

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 1 of 66

- [1- Attention: Groton Area School District Patrons](#)
- [2- Calling 811 remains an essential safety step, even during a pandemic](#)
- [3- State Parks Open for Solitary Exercise, Some Facilities Closed](#)
- [4- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [6- Private Time at the Fitness Center Sunday](#)
- [7- AREA COVID-19 CASES](#)
- [8- COVID-19 Update](#)
- [9- SD County Map of transmission of COVID-19](#)
- [10- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [11- Weather Pages](#)
- [14- Daily Devotional](#)
- [15- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [16- News from the Associated Press](#)



## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans

### **Attention: Groton Area School District Patrons**

The election for the Groton Area Board of Education has been postponed to Tuesday, June 2, 2020. This is the corresponding date of the 2020 presidential primary election. Three candidates running for two open positions on the school board are Jason Bickel, Steven R. Smith and Grant Rix. In order to vote in this election, you must be a registered voter of the Groton Area School District. If you are in doubt about your registration status, contact your local county auditor. Voter registration ends May 18, 2020.

On election day, the school district will operate polling sites from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at Andover Other Place, Bristol Community Center, Columbia Legion and Groton Community Center. Please note that Andover and Bristol patrons will not cast a presidential primary vote at their location. Day County will hold primary voting in Webster only. With respect to COVID-19 issues, please make good health related decisions when voting on election day.

In-person absentee voting is available at the school business office located at 406 North 2nd Street in Groton from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Friday. Voters may vote in-person up until 5:00 PM on the day before the election.

Voters may also vote absentee by mail or absentee by messenger, in the event of confinement due to sickness or disability. To receive a South Dakota Absentee Ballot Application Form call Mike Weber, at 605-397-2351 extension 1008, or email [mike.weber@k12.sd.us](mailto:mike.weber@k12.sd.us). Forms are also available on-line at [www.grotonarea.com](http://www.grotonarea.com) and [www.sdsos.gov](http://www.sdsos.gov).

Mike Weber  
Election Superintendent  
Groton Area Schools

## Calling 811 remains an essential safety step, even during a pandemic

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission is urging South Dakotans to be especially vigilant about utilizing 811's Call Before You Dig service to mark underground utilities and to exercise extreme caution with excavating projects.

"Underground utilities are always essential to the health and safety of South Dakota citizens, but with the current COVID-19 pandemic, these utility services are more important than ever," said PUC Chairman Gary Hanson. "Hospitals and their staffs rely on electricity and broadband networks to provide the best care for those in need. Our health care systems are already being stretched thin and damage to these utilities would only cause further strain to those on the front lines," he continued.

Whether you're landscaping, starting to build a new home, or putting up a new fence, calling 811 at least two days before starting any kind of digging should always be your first step. Those two days give utility providers time to go out and mark all the natural gas, electricity, communications, water and sewer lines on your property. This simple step helps avoid injury to those working and damage to the essential infrastructure that not only keeps utilities functioning properly, but also connects you to the world outside your front door.

"Each of us has been asked to do our part to flatten the curve of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and making major changes to our daily routines. These necessary changes have made access to quality broadband more essential now than ever before. With students using distance learning to continue their education and many adults working from home, we really rely on quality internet to function in our everyday lives. Preserving those connections by following safe digging practices is important," stated PUC Vice Chairman Chris Nelson.

Uneven surfaces, erosion and previous digging projects can all cause the depths of utility lines to vary and change over time, enhancing the risk of hitting an underground utility. For this reason, every digging project warrants a call to 811. Striking even a single line can result in service disruptions, serious injuries, and costly repairs.

"Coronavirus has caused a lot of uncertainty but one thing you can be certain of is calling 811 will help ensure you remain safe and connected while working outdoors. Spending a little time outdoors is important for our health; especially during this outbreak when we're spending so much time at home. Remember whether you're working, playing or just soaking up some sun, practicing safe distancing is an essential step to help flatten the curve no matter where you are," said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen.

South Dakota 811 is a free service. Homeowners and excavators with upcoming, outdoor construction projects must contact the South Dakota 811 center 48 hours before digging, excluding weekends and holidays. The center will then quickly notify all affected utility companies of your upcoming excavation plans and utility companies will dispatch crews to mark the underground lines at the respective dig site. To learn more about 811 and safe digging practices, visit [www.SD811.com](http://www.SD811.com).

## State Parks Open for Solitary Exercise, Some Facilities Closed

PIERRE, S.D. – Game, Fish and Parks officials say that while some facilities are closed, state parks remain open, allowing visitors to engage in solitary recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Parks and open spaces are essential resources for physical health and mental wellness," said State Parks Director Scott Simpson. "We believe you can safely be active outside while following the social distancing and other guidelines provided by Governor Noem and the CDC."

The SD Department of Health says that the parks provide a good opportunity for individuals to get out and enjoy some much-needed exercise.

"While enjoying your time outside, remember to continue to follow the social distancing guidelines of staying 6 feet apart," said Colleen Winter, Division Director, South Dakota Department of Health.

Simpson said visitors should choose activities such as walking, biking, birdwatching and fishing that avoid shared spaces and maintain social distancing guidelines.

Park offices are closed, and staff are primarily working from home through May 1. Shared spaces in the parks, such as comfort stations, fish cleaning stations, and visitor centers are also closed through at least May 1.

Campsites, cabins and lodges are open for stays at this time. Cabins and lodges will be reservable based on the availability of cleaning resources and staff at each park. Park staff will be reaching out to cabin and lodge reservations holders before their stay to discuss appropriate steps.

Simpson encourages visitors to consult [gfp.sd.gov](http://gfp.sd.gov) before heading to the parks, as the situation could change.

"We are evaluating the circumstances every day, as is the rest of the country," he said. "We understand that you may have questions and concerns about visiting during this time. Everyone must make mindful decisions as we care for ourselves and our families, and staying home is an option available to you."

If you do visit the parks, Simpson offers the following guidelines:

Refrain from using the parks if you are exhibiting symptoms of illness.

Follow CDC guidance on personal hygiene prior to and during use of parks.

Be self-sufficient. Prepare for limited access to public restrooms, showers and water fountains.

Be self-contained. Leave these public spaces as clean as you found them.

Limit contact with shared spaces and surfaces, like door handles or picnic tables. Use hand sanitizer if you do touch them.

While on trails, warn other users of your presence as you near, and step aside to let others pass.

Follow CDC guidance on the recommended size of social gatherings. Maintain proper physical distance at all times.

Observe CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals at all times. If this is not possible, find an alternate location or depart that space.

Be respectful of check-in and check-out times so staff have time to properly clean between guests.

Consult [gfp.sd.gov](http://gfp.sd.gov) for up-to-date guidelines on park use.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 4 of 66

## Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Well, I knew we were in this for the long haul, but it's still sort of startling to type, "#40 in a series." On the other hand, we are where we are. I'm relatively sure there will be plenty more of these before we're on the other side of this thing.

The numbers today reflect the fact that yesterday my source did not update as frequently as usual, so we're looking at reporting from a couple hours more than 24 here. Still, our trend appears to be holding. We now have 272,502 cases reported from 50 states + DC and 4 territories, a 16% increase from yesterday. I feel as though the early adopters of shelter-in-place restrictions are starting to see benefits as CA and WA move down the list, both in numbers of cases and in deaths reported. That gives me some hope that the sacrifices we're all making—some of us far more than others—may be paying off. Top 10 states are: NY – 102,870, NJ – 29,895, MI – 12,670, CA – 11,987, LA – 10,297, FL – 9577, MA – 8966, IL – 8904, PA – 8420, and WA – 6669. The top 2 states, NY and NJ, still have close to half of the cases, but their rates of increase are at 11% and 17% respectively, which is decent, and the top 10 still are in there at 77%. 11 more states have over 2000 cases reported, 7 more are over 1000, 9 more + DC are over 500, and 13 more + PR and GU are over 100. Only VI and MP are reporting less than 100 cases.

There have been 7046 deaths reported in 49 states, DC, and 3 territories. NY has 2935, NJ 647, MI 478, LA 370, WA 279, CA 265, and IL 211. 7 more states report over 100 deaths, 2 more over 50, 22 more – DC and PR over 10, and 11 + GU and MP are reporting less than 10 deaths. Additionally, WY and VI have still not reported any deaths.

