

By Sarah Cavacini scavacini@palatkadailynews.com June 20, 2020 Publication: Palatka Daily News (FL) Page: A1 Word Count: 529

The line to get tested for coronavirus Friday in Palatka wrapped around the side of the Price-Martin Community Center.

Testing fell on the same day it was announced Putnam County reached 213 coronavirus cases, according to the Florida Department of Health.

Mary Garcia, the administrator of the state Department of Health in Putnam County, said Friday afternoon she estimates more than 500 free tests were conducted at Price-Martin, but officials didn't have an exact count by press time.

Epidemiologist Susan Lane said by noon Friday, staff had already tested hundreds of people. The event ran 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. and was free for all county residents.

“I think (getting tested) is really important because there's been a lot of gatherings and things happening in the community that have caused people to come into contact with people who are sick – well not necessarily sick, but positive,” Lane said.

Palatka makes up the majority of COVID-19 cases in the county, totaling 139. Lane said as the numbers continue to rise, getting tested is vital.

East Palatka resident Beatrice Knowles said she didn't know free testing was happening until someone told her and she didn't want to miss it.

“At my age, I don't need (coronavirus),” she said.

Residents started lining up 8:30 a.m. to get tested, and although most people showed no virus signs, Lane said she tested at least 25 people with coronavirus symptoms.

Tests were being shipped to labs around the state Friday afternoon. People with no symptoms will get their results back in four to seven days, and people presenting symptoms will know if they are positive in two to three days, Lane said.

“I'm here because it's best to know,” Palatka resident Lanika Robinson said Friday. “It's better to know than not to know.”

Florida had the largest increase of overnight coronavirus cases Friday as 3,822 were reported by the Florida Department of Health. The total number of cases in Florida since the outbreak began increased to 89,748 with 3,104 deaths.

Putnam County remained at six deaths since March. Testing increased to 4,984, not counting the Price-Martin tests.

The newest county COVID-19 cases were:

- \* A 63-year-old Palatka woman.
- \* A 45-year-old Crescent City woman.
- \* A 26-year-old Satsuma man.
- \* A 19-year-old Palatka man.

Palatka Mayor Terrill Hill said Friday testing is important because of the high number of cases in the city. He said it's not just the older generation being diagnosed, but also younger people.

“Our young people need to understand that COVID doesn't have an age that it looks (at) and targets,” Hill said. “COVID targets all citizens. ... At the end of the day, this pandemic has affected all of us. It's caused all of us to create a new norm.”

Palatka Daily News (FL)

Date: June 20, 2020

Page: A1

Copyright © 2020 Palatka Daily News, Community Newspapers, Inc. All Rights Reserved.