Monday.

“We’ve been working around the clock getting ready for COVID-19 — and we are ready, now that the day is here,” Chris Cox, chief operating officer for Signature HealthCARE, said in a press release. “This is why we hired the experts we have on our team, including a new chief infectious disease physician.

"Our intense preparations have paid off, especially in this situation, with staff screening themselves and residents daily, and staff readily identifying anyone who might have the virus early and getting them sent out and tested right away."

Putnam County has 24 people who have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Tennessee Department of Health.

Some believe the true count is higher.

"Twenty four cases in Putnam County is not an accurate count," Cookeville Vice Mayor Laurin Wheaton said Monday in a council work session.

Cookeville Regional Medical Center now has three patients testing positive for COVID-19, according to Melahn Finley, director of communications at CRMC. All three are in stable condition, but one is in ICU. The CRMC employee who tested positive last week continues to remain in quarantine at home.

Cookeville Councilman Chuck Womack, a retired urologist, is asking the council to approve a resolution requesting the governor to mandate "shelter in place" and "social distancing."

Mayor Ricky Shelton asked how that would be enforced.

"That is absolutely unenforceable," he said. "It's unrealistic, unenforceable. Has anyone talked to local medical experts? They do not say this is needed here."

Womack said, "We're about to get hit by a tsunami, and we need to cut it down where it's manageable."

Womack had originally asked in the resolution that the governor also close "non-essential businesses." The governor encouraged people to shelter in place Monday, but did not mandate it. He did make an executive order to close certain businesses such as barber shops, nail salons and tattoo parlors.

Signature officials said they will continue to follow guidelines from the CDC and other government agencies including screening residents, restricting facility visitation and using alternative means of communication for families such as telehealth, social media and others.

Home Instead Senior Care, a business that focuses on keeping seniors in their homes longer, is also making changes to its business.

"Most everyone knows the home remains the safest place," franchise owner Rob Brown said. "Possible exposure will remain the lowest for those who are able to stay in their homes with limited outside contact. For this reason, home health will become even more important to provide care that keep people who require assistance safely at home."

Brown said many of the seniors they serve are especially at risk given their age and underlying health issues, and that his company requires caregivers to stay home if they are sick.

“I want to assure you that all home health companies are following all the necessary protocol to protect our clients and your loved ones,” Brown said.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: March 30, 2020

SIGNATURE REPORTS 44 CASES OF COVID-19

Signature HealthCARE has confirmed 44 patients and staff members have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

By Ben Wheeler and Lindsay McReynolds

Officials with Signature HealthCARE in Algood have confirmed that 44 people at the 175-bed nursing facility have tested positive for COVID-19.



Facility administrator Lee Rooney said during a press conference Thursday that 28 patients and 16 staff members have tested positive for COVID-19.

The first positive case at Signature was reported Monday.

“On March 9, we put a stop order on anyone entering our facility,” Rooney said. “We were screening every employee from March 9 on, and even with that, we developed a case and then tested two more, which we found out one was positive and one was negative.

“I requested the local health department do a sweep of my facility by testing every person, every patient and every staff member. We tested 320 staff and patients, the majority of which did not have any symptoms.”

The positive test results were returned Wednesday, according to Rooney, who said 90 percent of those who tested positive were symptom free.

“Out of the 28 patients that tested positive, we don’t have anyone with a temperature over 100,” Rooney said. “You wouldn’t even know that they were positive. That’s what is scary about this right now.”

A press release Thursday said a designated wing of the facility will be used for COVID-19 cases.

The COVID-19 unit will be isolated with barrier systems, its own entrance, supplies and staff. The unit will have its own infection control specialist nurse and infectious disease specialist physician.

The 44 cases at Signature are not reflected in the 37 positive cases reported for Putnam County by the Tennessee Department of Health Thursday.

Five of those 37 are hospitalized at Cookeville Regional Medical Center, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley.

Two CRMC employees who tested positive have been self-quarantining at home.

The number of reported positive cases across the state is approaching 3,000. The TDH reported 2,845 positive cases Thursday; 31,766 people tested negative, and 220 people have recovered.

The 32 deaths are now being reported by county by the TDH. Sumner County has the most deaths at 7. The remaining 25 deaths are in the following counties: Davidson, 6; Greene, 1; Hamilton, 3; Knox, 1; Marion, 1; Obion, 1; Rutherford, 1; Shelby, 5; Sullivan, 1; Trousdale, 1; Williamson, 3; and 1 out of Tennessee.

Gov. Bill Lee issued executive order 23 Thursday, which requires Tennesseans to stay at home unless they are engaging in essential activities or services.

The governor said enforcement of the order would be left up to local law enforcement.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 2 April 2020

COOKEVILLE FOOD DELIVERY CHANGING FOR COVID-19

By Ben Craven | Herald-Citizen

One of the local services most affected by the recent outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus) is that of food delivery.

Putnam County has two main food delivery services, and while they are not large, nationwide chains, delivery requests are increasing because of the government's efforts to keep everyone in their homes.

These services are also having to adapt to the restaurants themselves. Many have changed hours of operation or closed, and some are limiting their menu to accommodate receiving fewer food shipments or quick delivery times.

"We've got a lot of really great, local restaurant partners in the community, so it's definitely tough to see this hurt them," Food Of Your Mood owner Patrick Ely said.

“With everything going on, delivery is what people are looking for in a lot of instances, and our volume of business has definitely increased. We want to do everything we can to help them and the rest of the community in this tough time.”

We Deliver driver Noah Freedle goes to put an order from El Tapatio in his trunk just off Willow Ave. in Cookeville



“As this all continues, we’re constantly evolving with the situation, and we want to provide the maximum amount of safety for the public and our drivers,” We Deliver owner Jason Scott said. “We’re adding more drivers, so we can have faster deliveries and lower wait times.”

Ely admitted that FOYM saw its busiest day since opening in 2017

last week. He said he was lucky to have hired a wave of drivers recently, but needs more.

Both services are hiring to help with order volume and delivery times, and both services are working to lower delivery fees.

We Deliver and FOYM got their starts in Cookeville, but they are adding partnerships and policies during these hard times. For example, both have partnered with pharmacies to deliver prescriptions. We Deliver works with Nunally Drug Store in Baxter, and FOYM works through Cookeville Medical Family Pharmacy.

Both services offer other kinds of delivery, including groceries, gas station trips and Walmart pickup.