Quick update on antiviral therapies:

Something new—another Ebola prospect—has gained some interest. The drug is favipiravir, an RNA polymerase inhibitor. (RNA polymerase is an enzyme needed by RNA viruses—like influenza, Ebola, and coronaviruses—to replicate in your cells.) There were clinical trials in China which had promising results, but the Japanese company which makes and markets the drug says those results were not definitive and more clinical trials are needed. Favipiravir appears to work better on people with low levels of the virus, so early in infection, resulting in reduction of symptoms and faster viral clearance by the patients. It has been approved for human use for influenza in Japan for a few years, but has not yet been approved in the US. I don't know where it is in the approval process, but the FDA is resisting calls to skip steps, even as a 100-person clinical trial gets underway in Japan. The goal of this trial is to establish effectiveness and safety and to begin to figure out dosing and scheduling.

If you're getting impatient with the FDA's foot-dragging, here's something to consider: If this drug is most effective in early-stage infection, that means you're going to be giving it at a point when you don't know whether the patient really needs it. Remember that most people with Covid-19 will never get very sick, even without treatment. So you'd be proposing to give this drug, not to people who are seriously ill, maybe dying, when it seems worth a try to take a risk; you'd be giving it to a whole bunch of people who might not even need it—because you have to give it before you know how bad things they're going to get. That shifts the cost/benefit calculation. As a physician said about trials of a different drug, "For most any infectious disease, I think the earlier we start drugs the better. But it's a risk versus benefit question. What if this drug causes liver toxicity in 50% of the people, and we've given it to somebody who was probably going to do well without it?" There's the difficulty. We'll keep an eye on this one and see what develops.

We talked a while ago about remdesivir, another antiviral created for use against Ebola. This drug is what's called a nucleotide analog. Nucleotides are essential building blocks for viral RNA, which your cells make as they replicate the virus. A nucleotide analog mimics the correct nucleotide, but is actually a faulty version that gets in the way and stops the whole replication process. Randomized clinical trials are underway, but in a paper published based on tests (not an official clinical trial) in a very small number of seriously ill patients, there was evidence of efficacy in treating the virus, but also some potential safety concerns. Patients treated showed elevated levels of liver enzymes, generally an indication there has been liver damage. Hard to know what this means since the number of patients was small, all of them were very ill, and liver damage can be a thing in serious cases of Covid-19. The two randomized trials, one trying



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 5 of 66

a 5-day dosing schedule and the other trying a 10-day dosing schedule, should yield results in the fairly near future, and then we'll have a better idea what we're looking at here.

We have also talked before about a combination therapy that was used for HIV, lopinavir and ritonavir, sold as Kaletra. These are protease inhibitors, which work on an enzyme, protease, the virus uses to activate its proteins inside your cells so it can be replicated. In a report published a couple of weeks ago in the New England Journal of Medicine on a trial in 99 patients, the authors say "no benefit was observed." Still, there are those who believe this is a viable therapy. This may be because the initial trial was done under less than ideal conditions, rushed as it was during the height of the epidemic in China. There is also a theory that the patients treated in the trial were too far advanced in their disease for the drug to be effective and that earlier treatment may show some benefit. More work needs to be done, and there are other trials underway. At least one is being done combining these drugs with interferon-beta, a cytokine important in mediating the immune response. Meanwhile, Israel has approved Kaletra for Covid-19. The drug took a hit in this study, but we'll see what develops as time goes on.

I received an article from a friend today about ivermectin, a medication he uses to deworm cattle which has shown activity in vitro (that is, in laboratory tissue cultures) against this and a couple of other viruses. He said to me it looks as if they're throwing the kitchen sink at this thing. And he's right: They absolutely are throwing the kitchen sink at it. If someone can come up with the money to run clinical trials (which are ultra-expensive), then this drug will probably get one too. Ivermectin is already FDA-approved for use in humans as an anthelmintic (for parasitic worms), so that's one hurdle it's already crossed. It has not been tried on a virus in vivo, that is, in an actual person, so no idea whether it might have any effect when used in treatment. Of course, things don't always work the same in the body as they do in a lab. My guess is that someone, somewhere will try it in an off-label use (which is perfectly legal--doctors do it all the time), and if it shows promise from that, they'll scare up the money for a randomized clinical trial, which is how you demonstrate it's both safe and effective for this use.

We don't want to get overexcited about all of these potential therapies too soon, or bad things happen. Just a few days after tweets went out from our administration about hydroxychloroquine, a couple in Arizona who were scared of getting the virus drank fish-tank cleaner that contained the chemical, and the husband died. Also after that tweet, two people were rushed to the hospital in Lagos, Nigeria, after overdosing on the drug, also in an attempt to protect themselves. Misinformation and panic make bad bed partners.

Despite the pitfalls, I applaud the high level of activity around therapies. Probably most of what they try won't work or won't be safe or something, but if they try enough things, sooner or later, something will stick. And we will likely need more than one something because we're likely to find this drug won't be OK to use in certain patients and that drug won't be OK to use in certain other patients. So we probably need to have several choices available. But all of this research is how you find out.

Funny thing, a lot of what's getting tried is stuff that either didn't work for some other use or stuff someone discovered just messing around with no particular application in mind. That's called basic science--just finding things out because you were curious, not because you had a specific use for it. Next time I hear someone hollering about all the money scientists "waste" on things like that--studying something without a specific application being super-obvious from the start--I'm going to hit that guy over the head with a heavy object and tell him to stop being stupid. We should be spending ten times as much for stuff like that; it's how we get ready for crises like this. One of the many reasons we're not as ready for this as we should have been is because we've cut spending for basic science right to the bone. We are now seeing how short-sighted that is because it turns out it's a whole lot more expensive in lives and in treasure to do it this way and you can never predict how knowledge might be applied in the future. If you wait to study something until you need to know it, you end up rushing around like a crazy person while your economy's shut down--you know, the way we're doing now.

There is a lot we can learn from a crisis like this: the value of basic research, why it makes sense to spend money doing virus surveillance in other countries--even ones that are not always super-cooperative,

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 6 of 66

the importance of preparedness and crisis management, the value of having expertise and knowledge at your fingertips, AND who we should be to our fellow humans, even those we don't fully understand, which is, to be honest, all of them.

I hope we are also seeing how destructive the deep divisions in our society can be and learning how to step away from them. There was a time, not all that many years ago, when I had friends and neighbors who I knew didn't see the world the way I did, who didn't vote for the same guys I voted for, who had different ideas about religion or child-rearing or education. And I didn't think they were evil or stupid or greedy or ignorant; I never felt the need to call them Dumbocrats or Repugnantcans or some other dehumanizing nickname. I just thought of them as people who saw things differently from me, and I figured that was OK. And occasionally over the years, as I gave their ideas a fair hearing, I came to realize they were right about some things and I was wrong. The goal has been to get closer to right on more and more things because I'm listening. I'm better at that some days than others, but I'm trying. I'd like us to get back to that again; but doing so calls us all to be better versions of ourselves. Every day.

This is why I am pushing and pushing you to reach out and offer a kind act to people who need it—no matter who they're voting for, just because they are fellow humans in need. Make it your first step back to a time when we show respect for others. Could be you're the one who needs something tomorrow. Might not be money—maybe you're fine in that regard; but you might need someone to feed your cattle or check on your mom or watch your kids or give you a ride home. Maybe you'll need understanding or support. Sow the seeds; you might be surprised what grows and blooms. A society that moves in the direction of kindness and compassion is a society that's growing stronger, one that can heal itself while we also learn how to heal those with this virus. How about giving it a try?

See you all tomorrow.

## *Private Time at the Fitness Center!*



**Keep Healthy!  
Keep Fit!**



Call/Text Paul 397-7460 to make an appointment  
for Sunday between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Price is per family unit. Max. of 1 hour allowed.

