

NASCAR: RACING IS BACK AT DARLINGTON, WITH SOME CHANGES » SPORTS



CORONAVIRUS: PATRICK HENRY COMMUNITY COLLEGE HELD A VIRTUAL GRADUATION ONLINE. » LOCAL



MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

THE VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY FOR 130 YEARS

Sunday, May 17, 2020 • MARTINSVILLEBULLETIN.COM • Martinsville, Virginia \$2

The first day of Phase One of the reopening in Virginia was slow in Martinsville – except at salons.



City Council member Danny Turner and Shindig proprietor Tammy Pearson sit outside Shindig, waiting for customers to come for the outdoor dining.

PHOTOS BY HOLLY KOZELSKY/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

OSHA checked center's safety

A worker filed a complaint before COVID-19 infected six and led to one death.

By Kim Barto Meeks
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In the weeks before an outbreak of COVID-19 struck Young Williams Child Support Services, a complaint was filed with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) about the call center's efforts to prevent the virus's spread.

OSHA, a division of the federal Department of Labor, investigates potential health and safety hazards in the workplace. A complaint emailed to the agency on April 13 alleged, "During this COVID-19 crisis, certain employees are allowed to work from home while about 30% must stay in office and work. HR is handing out Lysol wipes every 3-4 days to wipe off."

The information was contained in a spreadsheet from the OSHA website listing "closed federal and state plan valid COVID-19 complaints through May 4." The agency keeps confidential the identity of workers who make complaints.

No further information on the investigation or its outcome is available. An email sent Wednesday to a labor department FOIA officer was not immediately returned.

This week, the Virginia Department of Social Services confirmed that six Young Williams employees have tested positive for the coronavirus. One, Jennifer Horsley, reportedly died Monday.

A former employee shared with the Bulletin a post by an employee who says she is the seventh case and is being isolated at home, but the newspaper has not been able to reach her for verification.

The Virginia Department of Health considers two or more diagnoses in the same location to be an outbreak.

DSS spokesperson Cletisha Lovelace said all Martinsville Young Williams employees have now been given the opportunity to work remotely. As of this week, she said, only nine of the call center's 130 employees have chosen to continue working on-site, and they are spread throughout the 18,412-square-foot offices located in the Clocktower Building off Commonwealth Boulevard.

"Prior to notification of a positive

SEE COMPLAINT | A8

Back in business

By Holly Kozelsky
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Martinsville has been slow to jump on board with the governor's loosening of lockdown restrictions. People aren't going out in droves to shop or eat – but they are getting their hair done.

Hair stylists say people have been going crazy over the limited appointments that are available, and restaurateurs are saying they hope people will start taking advantage of the relatively new ability to go back out to eat.

On May 9, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam signed Executive Order 61, which allowed Phase One of the lifting of public health restrictions throughout the commonwealth, except for hard-hit Northern Virginia, that were imposed to stem the deadly spread of the novel coronavirus.

Phase One allows retail establishments to open at 50% capacity — based on the facility's occupational license — restaurants to have

SEE OPEN | A9



Signs like this are typical on doors across the region.



Kim Williams of Reflections said the new health-safety precautions are working well, and clients have been calling to get appointments now that salons have reopened.

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WEATHER

Mostly cloudy, clearing slightly in the evening.

79 HIGH | 62 LOW

For detailed weather information, see Page A2



Gov. Northam says he will listen if localities urge caution.

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Positive coronavirus cases continue to spike

By STAFF REPORT

Two more positive cases for the coronavirus in Henry County and another hospitalization in Martinsville emerged Saturday as cases in the West Piedmont Health District in May continue to spike past the total for March and April combined.

These are added to the four cases announced Friday to give the county 34 total cases, but 18 of them have been diagnosed since May 1. Martinsville now has five and three this month – and it's the second hospitalization in two days.

Nancy Bell, spokesper-

son for the West Piedmont Health District, made the announcements in emails sent Saturday afternoon. Cases are listed in the municipality where the person lives.