“Even if you just need a bag of dog food, we’ll go get it for you,” Scott said. “We’ve delivered legal paperwork for people. We’ve picked up kids’ lunch boxes that were left in the back of cars. Our name is We Deliver because we’ll deliver just about anything if you need it, and we’re very reasonably priced in doing so.”

Still, some of the biggest changes for these services have been to their daily policies. Both services have made updates to their hygiene policies, and both now offer “non-contact” delivery options. Customers still have the option to pay with cash or pay drivers directly, but the default option is for drivers do leave deliveries on the front porch and call the customer afterward.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 4 April 2020

CRMC FURLOUGHS 400 EMPLOYEES

Cookeville Regional Medical Center announced it would lay off 400 employees and cut the hours of hundreds more Monday.

H-C FILE

BY Kate Cook

Cookeville Regional Medical Center is placing 400 employees on furlough, officials announced Monday.

That's 17% of the hospital's 2,400 employees. Several hundred employees will also see a reduction in hours, according to a press release.

CRMC CEO Paul Korth said the 400 are employed in areas that do not involve the treatment of COVID-19 patients. In a phone interview Monday, he said CRMC has 5 inpatient COVID-19 patients. Three staff members have tested positive and are in self-quarantine at home, he said.

Employees were notified of the furloughs at about 1 p.m. Monday, when a memo went out to all staff.

Furloughed employees will be eligible for state and federal unemployment benefits, he said. CRMC will also pay 100 percent of the furloughed employees' medical benefits, Korth said.

Korth said many of CRMC's outpatient services had dropped to zero patient volume because of the ongoing pandemic.



"Over the past few weeks, the government has passed a number of mandates that have affected hospitals in regard to procedures and patient volume. CRMC, like other hospitals across the country, has drastically reduced patient volumes for two reasons: to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to prepare for a high surge in patients with COVID-19. As a result, CRMC must make adjustments in staffing for the long-term stability of the medical center," according to the release.

The furloughs have been made in "administrative and non-clinical areas, as well as with PRN (as needed) staff," according to the release. "Adjustments have also been made in outpatient clinical areas that now have low or no patient volume."

CRMC can quickly bring furloughed employees back, Korth said.

“We want the community to know that we are prepared for a high surge of patients when it comes,” states Paul Korth, CRMC CEO. “You may be asking why we are reducing workforce at a time like this, and the reason is simple. We must preserve our financial resources now in order to direct more of them to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen a significant reduction in revenues while we are not doing elective surgeries and procedures, and we must be good financial stewards for the hospital’s long-term success. Our community expects us to preserve our hospital for the long-term. We are doing everything we can to also look after our employees, both in the short-term and the long-term. When we begin receiving a large number of COVID-19 patients, we will be able to call staff back in and be able to care for them.”

Korth said hospital staff don't know how the ongoing pandemic will affect CRMC's finances.

CRMC remains open, as does its emergency department and urgent care.

But the hospital has stopped doing elective surgeries and much of the outpatient diagnostic testing has been rescheduled. Korth said normally, CRMC would do more than 200 diagnostic images per day, including things like X-rays, MRIs and CT scans. Now, they're doing 25-30 images per day, all emergency cases.

"Volumes have declined significantly throughout the building," Korth said. "We're continuing to provide the services that we need to during the pandemic."

Earlier Monday, Gov. Bill Lee announced the state has set aside \$10 million in grants for rural hospitals to keep them afloat during the crisis. Korth said CRMC will apply for funding with that grant, as well as money through the federal stimulus package passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump March 27.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: April 6, 2020

FICOSA ANNOUNCES FURLOUGHS

By Ben Wheeler

Ficosa North America announced temporary furloughs at the company's Cookeville facility. It's unclear how long these furloughs could last.

Ficosa North America announced temporary furloughs for an unknown number of employees Thursday.

Hampered by COVID-19, businesses across the country have implemented furloughs to alleviate the financial impact of the virus, Ficosa included.

Employees at both the Shelbyville, Kentucky, and Cookeville facilities will be affected. The \$50 million Cookeville facility opened in 2016, following the closure of the Crossville location, and employs over 600 people. It remains unclear how many



employees will be furloughed or for how long.

“We understand the impact this has on the lives of all of our Ficosa NA team members,” said Fred Zicard, vice president of Ficosa North America. “This is not a step we take lightly. No one could have anticipated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy.”

“Our customers have been temporarily shutting down their production lines, severely reducing demand for the components we manufacture. We value all of our employees and will resume operations as soon as possible.”

The company said in a press release that furloughed employees will be eligible for unemployment and COBRA until reinstated for work. The company will continue to contribute to life and disability insurance coverage for employees throughout the furlough.

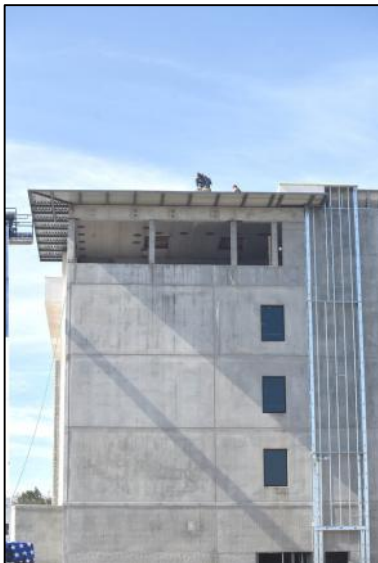
Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: April 9, 2020

CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES THROUGH COVID-19

Planning officials believe it's too soon to see the impact COVID-19 will have on the development boom in Putnam County. A worker helps construct a new hotel on Willow Ave., near I-40.

By Ben Wheeler

Cookeville planning officials say it's too early to tell what impact the March 3 tornado and the COVID-19 pandemic will have on construction and development.



Cookeville Planning Commission's March meeting was cancelled because of the virus, but those agenda items will be rolled into a virtual meeting in April, according to Planning Director Jon Ward.

“We have a healthy pipeline of approved projects,” Ward said, “so I think it's too early to ascertain what impact COVID-19 has had or will have on development.”

Ward said he's heard from some developers that demand is still high and they still plan to move forward on projects, but others have said they're taking a wait-and-see approach.

"We are evaluating the pandemic's impact on certain deadlines," Ward said. "Right now, we are continuing with business, and no action has been taken to extend any pending deadlines."

One project — the proposed shopping complex at Old Kentucky Road and 10th Street — is within the final extension. Developers must submit a final Planned Commercial Development plan to the planning commission for approval by July 30. If they don't, the property rezoned for the project would revert to a residential zone.

Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said it may be too soon to know the long-term impact to the development boom in Putnam County.