13 Main St., Downtown Groton

**GDI Living Fitness**

*Open 24/7*

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 7 of 66

## AREA COVID-19 CASES

	Mar. 20	Mar. 21	Mar. 22	Mar. 23	Mar. 24	Mar. 25	Mar. 26	Mar. 27	Mar. 28
Minnesota	115	137	169	235	262	287	346	398	441
Nebraska	27	42	50	52	61	68	81	89	108
Montana	15	27	34	45	51	65	90	121	147
Colorado	277	475	591	720	912	1,086	1,430	1,734	2,061
Wyoming	18	24	26	28	33	49	56	73	84
North Dakota	26	28	30	32	36	45	58	68	94
South Dakota	14	14	21	28	30	41	46	58	68
United States		15,219	33,276	43,963	54,812	69,147	85,996	104,837	124,686
US Deaths		201	417	560	780	1,046	1,300	1,711	2,191

Minnesota	115	+22	+32	+66	+27	+25	+59	+52	+43
Nebraska	27	+15	+8	+2	+9	+7	+13	+8	+19
Montana	15	+12	+7	+11	+6	+14	+25	+31	+26
Colorado	277	+198	+116	+129	+192	+174	+344	+303	+327
Wyoming	18	+6	+2	+2	+5	+16	+7	+17	+11
North Dakota	26	+2	+2	+2	+4	+9	+13	+10	+26
South Dakota	14	0	+7	+7	+2	+11	+7	+12	+10
United States		15,219	+18,057	+10,687	+10,849	+14,335	+16,849	+18,841	+19,849
US Deaths		201	+216	+143	+220	+266	+254	+411	+480

	Mar. 29	Mar. 30	Mar. 31	Apr. 1	Apr. 2	Apr. 3
Minnesota	503	576	629	689	742	789
Nebraska	120	153	177	214	255	285
Montana	161	177	198	217	241	263
Colorado	2,307	2,627	2,966	3,342	3,728	4,173
Wyoming	87	95	120	137	150	166
North Dakota	98	109	126	147	159	173
South Dakota	90	101	108	129	165	187
United States	143,055	164,610	189,633	216,722	245,573	278,458
US Deaths	2,513	3,170	4,081	5,137	6,058	7,159

Minnesota	+62	+73	+53	+60	+53	+47
Nebraska	+12	+33	+24	+37	+41	+30
Montana	+14	+16	+20	+19	+25	+22
Colorado	+246	+320	+339	+376	+386	+445
Wyoming	+3	+8	+25	+17	+13	+16
North Dakota	+4	+11	+17	+21	+12	+14
South Dakota	+22	+11	+7	+21	+36	+12
United States	+18,369	+21,555	+25,023	+27,089	+28,851	+32,885
US Deaths	+322	+657	+911	+1,056	+921	+1,101

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 8 of 66

## COVID-19 Update

No changes on the map, which is a good thing. There were 22 positive tests yesterday and 12 that have fully recovered. That brings our state total to 187 positive cases, 17 that have been hospitalized and 69 that have recovered. There were 376 negative cases.

Brown County has gained a new positive test. The biggest gainer was Minnehaha County with 14 positive tests while Codington and Lincoln each had two and Roberts, Turner and Yankton county each had one. No new cases in Beadle County where 17 of the 21 positive cases have fully recovered.

County	Total Positive Cases	# Recovered
Aurora	1	1
Beadle	21	17
Bon Homme	1	1
Brookings	2	2
Brown	7	4
Charles Mix	1	1
Clark	1	1
Clay	3	2
Codington	8	3
Davison	3	2
Deuel	1	0
Fall River	1	1
Faulk	1	1
Hamlin	1	0
Hughes	3	2
Hutchinson	2	2
Lake	1	0
Lawrence	9	3
Lincoln	19	3
Lyman	1	1
Marshall	1	1
McCook	2	1
Meade	1	1
Minnehaha	68	15
Pennington	6	1
Roberts	3	0
Spink	1	0
Todd	1	0
Turner	3	0
Union	3	1
Yankton	11	2

## SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS

Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	187
Negative**	4593
Pending***	3

## SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases
Male	93
Female	94

## COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Number of Cases	187
Hospitalized*	17
Deaths	2
Recovered	69
<i>*Cumulative persons who have been hospitalized to date.</i>	

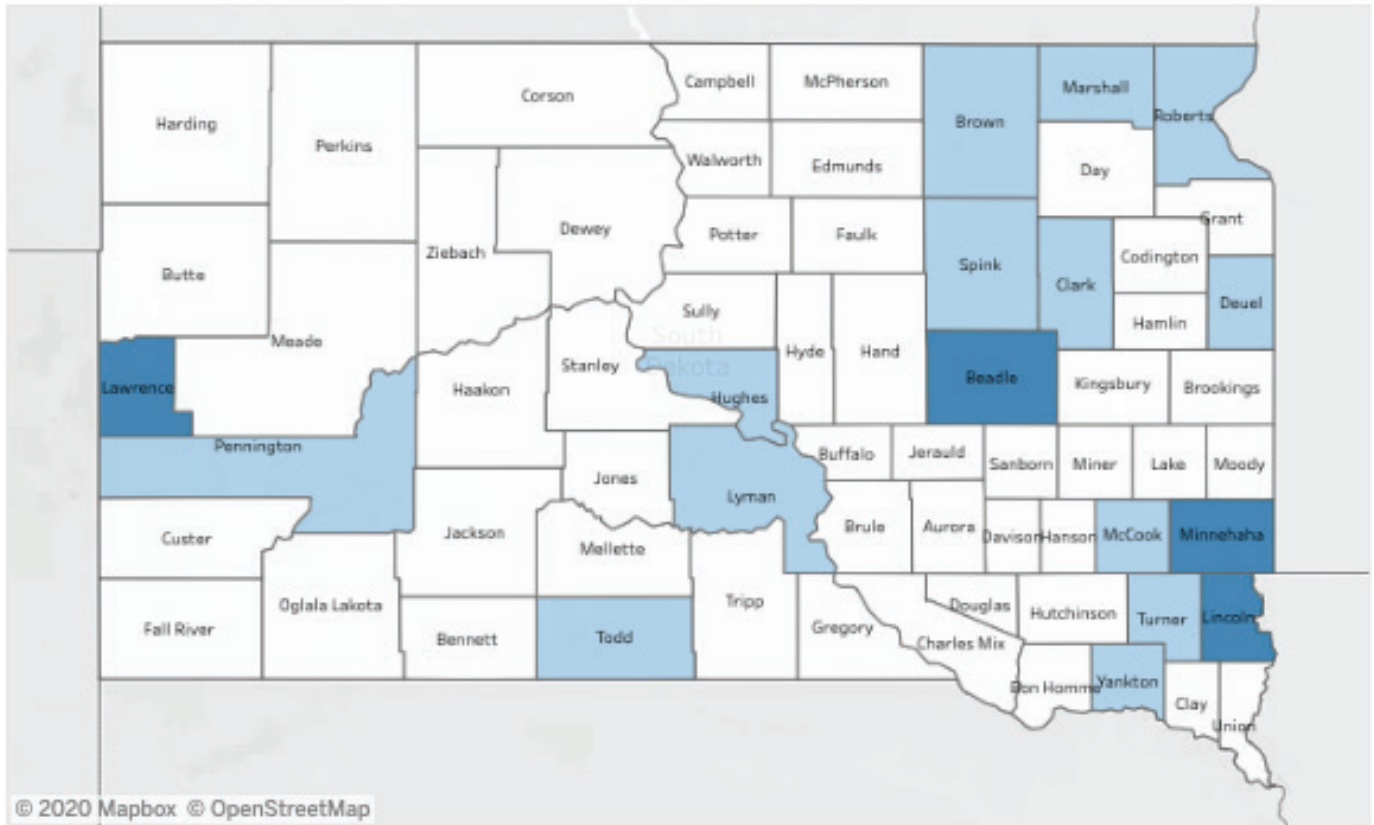
Age Range	# of Cases
0 to 19 years	6
20 to 29 years	34
30 to 39 years	28
40 to 49 years	34
50 to 59 years	39
60 to 69 years	30
70 to 79 years	9
80+ years	7