The latest hospitalization in Martinsville is a male in his 50s with an unknown exposure to the virus. He is hospitalized to be treated for COVID-19.

The cases in Henry County are a male in his 30s and a woman in her 50s.

The man had a known exposure to the virus, but the female had unknown exposure. Both are being isolated

at home, and their close contacts have been identified.

On Friday, a woman in her 40s from Martinsville was hospitalized. She had unknown exposure to the novel coronavirus. Her close contacts have been identified.

None of the cases in Henry County had to be hospitalized, but two of those identified Friday were young males – one in his 20s and one in his teens. The others are women in their 30s and 50s.

The teenager and female in her 30s had known exposures to the virus, but the

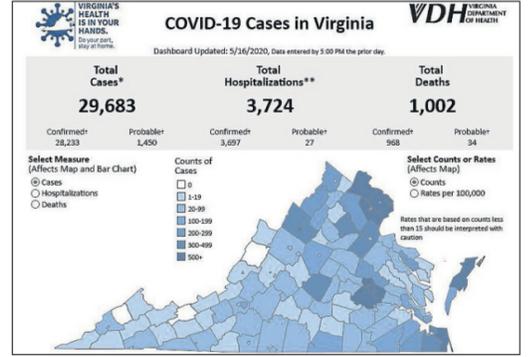
others did not.

All four are isolated at home, and their close contacts have been identified.

The Virginia Department of Health's data report on Saturday morning showed that deaths across the commonwealth had surpassed 1,000.

VDH reported Saturday that there are 29,683 cases and 1,002 deaths statewide. Some 3,724 people have been hospitalized.

That number did not include Saturday's cases in Henry County. The county has had six hospitalized and two deaths. Three of Mar-



tinsville's four cases hospitalized.

Patrick County has six cases. Franklin County, also part of the West Piedmont

District, has 30 and now has one death.

By comparison Danville now has 44 cases, and Pittsylvania County has 23.

Complaint

From Page A1

test result for COVID-19, the call center was actively working to move employees to telework to mitigate the potential for employee exposure," Lovelace said. "This required some additional time and effort to address technology access and security issues for employees working remotely.

"However, multiple CDC-recommended actions were in place, including masks being made available, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, routine daily cleaning and distancing between workers in large three-sided cubicles with high walls."

As for those who remain in the office, Young Williams "is working with the remaining nine employees to address their individual circumstances," Lovelace said. "Social distancing guidelines have been implemented in common areas. The work stations within this facility are large and have high wall stations with glass partitions approximately 5 feet tall between all employees. The facility and workstations exceed the recommenda-

tions for distancing, particularly given the number of employees who are teleworking."

Susan Blankenship was the first Young Williams employee to report a positive test result for COVID-19. She was last in the office on May 1. Since she was diagnosed, Blankenship has been self-isolating at her home in Patrick County. She remains in quarantine, for now, because of a recurring low-grade fever.

Once health officials clear her to return to work again, Blankenship said her plan is "to work from home, now that my employer has equipment available for the workers that have slow internet speed."

Before her diagnosis, however, she said working from home was not an option because of the lack of high-speed internet in her rural area of Patrick County.

"The requirements for the system that I use in my job, the high-speed internet requires 100 megabytes per second in order to properly run those systems. In Patrick County, where I live, the current speed is only 10 megabytes per second. I can only be upgraded to 15," Blankenship told the Bulletin in an interview on May 5.

"Therefore, I could not work

from home. If I had been able to work from home, I would be doing that, and none of this would be happening."

Blankenship was tested for COVID-19 at Sovah Health Martinsville on May 2. She was notified of the positive result on the evening of May 4. After hearing the news, Young Williams temporarily closed the office for cleaning and sanitation, officials said.

"Upon notification of a positive test result for COVID-19 by an employee, the center's management immediately contacted all employees and instructed them not to report to work. The call center was officially closed at 8:22 a.m. that day [Tuesday, May 5]," Lovelace said. "All employees who had already arrived were directed to return home. All employees received pay for that day."