"In March, we had the largest month for construction that we've had since March 2019, as far as a dollar number," Porter said. "None of those new homes had anything to do with the tornadoes. A few people had gotten permits to repair their homes. Talking with some of the contractors that I've spoken with, they were already booked out a year in advance.

"We're going to have all these homes that were destroyed that will need to be rebuilt."

Instead of a slowdown, Porter believes the county will be short on contractors to rebuild tornado-damaged homes.

"I don't know if COVID-19 will have an impact on construction," Porter said. "It's hard to tell now. If it goes on for a long time, of course it will."

When it comes to commercial development, Porter said it's a whole different scenario.

"Depending on how long things last, will they be afraid to build new buildings?" Porter said. "I don't know. I spoke to one contractor, and they're taking off this week. I think part of it was Good Friday and Easter but also to do their part to stop the virus."

Herald Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 9 April 2020

PUTNAM HAS 87 COVID-19 CASES

By Lindsay McReynolds

Eighty seven people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Putnam County, according to the Tennessee Department of Health. That's an increase of two from Saturday.

"I'm told that all Signature cases have now been entered," Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said during a press conference Monday.

One of the five COVID-19-positive patients at CRMC Monday is from Signature HealthCARE, where 47 cases among the patients and staff were reported recently.

Signature CEO Lee Rooney said the majority of the people who tested positive didn't have symptoms.

Finley said CRMC has treated two COVID-19 patients from Signature.

"One is still here," she said. "The other one was discharged back there last week."

Finley said the number of CRMC employees who have tested positive remains at three.

It has been taking two to seven days to receive results, according to Finley.

A woman called the Herald-Citizen Friday to express concern that her husband, a patient at CRMC, was being tested a second time for the virus after receiving a negative result from the first COVID-19 test.

"It is sometimes necessary to test a patient more than once if we get a negative result, but the provider still suspects the patient may have had COVID-19," Finley said. "Some nursing homes also require a second negative test result before transfer to their facility."

Tennessee Health Commissioner Dr. Lisa Piercey said during the governor's press conference Monday that with any infectious disease, you can test negative one day and be positive by the end of the week.

"We're quickly getting to the point where if you think you need a test, you can get a test," she said. "We look forward to sharing details of that plan later this week."

Finley said any patient who has been tested for COVID-19 at CRMC is placed on the COVID-19 unit that hospital officials have established.

"All of those patients are on isolation, and it is safer and more efficient to have them cohorted in the same area," Finley said.

At CRMC, 274 people, including patients and staff, have tested negative for COVID-19. In Putnam County, 780 people have tested negative.

Monterey Mayor Bill Wiggins said the town does have three confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Tennessee is 5,610, according to the TDH Monday; 109 people have died, including one child; 1,671 people have recovered.

No deaths from COVID-19 have been reported in Putnam County, and 28 people have recovered.

The most COVID-19-related deaths in Tennessee, 26, were in Sumner County, where 17 residents reportedly died as a result of a COVID-19 outbreak at a nursing home.

Mayor Porter said drive-through testing for COVID-19 is available through the Putnam County Health Department on County Services Drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily through Friday.

"They are testing anyone who wants to be tested," Porter said.

Gov. Bill Lee's previously issued executive order that asks people to stay at home was extended Monday from April 14 to April 30.

Herald Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 13 April 2020

SMALL BUSINESSES TAKING A HIT

As COVID-19 continues to spread, small businesses are hurting financially because of the guidelines implemented.



Tennessee banks provided more than \$4.7 billion to small businesses through the paycheck protection program from April 3 to April 13.

Wilmer Perez completes a drive through order at Poet's South. Like many Tennessee small businesses, the popular cafe is trying to navigate the financial burden of COVID-19.

The program was a part of the \$2 trillion economic stimulus package and has allocated up to \$350 billion in loans to help small businesses maintain payrolls during the global pandemic.

"Bankers are working as hard and as fast as they can, into the night and through the weekend, to process and disburse PPP funds to struggling small businesses that are continuing to pay their employees," said Colin Barrett, president and CEO, Tennessee Bankers Association, in a press release. "This is an unprecedented time for bankers and borrowers."

One of those businesses is popular Cookeville café, Poet's.

"We are down to just one location, Poet's South," Owner Jeremy Crabtree said. "It continues to be a struggle, but the drive through has been our saving grace to stay afloat."

The business has closed the Poet's on the Square and Poet's Kitchen locations until further notice. Crabtree said it is probable that Poet's Kitchen could close for good, as business is down 55 to 60 percent.

"For now, we can continue to operate Poet's South and pay the bills for Poet's Coffee. As of now, we will not open Poet's Kitchen back up," Crabtree said. "We have taken too hard of a hit to try and maintain three locations."

Nine employees have been laid off from Poet's. Crabtree said some were willing to accept the layoff due to the virus and others because it wasn't their main source of income.

"We still have rent and utilities to pay on two locations that we are not using," Crabtree said.

Like many other Tennessee small business owners, Crabtree has applied for the PPP loan and a \$10,000 grant. He has yet to receive any notification of whether they have been approved, but if he does, he plans on bringing as many people back as he can.

"If we do get the \$10,000 grant, we will use it for rent and utilities on the locations that haven't been opened. If I receive the PPP loan, I will bring some folks back and give bonuses for the folks that stuck with me and worked hard through this," Crabtree said. "It's been hard, but it's also been an interesting time for me to rethink my business and how to reinvent the Poet's brand. It's been a bit of an eye opener on things that we do that really work and things that don't."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 15 April 2020

PUTNAM UP TO 95 CASES OF COVID-19

By Lindsay McReynolds

Putnam County has 95 cases of COVID-19, according to the Tennessee Department of Health Saturday. That's an increase of two from Thursday.

The first three deaths among people testing positive for COVID-19 in Putnam County were reported Thursday by Signature HealthCARE officials.

All three were patients at the nursing facility in Algood, where about half of Putnam's cases were reported after Signature CEO Lee Rooney announced that they tested all 320 of their patients and staff.

"Nursing homes in the United States right now are being devastated by COVID-19," Rooney said in a press conference Friday. "We did have three deaths, as of this morning (Friday). Two had signs/symptoms of COVID. One did not have symptoms."

Lee said Signature has had a lot of success with their COVID-19 unit.

"We've had two patients with two negative tests," he said.

One returned to the general population, and one went home with family.

COVID-19 results for another eight patients are pending.

The majority of the Signature employees who tested positive for COVID-19 have returned to work.