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 9 of 66

Level of Community Transmission or Impact of COVID-19 by County, South Dakota



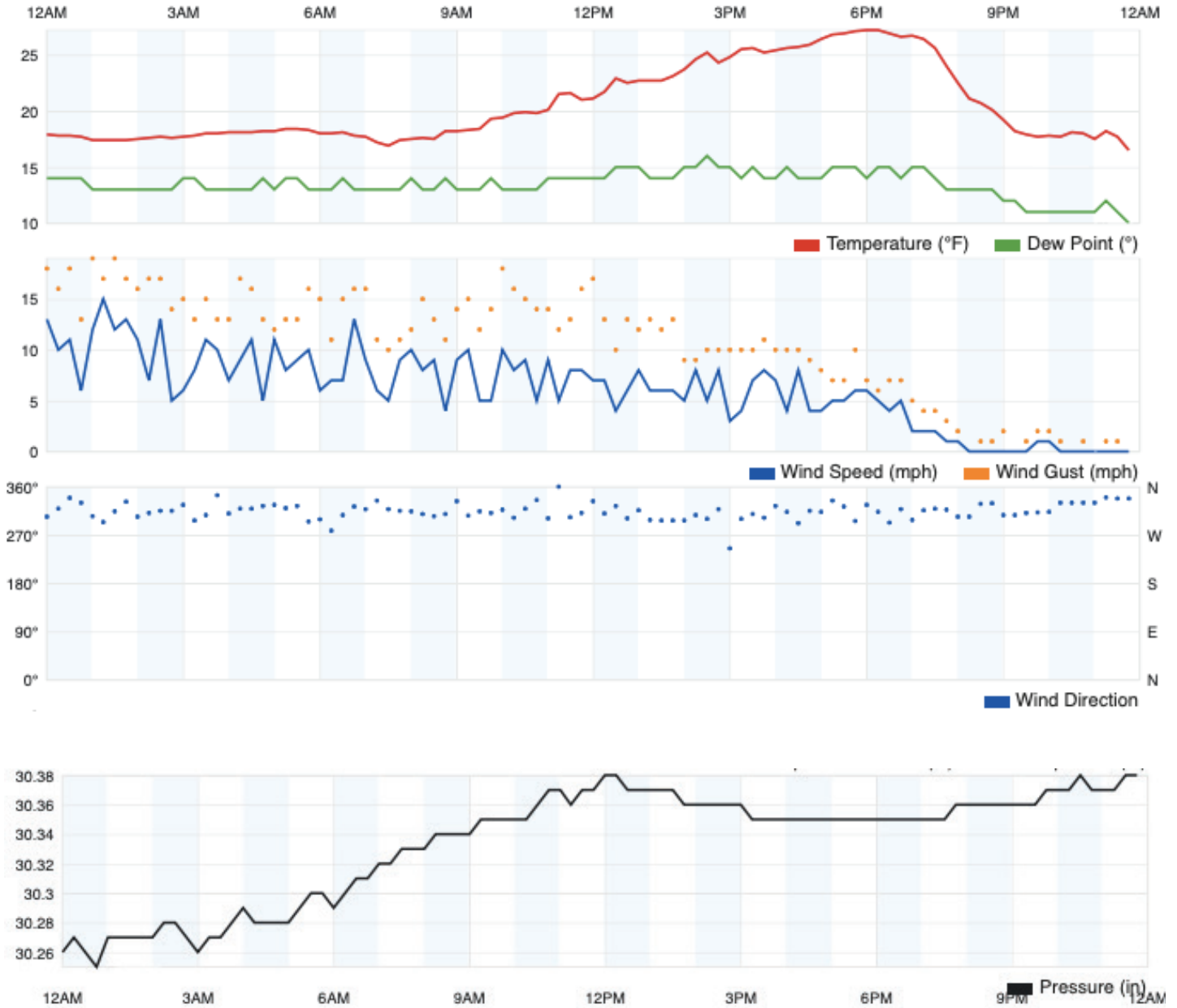
## Impact Level

- No Community Spread
- Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
- Substantial Community Spread

# Groton Daily Independent






Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 10 of 66

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 11 of 66

Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
				
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Rain	Chance Rain	Mostly Cloudy
<b>High: 44 °F</b>	<b>Low: 28 °F</b>	<b>High: 54 °F</b>	<b>Low: 37 °F</b>	<b>High: 60 °F</b>

## Warming Up Through Tuesday

*Today: 40 to low 50s*  
*Sunday: 50 to low 60s*  
*Monday: 55 to 70*  
*Tuesday: 60 to 70*

Next chance for precipitation:  
Light rain Sunday evening and  
Monday night. *Details at*  
[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)



Updated: 4/4/2020 4:03 AM Central

Temperatures will be on the rise this weekend through early next week. Widespread 60s by the peak Tuesday! Dry meanwhile, with a few exceptions for light rain Sunday and Monday evenings.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 12 of 66

## Today in Weather History

April 4, 1961: High winds of 40-60mph, with 80-90mph gusts, affected Central and Western South Dakota. The most extensive property damage occurred in the Pierre area. The roof was blown off, and one wall damaged at a new motel. One trailer home was blown over, numerous windows and large signboards were destroyed, and roofs sustained damages in Pierre. Total loss estimated \$10,000.

1804: A group of tornadoes slashed a 120-mile path across seven counties in Georgia and one county in South Carolina killing 11 people near Augusta, GA. The tornado's path through heavy timber was still visible some 71 years later as noted in an Army Signal Corps survey.

1923: An estimated F4 tornado killed 15 people and injured 150 at Alexandria and Pineville, LA. 142 homes and businesses in Pineville were destroyed.

1966: One of the strongest tornadoes in Florida's history moved in from the Gulf of Mexico and ripped through Pinellas, Hillsborough, Polk, and Osceola County. Damage was very severe in the towns of Gibsonia and Galloway in Polk County. 11 people were killed, and 350 were injured. The tornado was classified as F4.

1977: A Southern Airways DC-9 jet crashed near New Hope, Georgia, after being struck by large hail. The hail and associated heavy precipitation caused the engines to flame out. Seventy-two people (including nine on the ground) died.

1977: A massive F5 tornado moved across northern Birmingham, Alabama, killing 22 people and injuring 130. The tornado cut a 15-mile path from just northwest of Birmingham to the town of Tarrant. 167 homes were destroyed, primarily in the Smithfield Estates subdivision. Daniel Payne College sustained substantial damage. At one point, the tornado was three-quarters of a mile wide. The tornado crossed busy I-65, tossing cars and trucks like they were toys. Other tornadoes killed one other person in Alabama and one person in Georgia that day.

1933 - Pigeon River Bridge, MN, reported 28 inches of snow, which established the state 24 hour snowfall record. (4th-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1973 - Sandia Crest, NM, reported a snow depth of 95 inches, a record for the state of New Mexico. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - Colorado was in the midst of a three day winter storm. Buckhorn Mountain, located west of Fort Collins, received 64 inches of snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - Rains of five to eight inches drenched eastern New York State, and ten persons were killed in a bridge collapse over Schoharie Creek. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Sunny and warm weather prevailed across the nation. Fort Smith AR reported a record high of 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Southern Appalachians. The thunderstorms spawned seventeen tornadoes, including one which caused two million dollars damage at Baldwin AL. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Bremen GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A deep low pressure system in northern New York State brought heavy snow to parts of western and central New York during the day. The snowfall total of 5.8 inches at Buffalo was a record for the date, and 9.5 inches was reported at Rochester. Snowfall totals ranged up to 11 inches at Warsaw. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