Once employees had left the building, Lovelace said, "Two separate deep cleanings were performed in accordance with CDC guidelines. The janitorial staff cleaned all common area surfaces and workstations. A second vendor performed a thorough deep cleaning throughout the office, to include hard-to-reach areas throughout the building."

As of May 6 three employees had been diagnosed with the virus.

"All employees in the were emailed a memorandum formally notifying them of the positive test results, explaining the facility sanitation process, and providing them with instructions on how to have tests for COVID-19 ordered by the Virginia Department of Health," Lovelace said. "Once the call center was notified of additional positive results for COVID-19, a second round of deep cleanings were performed."

Further details were provided in an email from Young Williams Project Manager Darren Hopkins to the company's Martinsville staff on the night of May 6. Hopkins shared the news of three employees' testing positive and said the last day any of them had been in the office was May 1.

"After we received notice of the first positive test result on Tuesday, May 5th, we immediately closed the site to allow our outside janitorial companies the ability to thoroughly clean the facility," Hopkins stated in the email.

"This deep clean included the cleaning and sanitization of all common area surfaces and workstations. It also included the appli-

cation of a top grade disinfectant that was sprayed evenly throughout the office, spreads into hard to reach crevices, and clings to every surface it coats. All cleaning was done according to CDC guidelines.

"In addition to this enhanced cleaning and sanitation, we will offer all employees that are currently not teleworking, the opportunity to telework once we have secured all the necessary technical equipment," the email stated. "For those who want to continue to work from the office, we have implemented health screening procedures outlined by the Virginia Department of Health."

Lovelace said all employees returning to work at Young Williams when the office reopened May 6 were asked screening questions about symptoms such as fever and respiratory problems.

"If an employee answered 'yes' to any of the questions, they were not permitted inside the facility. Employees permitted into the call center were provided access to masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, disinfectant, and other PPE, as needed," Lovelace said.

Kim Barto Meeks is a reporter for the Martinsville Bulletin. She can be reached at 276-638-8801.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Martinsville Bulletin Announces Grant Program to Provide Marketing Assistance to Local Businesses Impacted by COVID-19

As a leading provider of news, information and advertising in Southside Virginia, today we are proud to announce the launch of our Local Marketing Grant program. This program offers matching marketing funds to local businesses whose livelihood has been impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

Since our inception, the Martinsville Bulletin has partnered with local businesses across our region to deliver their message to customers in both times of prosperity and in times of great challenge. While the COVID-19 virus has created change and difficulties for us all, the ability of our local business community to market to their customers remains essential to their, and all of our, sustainability and recovery. Our company's greatest assets, by far, are the local communities we serve, and we're firmly committed to supporting them through this grant program.

This program will be available to locally owned and operated businesses impacted by the COVID-19 virus, and will provide matching advertising grants for use in the Martinsville Bulletin print and digital publications and services. This builds upon our existing commitment to our local business community through such successful initiatives as our Buy Local gift card program, and our programs to highlight local restaurants offering carry-out and delivery.

Through our Local Marketing Grant program, we are enabling small business owners to access a much broader portfolio of marketing products. This program will allow us to take a far more comprehensive approach to overcoming the unique challenges our local business partners face as a result of this pandemic.

Grants will range from \$250 to \$15,000 each month, and will be awarded in April, May and June. Applicants may apply online at <https://www.martinsvillebulletin.com/pages/local-marketing-grant.html>.

As a trusted source of news and information for the communities that we serve, we feel that we are uniquely positioned to assist our local business community during these trying times. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen record-setting trends in both page views, and users who are accessing our content both in our printed newspaper, and at martinsvillebulletin.com. These audiences present a tremendous opportunity for our local business community to get their messaging out to local residents each and every day.

During these uncertain times, we believe each of us can do our part to help our community come through the other side of this pandemic, stronger and more united to tackle the challenges that lay ahead. We ask that you join us in supporting our local business community in the weeks and months to follow.

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN



Kelly Mirt
Publisher

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

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