"Four are still waiting to return," he said.

Rooney said employees are required to have two negative COVID-19 tests before they return to work, as do patients before they are returned to the general population.

Rooney said new patients are not admitted to Signature until they have been tested for COVID-19 so that staff know to place them in the COVID-19 unit or in the general population.

Saturday, three patients who've tested positive for COVID-19 were being treated at Cookeville Regional Medical Center, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley.

"They are stable," she said. "Three have been discharged."

The hospital is following recommendations by the Tennessee Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control regarding when employees who've tested positive may return to work, according to Finley.

"Employees who test positive can come back to work after seven days post onset of symptoms plus 72 hours fever free without fever-reducing medication and improved symptoms," Finley said. "They must mask while working when they come back until 14 days have passed."

CRMC has had three employees who've tested positive for COVID-19. Those employees have been self-isolating at home.

Statewide, 6,762 people have tested positive for the virus, according to TDH Saturday; 719 have been hospitalized, and 3,234 have recovered. In Putnam County, 40 people have recovered.

The number of COVID-19 deaths in Tennessee is 145. Shelby County leads the state with the most COVID-19 deaths at 34.

The average age of someone testing positive for COVID-19 is 45. The majority of deaths from COVID-19 in Tennessee, 48 people or 33 percent, are people 81 years old and older.

Drive-through testing for COVID-19 continues 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Putnam County Health Department and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 18 April 2020

FOOD PANTRY STILL OPEN, NEW POLICIES TO

LIMIT SPREAD OF COVID-19

By Lindsay McReynolds

The only food pantry open five days a week in Putnam County is continuing to serve those who need help.



"Regularly, we see about 200 families a month," Helping Hands Executive Director Debbie Handlson said. "Everything has been so different in the past month, so we're seeing maybe 150 families right now because they think we're closed."

Helping Hands Executive Director Debbie Handlson places cans of green beans on a shelf at the food pantry in Cookeville.

COVID-19 has placed restrictions on many businesses and non-profits, so Helping Hands has changed the way they operate to keep employees and volunteers safe as well as those seeking help with food and utility bills.

Handlson said usually when someone calls for help, they schedule an appointment to meet them in the office face to face. Now, interviews are being conducted by phone, and food is picked up by appointment.

Those seeking assistance must answer questions about who lives in their house, income, cost of rent and education.

Food recipients are also required to bring a bank statement or utility bill with their address since Helping Hands serves only Putnam County residents.

"We have a mail slot in the front door where people can bring their information," Handlson said. "We take the food to the door."

In addition to making sure needy families know Helping Hands is open, Handlson said she's also concerned about the limited supply of food she's been able to get from Second Harvest.

"Usually there's 240 items we can choose from," she said. "It's down to 160."

Handlson usually gets meat through a grocery store program, but "there's none now because people are hoarding meat."

"I do get some tomorrow (Friday)," Handlson said last week. "But nothing on order for two weeks from now and no toilet paper.

"It's nice that your freezer is full, but when you think about other people not having what they need ... people really need to be aware the first week of the month, be thoughtful of what you're buying," Handlson said.

To ask for assistance from Helping Hands or to donate, call 526-3838 during business hours.

Helping Hands is open 9 a.m.-noon and 1-3 p.m. Monday through Friday at 421 E. Broad St. Donations may be mailed to Helping Hands, 421 E. Broad St., Cookeville, TN 38501.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 19 April 2020

GOV. LEE ANNOUNCES PLANS TO REOPEN STATE

By Lindsay McReynolds

Gov. Bill Lee announced plans Monday to reopen the state's economy after the number of COVID-19 cases experienced its lowest day-to-day increase at 2.3 percent, but stressed that social distancing has worked and must continue.

"For 17 consecutive days in Tennessee, we have seen only single-digit increases," the governor said during a press conference. "Our number of recovered patients exceeds the number of active cases."

Statewide, the number of COVID-19 cases is 7,238, according to the Tennessee Department of Health Monday. In Putnam County, 96 people have tested positive for COVID-19. That's an increase of one case from Saturday.

Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said 116 people were tested at the Putnam County Health Department's drive-through Monday. Testing will continue at the PCHD on County Services Drive in Cookeville 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

The number of COVID-19 deaths in Tennessee is 152, including three reported at Signature HealthCARE in Algood, but 3,575 people have recovered from the virus.

Tennessee Health Commissioner Dr. Lisa Piercey said the TDH will have a long-term care report of COVID-19 cases by Wednesday.

"We'll start reporting the number of cases and number of deaths for residents and staff at each facility," she said.

About half of Putnam's COVID-19 cases have been reported by Signature, where the CEO tested all 320 staff and patients after two cases were reported there.

Five people were being treated for COVID-19 Monday at Cookeville Regional Medical Center, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley. Two were admitted over the weekend, and all are in stable condition, she said.

More than 100,000 Tennesseans have been tested for COVID-19, according to the TDH.

"We continue to flatten the curve in Tennessee," the governor said. "Tennesseans have done what we've asked them to do. We thank you for all each one of you individually has done."

Gov. Lee said some businesses will be able to open as soon as Monday, April 27.

"It's my firm intent, May 1, the vast majority of businesses in 89 Tennessee counties be allowed to reopen," he said.

The governor said he's asked state parks to start reopening at the end of this week, which was followed by a press release from the state park service about plans to reopen most of the 56 state parks Friday.

However, the governor said he does plan to keep the same social distancing guidelines in place.

"Even beyond into the next few weeks ... we'll continue to have the same restrictions, the numbers of people in social gatherings," he said.

In response to a question from a Daily Memphian reporter about whether restaurants would be operating at 50-percent capacity, Lee said they're working with the restaurant association.

"We're going to put guidance out for counties that have state health departments," he said. "What happens in Shelby County may be a little different than what happens in the rest of the state."

In response to a question about his response to people who've said the shutdown is unconstitutional, Lee said, "Shutdowns occurred to save people's lives."

"The message is we can continue to open businesses and remain safe because we change the way we do business," he said. "Social distancing is what has slowed the spread of this virus."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 20 April 2020

'SOLUTION WORSE THAN PROBLEM'

Crowd at Courthouse urges reopening of Tennessee economy

Demonstrators pray on the Courthouse steps and lawn Sunday as they urge Gov. Bill Lee to reopen Tennessee.

By Ben Wheeler



While some maintained social distancing and wore masks, others hugged and greeted each other without protective equipment at the Putnam Courthouse Sunday as part of the FreeTN movement across the state.