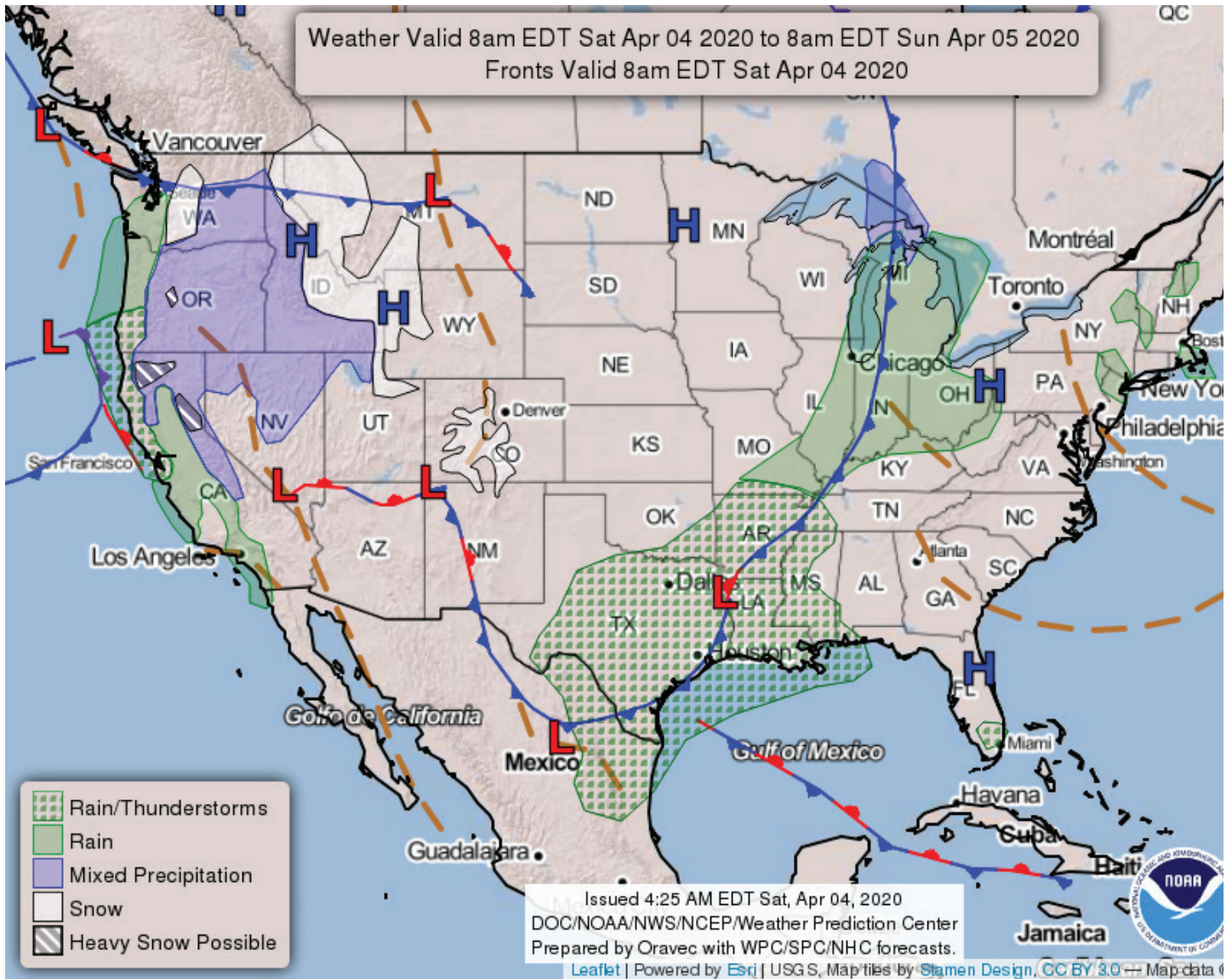
# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 13 of 66

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 27 °F at 5:59 PM**  
**Low Temp: 15 °F at 11:55 PM**  
**Wind: 20 mph at 1:01 AM**  
**Total Precip from last storm: 0.94**

**Record High: 90° in 1921**  
**Record Low: -6° in 2018**  
**Average High: 51°F**  
**Average Low: 27°F**  
**Average Precip in April.: 0.13**  
**Precip to date in April.: 0.94**  
**Average Precip to date: 2.31**  
**Precip Year to Date: 1.29**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:06 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:06 a.m.**





# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 14 of 66



## LOOKING FOR GOD IN 2020

"You chart the path ahead of me and tell me when to stop and rest.

"Every moment you know where I am." Psalm 139:3

"The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

"Because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us from the beginning and all things happen just as He decided years ago." Ephesians 1:11

"The Lord will work out His plans for my life – for Your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever. Don't abandon me, for You made me!" Psalm 138:8

"Seek His will in all you do and He will direct your paths." Proverbs 3:6

Prayer: Grant us wisdom, give us faith, increase our trust, and watch over us each day, Father, as we seek Your plan for our lives. May we follow You always. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scriptures For Today: - Psalm 139:3; Psalm 32:8; Ephesians 1:11; Psalm 138:8; Proverbs 3:6

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 15 of 66

## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
  - **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
  - **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
  - 04/25-26/2020 Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
  - 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
  - **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
  - 05/11/2020 Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
  - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
  - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
  - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
  - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
  - 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
  - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
  - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
  - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
  - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
  - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
  - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
  - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
  - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
  - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
  - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
  - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
- 
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
  - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
    - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
- 
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here
  - Jun 2020 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-June)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Pandemic might prevent Mandan man's 2nd chance with Sox**

By **TRAVIS SVIHOVEC** *The Bismarck Tribune*

MANDAN, N.D. (AP) — Robert Schulte was one of the best hitters on the South Dakota State College baseball team in 1959, and his skills at the plate and behind it as catcher didn't go unnoticed.

His hitting percentage in the North Central Conference was .659 that season, his junior year, and he followed it up by hitting better than .500 for the Jackrabbits the next year. The Chicago White Sox offered him a contract after his senior year, but a military commitment dashed his dream of playing in the big leagues.

Sixty years later, the White Sox invited the Mandan man back. And again, circumstances outside his control -- this time in the form of a global pandemic -- kept him from donning White Sox catcher's gear, *The Bismarck Tribune* reported.

#### First chance

The White Sox asked him to a tryout after his junior year at State, today known as South Dakota State University. The test pitted him against former major league pitcher and future Hall of Famer Dizzy Trout. He handled Trout, notching several hits, including a couple of home runs, and was headed back to the dugout when Trout called him back. The White Sox brought in another pitcher -- a young powerhouse -- and told him to throw Schulte nothing but fastballs.

"And he was bringin' 'er," said Schulte, now 83.

He pounded out hits against the young pitcher, just as he'd done with the veteran. That was enough for the White Sox. They wanted Schulte, but the major league club couldn't sign him because he had a year of college to go. The scout left him with "see ya' next year," and kept his word. The club offered him a contract with a nice signing bonus, and Schulte thought his childhood dream had come true.

"For a young man, it don't get any better than that," he said.

All that stood in his way was his commitment to the military. He'd completed four years in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and was set to enter the Army as a second lieutenant. The Army wouldn't let him out, even though he offered to repay the cost of flight training and fulfill his obligation in other ways. He met with his commanding officer and told him he was considering resigning his commission. The officer sat him down and said "you don't want to do that."

Those were words Schulte didn't want to hear, but the argument behind them was pretty strong. Resign his commission and go play baseball, the officer said, and he'd likely get drafted. As a private. That would have made life tough enough, even more so when he added his wife and two children into the calculation.

So ended a professional baseball career and started a military career, one that would last 39 years and end with Schulte as a major general in the North Dakota Army National Guard. During his active military career he shook hands with the queen of England and played baseball for the 3rd Armored Division at the request of Gen. Creighton Abrams. At one point he was deputy commanding general of the 6th Army.

Through the years, Schulte stayed competitive playing on championship softball and amateur baseball teams. Still, that missed White Sox opportunity gnawed at him. He'd grown up poor, he said, and thought he'd end up working at a packing plant in his hometown of Sioux Falls. Through some hard work and a little luck he got to play football and baseball in college. Letting go of the offer from the White Sox came with "a few tears," he said.

#### Second chance

His second chance -- or what would have been his second chance -- came last December, when he got a letter from White Sox Vice President of Community Relations Christine O'Reilly-Riordan. She offered him the chance to suit up at a spring training game. The club wanted to recognize his military service and his connection to the White Sox, having received a "scouting report" from his son, Bob, who relayed the story of his father's college career and decision to serve in the military. Bob Schulte told them his father had completed his military obligation and had two new knees.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 17 of 66

"You might want to give this kid another chance," he wrote.

O'Reilly-Riordan in her letter told the elder Schulte to "get your arm ready" and that more details would follow. Schulte and his family started making plans to be at a March 19 spring training game against the Cleveland Indians. But as the day approached and the number of people planning to attend grew -- family, former softball and amateur baseball team members -- Schulte had to face another reality. The new coronavirus was spreading, and more than 30 people were planning to be at the game with him. He couldn't stand the thought of others getting sick because they traveled to an event organized in his honor.

