

EV-W Schools extends lunch distribution from 10 to 12 noon

Wednesday, March 18: The Eden Valley-Watkins School District is delivering meals for students at four sites:

- Door #12, EV-W High School, Eden Valley;
- Door #1, Watkins Elementary, Watkins;
- The Church of Our Lady, Manannah;
- St. Nicholas Catholic Church, St. Nicholas.

Pick-up hours have been extended from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

The district will start meal deliveries on Monday, March 23. There is a survey on the district web to sign up – at www.evwk12.mn.us under the “Coronavirus (COVID-19)” tab or contact Jessica Heying in food service at jheying@evwk12.mn.us.

New Ulm bishop suspends masses through March

Wednesday, March 18: Bishop John M. LeVoir of the Diocese of New Ulm has suspended all public masses until the end of March. The Diocese of New Ulm includes the Church of Our Lady in Manannah. “I am concerned that all people be safe during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said LeVoir. “Consequently, due to the public health recommendations from President Trump’s newly issued guideline that over the next 15 days, Americans should not gather in groups of more than ten people, I am immediately suspending all public masses in the Diocese of New Ulm from Wednesday, March 18, until at least Tuesday, March 31. All Catholics in the diocese are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass during this time. The fundamental operating principles of the Diocese of New Ulm as we face this pandemic are prevention or the slowing down of the spreading of the virus, as well as the spiritual well-being of our parishioners, while not endangering oneself.”

In addition, Bishop John M. LeVoir ordered:

- Effective today (March 18), all gatherings of ten people or more should be canceled or postponed until at least March 31. Consider live streaming of meetings.

- All funerals are to be private and not public; that is, for the immediate family only.

- The celebration of infant baptisms should also follow the ten-person limit.

- I ask that church buildings be open during the day, especially on the weekends, so that people can pray in church.

- I ask that clergy be available to parishioners for communion (especially for sick/homebound), for confession, and blessings.

MDH issues updated guidance on COVID-19 testing criteria

Tuesday, March 17: The Minnesota Department of Health announced that, due to a national shortage of COVID-19 laboratory testing materials, the state is forced to make adjustments to its testing criteria to focus on the highest priority specimens, including hospitalized patients. Health care workers and those in congregate living settings such as long-term care will also be given high priority.

The Minnesota Department of Health sent a message to Minnesota health care providers on Tuesday, March 17, with the following guidance:

- Hospitals and health care systems should assess whether they can send specimens to a commercial reference laboratory, and determine their own priorities for testing and assess whether these labs have restrictions.

- Limit sending specimens to the Minnesota Department of Health to those from hospitalized COVID-19 patients. At this time, MDH can also test ill health care workers and ill persons living in congregate settings.

- Providers should inform all patients with undiagnosed fever and/or acute respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath), even those not able to be tested, that they should self-quarantine for 7 days after illness onset, or 72 hours after resolution of fever (without taking fever-reducing medications), and improvement of respiratory symptoms, whichever is longer. Patients should seek care if their symptoms become severe. They should call ahead to health provider when possible.

- Patients with symptoms who are not able to be tested should isolate themselves from household and intimate contacts as much as possible. Household and intimate contacts of these individuals should limit their activities in public for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

People who have a suspected or known case of COVID-19, but who are not severely ill, should stay home while they recover. If they have severe underlying health conditions or are older adults, they should contact their health care provider to see if they have additional recommendations for them. If someone develops severe symptoms they should call ahead to their health care provider if possible prior to seeking care.

Gov. Tim Walz sent a letter to vice president Mike Pence last week calling for an immediate increase in the number of COVID-19 laboratory tests available to Minnesota.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread primarily by respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza spreads. It can also spread when people touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.

The Minnesota Department of Health has set up a COVID-19 hotline open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at 651-201-3920.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety has a hotline to field questions about issues associated with community mitigation, including school and business impacts. That line is also open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at 1-800-657-3504 (toll-free).