Signs reading "Stop Killing Small Business," "Everyone is Essential," "Flatten the Fear," and more were held by protesters as part of the "Cookeville Prayer and Freedom Rally."

Honks of approval from passing cars rang out in support while a single counter-protester on an adjacent corner, dressed as a dinosaur, held a sign reading, "We didn't believe in science either."

Before the event, organizer Jennifer Greene said it wasn't in protest of any government official, but rather the protocols.

"Each organizer for each city has the ability to set the tone for their own city. We felt that we should include prayer to ask God to heal our land," Greene said. "The tone for Cookeville is two-fold. We all know we are living in perilous and unprecedented times. The second reason that we are going to come together is I think we are seeing how the solution to the COVID-19 pandemic is actually worse than the problem itself.

"We are seeing that businesses are shutting down. We are seeing that parents are struggling to feed their kids while they wait for government assistance to come in. People are being affected. They can't gather to worship."

Unemployment has reached historic levels as businesses deemed non-essential have been forced to close while the state tries to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Greene declined to comment when asked whether reopening the economy too soon could result in a second peak of cases.

“We are gathered here today as freedom-loving, hard-working, normal folks. COVID-19 is a problem. We are concerned about those who are vulnerable to this disease. Let there be no doubt here about that,” Greene said at the event. “We acknowledge and appreciate the challenges our great governor and other leaders have faced and the difficult decisions they have made. However, we are also troubled about the heavy handed response to this health concern.”

Despite COVID-19 guidelines on limiting gatherings to less than 10 people, Sunday's rally brought more than 100 to the courthouse lawn.

"If people feel like they shouldn't leave the house and want to self-quarantine, they can join us live on Facebook," Greene said. "But that freedom should be in the hands of the individual and not in the government."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 20 April 2020

WITH FULL MILITARY HONORS

Veterans Honor Guard still present at funerals

Veterans Honor Guard of the Upper Cumberland Commander Jim McAfee, right, and Mike McCarthy fold the ceremonial American flag during a funeral service Monday at Phillips Cemetery in Cookeville.

By Ben Craven | Herald-Citizen

Despite funerals being limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Veterans Honor Guard of the Upper Cumberland continues to carry out business almost as normal.



The Veterans Honor Guard provides military honors for deceased veterans who were honorably discharged from the United States military. Even with changes because of the virus, Commander Jim McAfee says the guard is able to honor veterans adequately while protecting itself and the family.

“Some of our members are a bit antsy about getting out, so we’ve got about five members that are not participating,” McAfee said. “On the other hand, there are about six or seven of us that are doing the funerals. We take whatever precautions we can. We’re not wearing masks because that doesn’t look good with the uniform, but we are still keeping a safe distance from everyone.

“Under normal circumstances, we would be at either the funeral or church where the funeral was conducted, and we would stand casket guard. During this time, we’re not doing that. If we did that, we would be right by the casket in other people’s space. Instead, we are meeting the funeral procession at the cemetery.”

Once the procession reaches the cemetery and the ceremony is done, the honor guard is able to fold the ceremonial American flag, perform rifle volleys and present the family with the flag, rifle casings, and a special honor guard coin. The honor guard is then able to leave.

The Veterans Honor Guard of the Upper Cumberland covers 14 counties, but has also performed services in Nashville, Chattanooga and Kentucky. It has honored eight veterans in April, down from the average of 20 a month. But McAfee is not convinced the dip is because of the pandemic.

“It’s probably a little bit below average, but we’ve been a little below average for about four months, before the coronavirus ever hit,” McAfee said. “That happens though. We’ll have a few slack months, then we’ll get hit with a really heavy month.”

The Veterans Honor Guard is always looking for new members, especially now. If you are an honorably discharged veteran and would like to help, call McAfee at (931) 516-3207.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 21 April 2020

FIFTH COVID-19 DEATH REPORTED IN PUTNAM

By Lindsay McReynolds

All five COVID-19 deaths in Putnam County have been patients at Signature HealthCARE, according to a communications manager for the facility Wednesday.

The fourth and fifth deaths from COVID-19 were included in new totals reported Wednesday by Ann Bowdan Wilder, communications manager for Signature, where 51 positive cases of COVID-19 have been reported. That number includes the 32 patients and 19 employees.

No COVID-19 deaths have happened at Cookeville Regional Medical Center, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley.

"We have six COVID-19 positive inpatients today," she said. "One was discharged, but we admitted one more. To date, CRMC has had a total of 15 COVID-19 positive inpatients with 9 of them having been discharged."

Putnam County has 100 COVID-19 cases, according to the Tennessee Department of Health Wednesday. That's an increase of five from Tuesday; 74 people have recovered from the virus, according to the TDH, and 1,097 people in Putnam County have tested negative.

"For the last 19 days, we've had a steady decline of new COVID-19 cases in Tennessee," Gov. Bill Lee said in a press conference Wednesday, the day after he announced plans to reopen non-essential businesses next week.

"We're going to open as many things as we can in 89 of our counties next week," he said. "We're going to get Tennesseans back to work as soon as possible."

The number of COVID-19 cases in Tennessee increased from 7,394 Tuesday to 7,842 Wednesday; 4,012 people have recovered from the virus, according to TDH.

The average age of someone who's tested positive for the virus is 45. The majority of deaths related to COVID-19 in Tennessee, 54, are people 81 years old and older.

Wilder said no new positive COVID-19 cases have been reported at Signature in Algood in the past 11 days and that the Putnam facility has admitted six COVID-19 positive patients from other facilities into its COVID-19 unit.

Six residents in the COVID-19 unit at Signature have had two negative tests within 48 hours and have moved out of the unit.

Free drive-through testing for COVID-19 continues to be available at the Putnam County Health Department on County Services Drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 22 April 2020

PUTNAM COVID-19 CASE COUNT AT 119

By Lindsay McReynolds

Putnam County's number of COVID-19 cases increased to 119 Wednesday, up four from Tuesday, according to the Tennessee Department of Health.

The number of those recovered increased from 77 to 81.

Putnam's number of deaths related to COVID-19 remains at five, and all of those were patients at Signature HealthCARE.

Twelve COVID-19 patients are being treated at Cookeville Regional Medical Center, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley. Two are in ICU, and all are in stable condition, she said.

As the reopening of the state's economy progresses this week, the TDH reported the state has 10,366 positive cases of the virus, and 5,140 people have recovered. The deaths from COVID-19 in Tennessee increased by seven to 195. The number of people hospitalized in the state went up by 132 to 1,013, and 168,549 Tennesseans have been tested.