"He kept saying he was worried," said his wife, Euella Schulte.

The family leaned toward calling it off a few days before the game. Then Major League Baseball made the decision for them when it shut down spring training. The disappointment reminded Euella of 60 years ago, which she called "a fun time and yet kind of sad" because Robert couldn't fulfill his baseball dream.

Third chance?

This second chance isn't gone yet, though its future is uncertain. The White Sox club -- which Bob Schulte said has been "a classy organization" during this time -- said there might be another opportunity for his dad to go to Chicago.

"It could still come about this summer," Robert Schulte said. "I don't want to drop it."

He'll cling to that, for the time being anyway, and eye the trip as the one where he finally puts on White Sox gear. He hopes to catch a few from a major league pitcher, watch, observe, and maybe hit a little bit.

"Give me a feel of what it would have been like," he said.

## Sioux Falls housing aid program reaches first recipients

By PATRICK ANDERSON Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The unknown is what's so frightening for Stephanie Bossman.

She always made her own way in the world, earning enough to live, pay for day care and to give her two young sons a happy home.

The 29-year-old single mom, a graduate of South Dakota State University, has never relied on government assistance.

"I'm not in that position anymore, and it's really scary," Bossman told the Argus Leader.

Jobless as of March 27, Bossman fought back tears as she talked about the program her property manager brought to her attention — a fund that sprung out of thin air at the urging of Mayor Paul TenHaken last month and quickly passed the million-dollar mark just days later.

Money in the One Sioux Falls Fund is dedicated to housing assistance for Sioux Falls residents affected by the economic fallout of the new coronavirus. Bossman applied for help from the fund during her last few days at work.

The former bartender at JL Beers had already suffered a drop in income due to fewer people coming out, and leadership at the restaurant was great about helping her transition to what she hopes is temporary joblessness, Bossman said.

The One Sioux Falls Fund will cover 70% of her rent, helping her make it through the next few weeks as she focuses on providing full-time care to Brekken, 7, and Finley, 2 and waits on the unemployment office.

She applied last week. They never gave her a timeline for when help would come, she said.

"At least I know that I get to feed my kids this month," Bossman said. "I don't have a whole lot in savings and I can't even afford to take a week off of work, let alone an unforeseen amount of time."

One Sioux Falls Fund had raised \$1.2 million. As of March 27, checks were being cut and readied to go out to 300 people like Bossman, who are at risk of not being able to make their April 1 rent payment.

They represent just a small fraction of the overall need as coronavirus-related closures continue to mount and a new mandate from City Hall restricts businesses to nine or fewer patrons at one time.

In its first week, more than 1,400 area residents applied for housing aid from the fund, said Patrick Gale, vice president of community investment for the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation.

The Community Foundation is partnering with city officials and other local charities and nonprofits to

handle applications and distribute the funds.

Those who need help should apply through the 211 Helpline Center.

Organizers with the city's Unmet Needs Committee worked together to distribute the funding ahead of April, when bills will become due, Gale said. In addition to offering tenants help from the One Sioux Falls Fund, city leaders have already asked landlords and property owners to show grace as households suffer the consequences of the pandemic's arrival in Sioux Falls.

"We've got to keep people in their houses or they're going to fall in to a system that's already at capacity," Gale said.

## Making an impact: Man interprets virus updates for deaf

By MAKENZIE HUBER Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Rick Norris is used to being in the public eye.

The 50-year-old American Sign Language interpreter has stood in front of crowds interpreting for world leaders, entertainers and presidents — including former presidents George Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

Now, Sioux Falls residents see Norris daily as he appears alongside Mayor Paul TenHaken to interpret the latest updates about the coronavirus spread around the city and Minnehaha County.

Norris' role is to ensure that thousands of Sioux Falls residents who are deaf and hard of hearing are getting the same information and updates as every other resident. Several cities across the world are partnering with interpreters during live press conferences to easily disseminate the information to the deaf and hard of hearing community as soon as possible.

"I'm here to fill a gap and meet a need that most people don't think of," Norris told the Argus Leader. "If you don't live and breathe and experience this on a daily basis, you don't realize it's even a problem. I want to make a difference and impact. That's what I was meant to do and what I've been doing all these years."

Norris has been interpreting for decades. He's served as the executive director and owner of Interpretcore, a company that provides interpreters for people who are deaf and hard of hearing in the area, for about six years. Norris has interpreted in hospitals, classrooms and court rooms, and updating citizens on the COVID-19 outbreak isn't the first time he's worked with the city.

"Rick has been awesome," Mayor Paul Ten Haken said. "Because of the School for the Deaf we used to have here and CSD (Communication Services for the Deaf), which had so many deaf and hard of hearing voices, we have a large deaf and hard of hearing population in this state. So ensuring we have an interpreter at these sorts of things is really, really important. And Rick has been here. He gets here 15 minutes early, and the feedback I get online about Rick is they love him."

Sioux Falls is Norris' home. He graduated from Lincoln High School and was raised by his parents, both of whom were deaf. Because of his parents, he was absorbed into the deaf and hard of hearing community that he identifies as his own.

He naturally fell into the role of interpreter with his parents, representing them to doctors, employers, telemarketers and other community members in a time before expanded representation and accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Nearly as far back as he can remember, he experienced the frustration, discrimination and oppression against his parents, he said. In many cases, people overlooked his parents' needs because they did not understand their challenges.

When he was in fifth or sixth grade, Norris was pulled out of school one day. He wasn't brought to the school principal though, he was brought to his mother's work where he was asked to interpret and mediate a miscommunication between her and her employer. Even as a child, he was grateful that someone had thought to use his skills to remedy the situation.

He realized quickly that there was a need for interpreters and he wanted to be that connection for others, just as he was for his parents.

"I saw the kinds of barriers my parents had to deal with, and that made a profound impact on me," Nor-



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 19 of 66

ris said. "I wanted to make sure I was in a position to help others and avoid those experiences. ... That's what I've dedicated my life to try and do."

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

24-38-44-57-58, Mega Ball: 17, Megaplier: 4

(twenty-four, thirty-eight, forty-four, fifty-seven, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: seventeen; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$121 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$180 million

## Noem: Up to 70% of South Dakota may get the coronavirus

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Up to 70% of the population of South Dakota might get COVID-19, Gov. Kristi Noem said Friday, though she insisted that a statewide stay-at-home order wouldn't be worth the disruption it would cause even though she acknowledged it would help slow the spread of the disease.

Noem upped her predictions of how many of South Dakota's nearly 900,000 residents will contract the disease, saying during a news conference at the Capitol that anywhere from 30% to 70% of them might.

The state is preparing for as many as 5,000 hospitalizations when the disease is expected to peak in South Dakota in mid-June, the Republican governor said.

Despite the unsettling projections, Noem said she plans to keep South Dakota among the dwindling number of states that haven't issued stay-at-home orders, calculating that the state's hospitals will be ready to handle the peak crush of infections. She acknowledged that a stay-at-home order would slow the spread of the virus and push the peak of infections out further, but she said she doesn't think it would be worth prolonging school closures, keeping people out of work, or disrupting daily life.

When reporters asked what the state projects its death toll from the virus will be, Noem declined to give a specific number but referred to Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon's estimates that the death rate could range from 0.5% to 3%. With those figures, the number of deaths would be between roughly 1,325, at 0.5% of a 30% infection rate, and 18,000, at 3% of a 70% infection rate.

Noem said she hoped that treatments that are still being developed for the coronavirus would decrease the number of people who die.

Josh Clayton, the state epidemiologist, said Noem's administration based its strategy on the state's ability to provide hospital beds, not the number of deaths from the disease.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are among those particularly susceptible to more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The state's hospitals can currently expand to take care of 4,400 people, according to Malsam-Rysdon. But those beds also serve people who need care for other reasons.

Noem said the state's hospitals would also need 1,300 ventilators. They currently have 525. She has tasked the National Guard with building temporary hospitals that could accommodate a total of 200 people.

Health officials reported earlier Friday that 22 more people had tested positive for the coronavirus, bringing the state's tally of COVID-19 cases to 187. About a third of those people have recovered, but three have died.