Paynesville Schools starts breakfast and lunch program

Wednesday, March 18: During the statewide school closure – Wednesday, March 18, to Friday, March 27 – the Paynesville Area School District will distribute breakfasts and lunches for all residents age 18 and younger at eight sites in the district, with the help of Paynesville Motor and Transfer; the district’s bus contractor. Pick-up times for the breakfasts/lunches will begin at 7:30 a.m. and end at 8:15 a.m. each weekday.

Distribution sites are:

- Paynesville Area Elementary School (217 W. Mill Street);
- Koronis Civic Arena (28780 Koronis Drive, Paynesville);
- Five-Mile Bridge (Highway 4/55, east end of Lake Koronis);
- Hawick Methodist Church (15988 232nd Avenue, Hawick);
- Regal (former County Line Bar parking lot, 145th Street NE);
- St. Margaret Catholic Church (23189 Highway 4, Lake Henry);
- St. Martin Parish (111 Maine Street, St. Martin);
- St. Agnes Catholic Church (100 Lillie Avenue, Roscoe).

Childcare: Per the governor’s directive, the school district is also responsible for providing childcare programming for emergency service personnel, including nurses and health care workers, EMTs, law enforcement personnel, firefighters, and public health personnel. Families who believe they are eligible for this care should contact Community Education at 243-7570.

No Schoolwork: Paynesville Area School personnel are preparing a Distance Learning plan in case school operations are shut down for a significant period of time in response to COVID-19. The planning period is Wednesday, March 18, to Friday, March 27. During this non-instructional period, as school employees actively participate in professional development, students will have no schoolwork. Minnesota schools are scheduled to resume normal operations on Monday, March 30, which is scheduled as an in-service day for Paynesville, so they would resume normal classes on Tuesday, March 31.

Senior Dining providing “grab and go” meals and frozen meals

Wednesday, March 18: Congregate dining at Senior Dining at the Paynesville Area Center has been suspended. From Monday, March 16, to Wednesday, March 18, a “grab and go” takeout option was provided for these diners, along with 10 frozen home meals. Frozen meals can be refrigerated for 5 days and kept in the freezer for 30 days.

Home-delivered meals – commonly called “Meals on Wheels” – also delivered 10 frozen home meals on Wednesday, March 18. Beginning Thursday, March 19, meal delivery will take place once every two weeks with two weeks of meals until further notice. Staff will provide a “wellness check” phone call to “Meals on Wheels” clients on Wednesday, March 25, to ensure health and safety.

From Monday, March 30, to Wednesday, April 1, hot “grab and go” meals will be available for pickup by congregate diners, along with an additional 10 frozen meals. “Meals on Wheels” will deliver 1 hot meal and 10 frozen meals on these days.

This modified service will continue in two-week increments until the Minnesota Department of Health advises that it is again safe for seniors to participate in congregate dining.

CentraCare rescheduling appointments, elective surgeries

Tuesday, March 17: Due to the presence of COVID-19, CentraCare Health will be canceling and rescheduling patients who have elective procedures, surgeries, physicals, and/or well exams. This action is being taken to provide safe care for patients, reduce the speed of COVID-19 spread, conserve necessary supplies, and redistribute CentraCare staff and providers as needed throughout this pandemic.

Patients with the following will be contacted to be rescheduled for: elective patient procedures/surgeries; most physicals and well exams, including pediatrics; chronic visits that can be postponed or done by phone or video; and many outpatient rehab appointments.

Starting Wednesday, March 18, CentraCare will screen patients at the front door before they enter clinic locations. After entering, patients must practice social distancing, keeping a distance of at least 6 feet from others, if possible. CentraCare facilities will work to separate patients with symptoms of respiratory illness from other patients.

If you have symptoms of respiratory illness, please do one of the following:

- Visit CentraCare eClinic for online, phone, or a video visit, 24/7; this screening is free of charge.

- Call CentraCare Connect at 320-200-3200 to speak with a nurse, 24/7; this will ensure being directed to the correct care.