Putnam County Health Department continues to offer drive-through testing for COVID-19 daily from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on County Services Drive.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 29 April 2020

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

By Ben Wheeler

Employees return to work as businesses in Putnam County reopen

Brookland Gordon helps a customer at Ready, Set, Grow in Cookeville. Gordon is one of the many retail employees returning to work with new guidelines.

Cookeville retail employees are returning to work as businesses open their doors again, but with some restrictions as they try to limit the spread of COVID-19.



Businesses that have decided to reopen their doors following Governor Lee's Executive Order 30 are doing everything from changing hours of operation and limiting customers to strictly taking appointments.

Children's clothing store Ready, Set, Grow is taking it seriously with owner Susan Chaffin saying they are bleaching everything they can and providing

masks to all employees and customers.

"We're doing everything we can to keep everyone safe and keep the doors open," Chaffin said. "For our formal wear, we're making appointments of not more than three people at a time. We're also doing curbside delivery and shipping as well."

Outdoor Experience is also taking precautions, limiting the number of customers in the store at one time to six.

"Counter tops and credit card machines are sprayed with disinfect between customers, Clorox wipes are readily available to both staff and customers, staff is equipped with Buff neck gaiters that can be worn over their mouths, and hand sanitizer is definitely a part of our routine," owner Heather Call said in an email.

"However, we do have other options for those not comfortable coming in as we can take orders via the phone and provide curbside pick-up and home delivery within the city limits."

Call said the staff has spent the last month building an e-commerce site with shipping, curbside and home delivery options at outdoorexperienceonline.com.

With people staying home from work, Call said there's been an uptick in people to get outdoors despite state park closures mandated by Tennessee officials.

"As people are staying close to home, I think they are reminded what nature has to offer," Call said. "Park closures have definitely put a damper on some of these activities but we are seeing lots of creativity in attempts to enjoy the great outdoors while distancing."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 4 May 2020

COOKEVILLE ORECK PLANT HAS THIRD COVID CASE

The Oreck plant in Cookeville has seen an employee test positive for COVID-19. The company said the three positive cases since March have not been related.

By Ben Wheeler

The third case of COVID-19 has been confirmed at the Oreck plant in Cookeville.



TTI Floor Care Corporate officials, the parent company of Oreck, sent a letter to employees notifying them of the case. That letter was sent to the Herald-Citizen.

According to the letter, the employee last worked the second shift on April 30 until the early hours of May 1.

TTI Vice President of Human Resources Lauren Murphy said employees who came into contact with the individual were placed on a 14 day quarantine and will require a test for COVID-19 before being able to return to work.

According to the letter, those employees who have not been contacted should not fear having interacted with the confirmed case.

The first two cases of COVID-19 came in March and the facility underwent a short shutdown, according to employees.

"We had two positive cases back in the beginning of March and to the best of our knowledge, those were unrelated and then this week ... we did have an employee that informed us this week that they had tested positive for COVID-19," Murphy said.

"Safety is our top priority and remains our top priority in keeping our employees, their families and the community safe. We've implemented several best practices in accordance with all the CDC guidelines and OSHA guidelines."

Some of the safety practices implemented at the plant, Murphy said, are mandatory temperature checks and health screenings prior to allowing access to the facility, any employee displaying symptoms are required to stay at home for a period of time, restricting visitor access and personal protective equipment for employees.

Employees were asked in the letter to monitor symptoms and check their temperature daily and if they had any symptoms to reach out to a medical professional and an employee of TTI for further instructions on when they can return to work.

The letter said, "Because of the aggressive cleaning schedule we have, we will not close the facility down."

The company employed 400 people as of January 1, 2020, according to data from the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce.

"We closed the space temporarily where the employee was working and disinfected it, hydrostatically cleaned that area," Murphy said. "I feel confident we did what we needed to do."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 5 May 2020

CIRCUIT COURT CLERK EMPLOYEE TESTS POSITIVE

By Lindsay Pride

In-person interaction has been temporarily suspended at the Putnam County Circuit Court Clerk's Office after an employee tested positive for COVID-19.

"I want to reassure everyone that our office is prepared," Putnam Circuit Court Clerk Jennifer Wilkerson said in a press release Monday. "We will continue to serve the public and will keep the office open and running without pause."

"However, in an effort to maintain the safety and health of our staff members as well as the public, we will limit in-person interaction with other individuals for a brief period of time," she said. "Our staff will be in the office, and we will continue to process payments and paperwork daily. We encourage everyone to use electronic means to communicate with our office whenever possible."

The circuit court clerk's office employs 27 people at the Putnam County Justice Center. In early March, they began rotating shifts to limit the number of people in the office at one time, and several employees started working remotely, Wilkerson said.

"Additionally, we placed a lock box in the lobby of the justice center for payments or other information to lessen in-person contact," she said. "We also increased our online presence and revamped our website to receive payments through the internet."

Petitions can be filed electronically, and fees have been waived to better assist attorneys and clients, according to Wilkerson.

Wilkerson said they are waiting for the results of COVID-19 tests of employees who worked with the employee who tested positive.

"We are cleaning numerous times daily," she said. "Employees have been wearing protective gloves and facemasks as well. We feel confident that the employee who tested positive likely contracted the virus outside of our office, but we feel that it is appropriate to take certain measures to keep others safe and healthy."

Wilkerson said the new restrictions in the circuit court clerk's office will not prevent court from happening.

"We will continue to have court proceedings as we have planned," Wilkerson said. "We have made adequate preparations to continue moving forward."

For information, email Wilkerson at jennifer.wilkerson@putnamcountyttn.gov or dloftis@putnamcountyttn.gov or call 931-528-1508.

Putnam County's COVID-19 cases increased by three Monday to 178.

Cookeville Regional Medical Center personnel were caring for three COVID-19 patients Monday, according to Melahn Finley, director of communications for CRMC, where a total of 28 patients have been treated. Across the state, 1,344 have been hospitalized for COVID-19.

Five people have died from COVID-19 in Putnam County, all at Signature HealthCARE, where 51 cases were reported several weeks ago.

Ninety-five people in Putnam County have recovered from the virus.

Across the state, 15,544 people have tested positive, an additional 559 over Sunday; 251 people have died, and 8,038 have recovered.

Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said Monday that drive through testing continues 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday at the Putnam County Health Department.

More than 5,000 masks were given away to residents by the state health department at the fairgrounds Monday.