The latest death came from the Prince of Peace Retirement Community in Sioux Falls. Avera Health, which operates the facility, said one of the residents died of COVID-19 and two other residents are infected with it.

Doctors from the state's three largest health care providers joined Noem at the news conference to offer

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 20 of 66

their support for her plan, saying they were working to expand their hospitals' capacities.

They continued to ask people to stay at home if at all possible, though Noem is relying on encouraging people to take personal responsibility to do so, rather than requiring business closures or curfews.

Her reluctance to issue statewide mandates has made vocal critics of the mayors of the state's largest cities.

Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender earlier this week told the Legislature that "cities and counties have been absolutely left on their own" by Noem's inaction. Lawmakers were considering an emergency bill that would have given municipalities the power to quickly enact business closures or stay-at-home orders.

House lawmakers did not pass that bill. The governor also opposed a part of the bill that would have let municipalities skip over wait periods during a public health emergency.

As Sioux Falls emerges as a hotbed of infections, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken said Friday that it would take six days to move a stay-at-home order through the waiting period required by the City Council.

He said, "Things change hour to hour."

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

## The Latest: Elder care facility reports coronavirus death

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local):  
3:45 p.m.

A Sioux Falls elder care facility said on Friday that one resident has died after contracting the coronavirus.

The Prince of Peace Retirement Community, run by Avera Health, announced earlier this week that three residents had become infected. Avera said it believed an asymptomatic staff member had unknowingly brought the infection into the facility. They isolated the people who contracted the coronavirus.

The administrator of the facility, Justin Hinker, said "We will take all precautions possible to stop the spread of this virus in our facility."

Three people have died in the state after contracting the coronavirus.

12:00 p.m.

South Dakota health officials reported Friday that 22 more people have tested positive for the coronavirus, bringing the state's tally of cases to 187.

The number of people who have tested positive in the state has doubled since Sunday.

About a third of the people who have tested positive in the state have recovered, officials reported, while 17 have required hospitalization. Two have died. Over 4,700 people have been tested through the state lab and commercial labs, but most of those have yielded negative results.

The state's most populated area, Minnehaha County, saw the greatest increase in positive test results with 15.

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said during a briefing that she would investigate irregularities with the Health Department's count at the county level.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are among those particularly susceptible to more severe illness, including pneumonia.

10:50 a.m.

Inmates at South Dakota prisons are producing personal protective equipment for prison staff, the state Department of Corrections announced on Friday.

South Dakota prisons have several manufacturing shops that have turned to producing cotton face masks, nylon gowns and plastic face shields amid the global coronavirus pandemic. The Department of Corrections said the equipment is not approved for medical use, but could be used in an emergency.

The prison manufacturing program plans to produce several thousand gowns, masks and disposable

face shields that could also be used by other government agencies.

One woman held at the Women's Prison in Pierre tested positive for the coronavirus last month, sparking fears that infections could spread rapidly in the facility. Nine women fled the prison shortly after the positive test result was announced, and seven have since been apprehended.

Health officials have said several inmates were tested for the coronavirus, but have not reported any more positive results.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

## The Latest: first case confirmed in the Falkland Islands

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on the coronavirus pandemic. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death.

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- First case confirmed in the Falkland Islands
- Britain may be able to loosen lockdown measures by the end of May
- Hundreds of stranded tourists flown out of Nepal

LONDON — The first case of COVID-19 has been confirmed in the Falkland Islands, a remote British territory in the South Atlantic.

The islands' government says the patient was admitted to a hospital on Tuesday from the Mount Pleasant Complex, a Royal Air Force base. The patient, who has not named, is in stable condition and is not on a ventilator.

The Falklands' chief medical officer Dr. Rebecca Edwards, said authorities were working with the British military on tracing people who may have come into contact with the patient.

The U.K., which maintains a permanent military presence on the islands, has sent in extra army medics to help with the fight against the new coronavirus.

The islands have a population of about 3,000 and lie off the coast of South America. Britain and Argentina fought a 1982 war over the islands, known to the Argentines as the Malvinas.

LONDON — A scientist advising the British government on the coronavirus pandemic says it might be possible to loosen some lockdown measures by the end of May.

The U.K. has been in effective lockdown since March 23, with schools, bars, many shops and gathering places shut and people told to go out only for essentials or exercise.

Imperial College London epidemiologist Neil Ferguson, who sits on the government's scientific advisory committee, says "we want to move to a situation where at least by the end of May that we're able to substitute some less intensive measures, more based on technology and testing, for the complete lockdown we have now."

He told the BBC that if the number of cases began to fall soon, then "we will be able to move to a regime which will not be normal life, let me emphasize that, but will be somewhat more relaxed in terms of social distancing and the economy, but relying more on testing."

Authorities are imploring Britons not to flout the lockdown rules on what's expected to be a warm, sunny weekend.

KATHMANDU, Nepal — Hundreds of stranded tourists have been flown out of Nepal days after complete lockdown was imposed in the country.

According to Tribhuvan International Airport, planes chartered by German, French and Malaysian govern-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 22 of 66

ments have transported their citizens back home.

Two Qatar Airways jets flew 305 Germans and 303 French nationals out of Kathmandu. A Malaysian Airlines plane transported 66 passengers who were Malaysians, Singapore, British and Indian nationals.

Nepal's government has halted all flights and ground transportation, shutting down offices and shuttering businesses since last month to control the spread of the coronavirus.

Nepal has six confirmed cases including one person who has recovered.

**NEW DELHI, India** — A couple in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh have named their newborn twins Corona and Covid.

The twins — a boy and a girl — were born during the ongoing 21-day long nationwide lockdown that began on March 24.

"The delivery happened after facing several difficulties and therefore, my husband and I wanted to make the day memorable," Preeti Verma, the 27-old mother of the twins, told news agency Press Trust of India.

The couple said the names would remind them about the hardships they faced during the lockdown and ahead of the successful delivery in a government hospital last week.

The lockdown in India has resulted in the suspension of trains and airline services and effectively kept 1.3 billion Indians at home for all but essential trips to places like markets or pharmacies.

India has 2,909 confirmed cases of the coronavirus across the country, including 68 deaths.

The overall number of known cases in India is small compared with the United States, Italy and China, but health experts say India could be weeks away from a huge surge that could overwhelm its already strained public health system.

**DHAKA, Bangladesh** — Bangladesh has reported two more deaths and nine more cases of infection from the new coronavirus.

The total death toll stands at eight while the number of people infected with COVID-19 rose to 70 since March 8 when the first case of infection was declared, said Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

Meanwhile, a private TV station in the capital says one of their journalists has tested positive and it has sent 47 journalists to home quarantine as they came into close contact with the infected person.

Experts say the number of cases could rise over the next few weeks as authorities have increased testing facilities across the South Asian country.

**UNITED NATIONS** — The president of the United Nations General Assembly says the 193-member world body will make a decision "in the coming month" on whether to delay the annual gathering of world leaders in New York in late September because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande said in an interview with The Associated Press that "this is not something that has so far been an issue of serious consultation," and for now the calendar of events remains. It calls for the General Debate — the official name of the high-level meeting — to open on Sept. 22, with a kick-off event for world leaders the previous day to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

But the former Nigerian ambassador said "in the coming month we'll take a decision through the normal means," which "of course" means consulting all U.N. member states.

The United Nations has canceled or postponed numerous upcoming events. Muhammad-Bande on Friday announced the postponement of several General Assembly meetings scheduled in the next two months, including the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II on May 6.

"The current situation might have pushed us to postpone events celebrating the 75th anniversary (of World War II) but it illustrates, maybe more than anything else, the absolute need for the U.N. to guide the global efforts and provide much needed support to defeat our common threat" from COVID-19, he said

**ISLAMABAD** — The World Bank has given Pakistan \$200 million in aid to help the most vulnerable as



the country deals with the coronavirus pandemic with a lockdown that Prime Minister Imran Khan says will continue until April 14. The money will be used to provide social protection measures, as well as food for the poorest and education supplies for the millions of children out of school.

Pakistan has 2,686 confirmed cases and 40 deaths. Most of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 are in Pakistan's southern Sindh province and are traced to pilgrims returning from Iran, with more than 58,000 confirmed cases and more than 3,200 deaths.