About 2,000 masks will be available on a first-come, first-served basis from 3:30 to 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Putnam County Health Department on County Services Drive.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 11 May 2020

FIRST COVID-19 DEATH AT CRMC FRIDAY

Cookeville Regional Medical Center officials reported its first COVID-19-related death Saturday afternoon.

"With great sadness, Cookeville Regional Medical Center reports its first COVID-19 related death," according to a CRMC press release Saturday. "The death occurred in an elderly patient from Nashville with multiple comorbidities. The patient passed on Friday evening."

More specific information about the patient was not released.

"We want to express our sincere condolences to the family of this patient," CRMC CEO Paul Korth said. "We also want to remind the community that now is not the time to let your guard down. Everyone still needs to be taking precautions to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19."

CRMC was caring for five COVID-19 positive inpatients Saturday and has treated a total of 31 COVID-19 patients.

CRMC restated the following COVID-19 guidelines:

"To protect yourself and others from the spread of COVID-19, practice good hand hygiene by washing hands often and using alcohol-based hand sanitizer of at least 60% when soap and water are not available. Keep at least a six foot distance from others in public, avoid large gatherings, and wear a facemask to protect others in case you have the virus and are asymptomatic."

Korth said, "None of us want to unknowingly spread the virus to others, especially those that are high risk and immunocompromised. Follow these guidelines for yourself and for the safety others."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 16 May 2020

COVID-19 ANTIBODY TESTS ARE HERE

Fast Pace Urgent Health Care employee Tina Ealey, right, draws Brandy Minnear's blood for a COVID-19 antibody test.

By Paige Stantage

Fast Pace Urgent Health Care in Algood is offering COVID-19 antibody testing.

The test is done by analyzing a patient's blood sample. It determines if a patient has had past exposure to COVID-19.



"This test is intended for people who may have had COVID-19 symptoms, but are no longer experiencing those symptoms," according to a Fast Pace press release. "The test determines the presence of antibodies (your body's response) to the virus, and helps identify people who may have been infected with the COVID-19 virus."

The cost of antibody testing varies. It can depend on your insurance type and coverage and guidelines. Please check with your insurance carrier for more information.

Patients don't need appointments for the COVID-19 antibody test or the COVID-19 test.

Fast Pace Urgent Health Care in Algood at 562 West Main Street is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday; and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday.

"The antibody test is not intended to determine if a patient has a current infection," the release states. "Diagnosis of a current COVID-19 infection involves a different type of testing which is also available at Fast Pace Health. Rather, the antibody test can be used to help determine if a person had the infection but was asymptomatic, or experienced symptoms but was not tested at the time of infection.

"A positive result to the antibody test does not necessarily mean a person is immune to the virus. However, it can produce a likely indication that someone had a past infection. Information about how many people have been exposed to the virus and experienced no

symptoms or mild symptoms can provide valuable insight to healthcare professionals as they track and respond to the spread of COVID-19."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, "CDC is looking at data from antibody tests to estimate the total number of people who have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 in the United States. CDC is also using antibody testing to learn more about how the body's immune system responds to the virus and to explore how the virus spreads among people exposed to it."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 18 May 2020

TDH REPORTS SIXTH COVID-19 DEATH IN PUTNAM

By Lindsay Pride

A sixth person has died from COVID-19 in Putnam County, according to the Tennessee Department of Health.

The number of deaths have remained at five for several weeks. Those five were all patients at Signature HealthCARE in Algood.

Cookeville Regional Medical Center did report its first and only death from COVID-19 May 15, but the patient was an elderly person from Nashville.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Putnam County increased by four to 465 from Thursday to Friday, according to the TDH. That's an increase of 115 since last Friday, May 29; 223 people have recovered from the virus in Putnam County.

Statewide, 22,085 people have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the TDH, an increase of 406 since Thursday; 360 have died, and 1,710 have been hospitalized.

Eight COVID-19 patients were being treated at CRMC Friday, an increase of four since Thursday.

COVID-19 case counts in other Upper Cumberland counties: Macon, 130; Clay, 7; Pickett, 3; Smith, 32; Jackson, 17; Overton, 26; Fentress, 12; DeKalb, 37; White, 31; Cumberland, 111; Cannon, 17; Warren, 23; and Van Buren, 4.

COVID-19 testing and free mask distribution continue from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Putnam County Health Department on County Services Drive Monday through Friday.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 29 May 2020

COVID-19 CASES UP TO 507 IN PC

By Lindsay Pride

COVID-19 cases in Putnam County increased to 507 Tuesday, according to the Tennessee Department of Health. That's an increase of 11 since Monday and an increase of 97 since Tuesday, May 26.

Two COVID-19 patients are being cared for at Cookeville Regional Medical Center Tuesday, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley. Both are in stable condition. One is in ICU. CRMC has cared for a total of 43 COVID-19 patients. Two have died.

Across the state, 24,375 people have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the TDH, an increase of 821 since Monday; 381 people have died, and 1,792 have been hospitalized.

The number of people who've recovered increased by 352 in Tennessee to 15,916 Tuesday. In Putnam County, 248 people have recovered.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 2 June 2020

COVID-19 CASES UP TO 552

By Lindsay Pride

Putnam County has 552 people who've tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Tennessee Department of Health Monday. That's an increase of 23 since Saturday and an increase of 56 since last Monday, June 1.

Across the state, 26,944 people have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the TDH, an increase of 563 since Sunday; 421 people have died, and 1,948 have been hospitalized.

Three COVID-19 patients were being treated at Cookeville Regional Medical Center Monday, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley. Two were in ICU, and all were in stable condition.

In Tennessee, 17,563 people have recovered from COVID-19 in Tennessee, an increase of 341 since Sunday. In Putnam County, 361 people have recovered.

COVID-19 case counts in other Upper Cumberland counties: Macon, 181; Clay, 9; Pickett, 4; Smith, 37; Jackson, 19; Overton, 35; Fentress, 12; DeKalb, 40; White, 43; Cumberland, 125; Cannon, 34; Warren, 31; and Van Buren, 4.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 8 June 2020

COVID-19 CASES UP TO 571

By Lindsay Pride

Putnam County has 571 people who've tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Tennessee Department of Health. That's an increase of two since Tuesday and an increase of 52 since last Wednesday, June 3.

Across the state, 27,869 people have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the TDH, an increase of 294 since Tuesday; 436 have died, and 1,990 have been hospitalized.

Cookeville Regional Medical Center staff were caring for three COVID-19 patients Wednesday, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley. A total of 46 COVID-19 patients have been treated at CRMC.

In Tennessee, 18,516 people have recovered from COVID-19, according to the TDH, an increase of 503 since Tuesday. In Putnam County, 410 people have recovered, an increase of nine since Tuesday.

Case counts in other Upper Cumberland counties Tuesday according to the TDH: Macon, 186; Clay, 9; Pickett, 4; Smith, 37; Jackson, 19; Overton, 36; Fentress, 13; DeKalb, 41; White, 44; Cumberland, 127; Cannon, 34; Warren, 32; and Van Buren, 4.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 10 June 2020

FINALLY — PUTNAM SENIORS GRADUATE

Upperman High School Valedictorian Christian Mahan leads his fellow classmates to their seats Friday at Tennessee Tech's Tucker Stadium.

By Lindsay Pride

Graduating seniors at Cookeville, Monterey and Upperman high schools walked across a stage at Tennessee Tech's Tucker Stadium to receive their diplomas over the weekend in



mostly traditional ceremonies that had been postponed and revamped because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

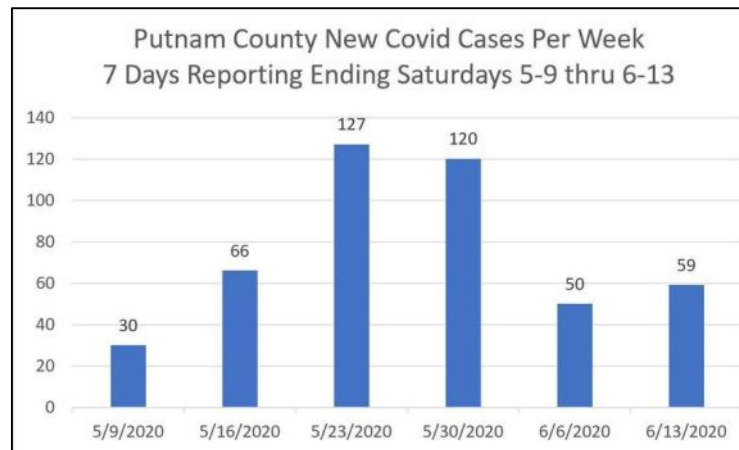
"As hard as it's been for our family and friends, we must remain thankful for the opportunity to stand here today and celebrate with our loved ones," Upperman High School Salutatorian Natalie Jo Nash said.

Cookeville High School Valedictorian Eli Apple said, "Change, both good and bad, has driven all of us here today."

Monterey High School Salutatorian Alex Garcia said during her speech Saturday night at the final graduation of the weekend, "After tornadoes, missing nine weeks of school and a pandemic, we finally got to graduate."

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Saturday, June 13, 2020

COVID-19 CASES UP TO 610



This graph shows new COVID-19 cases reported in Putnam County by week. Graphs for the statewide numbers and Upper Cumberland region are available on our website at Herald-Citizen.com.

Upper Cumberland Medical Society
By Lindsay Pride

Putnam County has 610 people who've tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Tennessee Department of Health Monday. That's an increase of 38 since Thursday, June 11.

Across the state, 31,160 people have tested positive for COVID-19, according to TDH, an increase of 728 since Sunday; 2,106 have been hospitalized, and 483 people have died.

Those who have recovered from the virus increased by 166 Monday to 20,062.

Cookeville Regional Medical Center staff were caring for two COVID-19 patients Monday, according to Hannah Davis, CRMC marketing and public relations specialist.

Case counts in other Upper Cumberland counties Monday according to the TDH: Macon, 207; Clay, 11; Pickett, 4; Smith, 41; Jackson, 20; Overton, 38; Fentress, 14; DeKalb, 41; White, 48; Cumberland, 133; Cannon, 34; Warren, 33; and Van Buren, 5.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Saturday, June 15, 2020

GARDEN TOUR SET FOR JUNE 27



Jean B. Jones shows off her fish pond to Rob Wright of the Keep Putnam County Beautiful Clean Commission, just part of her expansive garden at her home in Cookeville. Jones' garden will be one of the four featured in this year's Garden Tour. Keep Putnam County Beautiful Clean Commission

members say rain or shine, the tour will take place June 27.
Ben Wheeler | Herald-Citizen

By Ben Wheeler

Daisies, tulips and lilies — oh my.
Cookeville's annual Garden Tour is set to continue this year.
Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Garden Tour is still a go and set for Saturday, June 27 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Keep Putnam County Beautiful Clean Commission members say that rain or shine, the Garden Tour will still be held. This year's event hopes to teach attendees to incorporate sustainability in their lives while visiting gardens through the county.

“(Funds) go to benefit the organization, our mission is to do beautification and clean-ups across the county,” said Executive Coordinator Rob Wright “We do education programs, recycle talks. It's been a weird year to try and do that but typically we go to schools and run those programs.”

This year will feature four homes throughout the county and some of the best gardens around, including some new additions — chickens.

“We have four gardens, a few of them are the same. We have one though that's actually a chicken garden,” Wright said. “It's a chicken farm so that should be pretty cool.”
The gardens of Rosemary Ponte, Jean B. Jones, Dawson Davidson and Lana Emery will be the featured gardeners this year.

The organization has been busy as of late, with the recent completion of the beautification efforts to paint the life cycle of a butterfly on the recycling center at Lowe and Stevens Street.

Tickets to the fundraiser are \$15 and can be purchased at Johnson Nursery or online at www.cleancommission.com.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Saturday, June 16, 2020

COVID-19 CASES UP TO 655

By Lindsay Pride

Putnam County has 655 people who've tested positive for COVID-19, according to the Tennessee Department of Health Saturday. That's an increase of 25 since Thursday.

The active number of COVID-19 cases in Putnam County was 154 Saturday since 501 people have already recovered, according to the TDH.

Across the state, 34,446 people have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the TDH. That's an increase of 429 people since Friday; 524 people have died, and 2,266 people have been hospitalized.

Four COVID-19 patients were being treated Saturday at Cookeville Regional Medical Center, according to CRMC Director of Communications Melahn Finley. One was in ICU; all were in stable condition.

COVID-19 case counts in other Upper Cumberland counties: Macon, 219; Clay, 13; Pickett, 4; Smith, 49; Jackson, 21; Overton, 41; Fentress, 15; DeKalb, 42; White, 53; Cumberland, 137; Cannon, 23; Warren, 33; and Van Buren, 5.

COVID-19 testing continues at the Putnam County Health Department on County Services Drive from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: Saturday, June 20, 2020

*Read more about the people & places in Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>