Khan has been criticized for not moving quicker, particularly in stopping a world-wide gathering of Tableeghi Jamaat (Islamic missionaries) to Pakistan, that was eventually canceled in mid-March, weeks after the virulent nature of the epidemic was known and tens of thousands had already gathered in Pakistan.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

## Medics at Egypt's main cancer center test positive for virus

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — At least 15 medics in Egypt's main cancer hospital have been quarantined after testing positive for the coronavirus, officials said Saturday, raising fears the pandemic could prey on health facilities in the Arab world's most populous country.

Egypt has reported around 1,000 confirmed cases and 66 fatalities from the global pandemic. Authorities have closed schools and mosques, banned public gatherings and imposed a nighttime curfew to prevent the virus from spreading among the population of 100 million, a fifth of whom live in the densely-populated capital, Cairo.

Dr. Hatem Abu el-Kassem, the director of the National Cancer Institute, said three doctors and 12 nurses tested positive for the virus. He said all other health workers at the facility, which treats hundreds of cancer patients every day, would be tested.

The institute will be partly closed for three days to be sterilized, with only the emergency ward remaining open.

The virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can cause severe illness or death, particularly in older patients or those with underlying health problems, including cancer patients.

More than a million people have been infected worldwide and more than 50,000 have died from the COVID-19 illness caused by the virus. More than 200,000 have recovered, according to data gathered by Johns Hopkins University.

Egypt's Health Ministry reported a spike in cases on Friday, with 120 new infections and eight fatalities, its highest one-day tally since the first case was reported in February.

The government has not yet imposed the kind of total lockdown seen in other countries in the region, but officials have said there are plans for stricter measures if needed.

## Competition for supplies sharpening as pandemic worsens

By MICHELLE R. SMITH, MARINA VILLENUEVE and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Scarce supplies of medical equipment are leading to growing competition within the U.S. and among nations, in what one French politician called a "worldwide treasure hunt."

The governor of New York state, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, vowed to seize unused ventilators from private hospitals and companies, while President Donald Trump said he was preventing the export of N95 respirator masks and surgical gloves, a move he said was necessary to ensure that medical supplies are available in the U.S.

The number of people infected in the U.S. exceeded a quarter-million, and the death toll climbed past 7,000, with New York state alone accounting for more than 2,900 dead, an increase of over 560 in just one day. Most of the dead are in New York City, where hospitals are swamped with patients.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 24 of 66

Worldwide, confirmed infections rose past 1 million and deaths topped 58,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say both numbers are seriously undercounted because of the lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are underplaying the crisis.

Europe's three worst-hit countries — Italy, Spain and France — accounted for more than 32,000 dead, or over half the global toll.

In China, where the novel coronavirus was first detected in December, flags flew at half mast and air raid sirens sounded for three minutes on a day of remembrance for the dead. China has cautiously lifted restrictions amid dropping numbers of infections and on Saturday, reported just one new confirmed case in the epicenter of Wuhan and 18 others among people arriving from abroad. There were four new deaths for an official total of 3,326.

Among those joining the observance in Wuhan, Sheng Xiaohang said that after experiencing the outbreak, "everyone has grown up."

"I think everyone's outlooks on life, on the world, and values were overthrown," said Sheng, who left her media job to organize a volunteer organization to deliver medical materials to Wuhan hospitals.

South Korea extended for two weeks guidelines urging people to stick to social distancing as infections continue to grow in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area.

During a meeting on anti-virus measures on Saturday, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun expressed concern over rising infections linked to recent arrivals.

The economic damage from the lockdowns and closures mounted. The U.S. snapped its record-breaking hiring streak of nearly 10 years when the government reported that employers slashed over 700,000 jobs last month. But the true picture is far worse, because the figures do not include the last two weeks, when 10 million thrown-out-of-work Americans applied for unemployment benefits.

A more immediate concern was the shortage of masks and gloves, leading to fierce competition among buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere and aggressive measures such as New York state Gov. Andrew Cuomo's plan to take ventilators that aren't being used. Cuomo says New York, the nation's worst hot spot, could run out of ventilators next week.

"If they want to sue me for borrowing their excess ventilators to save lives, let them sue me," Cuomo said. He promised to eventually return the equipment or compensate the owners.

Worldwide shortages have caused health care workers to fall sick and forced doctors in Europe to make life-or-death decisions about which patients get a breathing machine. The search for supplies and bidding wars among buyers have created what Valerie Pecresse, president of France's battered Île-de-France region, called a "worldwide treasure hunt."

The governor of the U.S. state of Louisiana said New Orleans could exhaust its supply by Tuesday.

Amid swelling cases, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, has gone from one unit dedicated to coronavirus patients to seven. Nurse Christen Hyde said nurses call families twice a day to give updates on their relatives, in some cases delivering bleak news.

"To have to call a family member and tell them that their family member is not doing well and they are probably going to be passing soon is just devastating," said Hyde, who has had four patients die.

Along with blocking mask exports, Trump announced new guidelines that call for everyone to wear makeshift face coverings such as T-shirts and bandannas when leaving the house, especially in areas hit hard by the pandemic, like New York. But the president said he had no intention of following the advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"It's a recommendation, they recommend it," Trump told reporters. "I just don't want to wear one myself."

The change comes amid concerns from health officials that those without symptoms can spread the virus, especially in places like grocery stores or pharmacies. Officials stressed that medical-grade masks should be reserved for health workers and others on the front lines of the pandemic, with critical equipment in short supply.

Italy, the hardest-hit country in Europe with about 14,700 dead, continued seeing signs that infections and deaths might be leveling off. France reported a surge of more than 1,000 deaths Friday, bringing its

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 25 of 66

overall toll to more than 6,500.

"The work is extremely tough and heavy," said Philippe Montravers, an anesthesiologist in Paris. "We've had doctors, nurses, caregivers who got sick, infected ... but who have come back after recovering. It's a bit like those World War I soldiers who were injured and came back to fight."

Spain recorded over 900 new deaths, down slightly from the record it hit a day earlier. The carnage almost certainly included large numbers of elderly who authorities admit are not getting access to the country's limited breathing machines, which are being used first on healthier, younger patients.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause pneumonia. Over 200,000 people have recovered, by Johns Hopkins' count.

Smith reported from Providence, Rhode Island, Villeneuve reported from Albany, New York, and Santana reported from New Orleans. Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

## **African elite who once sought treatment abroad are grounded**

**By CARA ANNA Associated Press**

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic could narrow one gaping inequality in Africa, where some heads of state and other elite jet off to Europe or Asia for health care unavailable in their nations. As countries including their own impose dramatic travel restrictions, they might have to take their chances at home.

For years, leaders from Benin to Zimbabwe have received medical care abroad while their own poorly funded health systems limp from crisis to crisis. Several presidents, including ones from Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia, have died overseas.

The practice is so notorious that a South African health minister, Aaron Motsoaledi, a few years ago scolded, "We are the only continent that has its leaders seeking medical services outside the continent, outside our territory. We must be ashamed."

Now a wave of global travel restrictions threatens to block that option for a cadre of aging African leaders. More than 30 of Africa's 57 international airports have closed or severely limited flights, the U.S. State Department says. At times, flight trackers have shown the continent's skies nearly empty.

Perhaps "COVID-19 is an opportunity for our leaders to reexamine their priorities," said Livingstone Sewanyana of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, which has long urged African countries to increase health care spending.

But that plea has not led to action, even as the continent wrestles with major crises including deadly outbreaks of Ebola and the scourges of malaria and HIV.

Spending on health care in Africa is roughly 5% of gross domestic product, about half the global average. That's despite a pledge by African Union members in 2001 to spend much more. Money is sometimes diverted to security or simply pilfered, and shortages are common.

Ethiopia had just three hospital beds per 10,000 people in 2015, according to World Health Organization data, compared to two dozen or more in the U.S. and Europe. Central African Republic has just three ventilators in the entire country. In Zimbabwe, doctors have reported doing bare-handed surgeries for lack of gloves.

Health experts warn that many countries will be overwhelmed if the coronavirus spreads, and it is already uncomfortably close. Several ministers in Burkina Faso have been infected, as has a top aide to Nigeria's president. An aide to Congo's leader died.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 26 of 66

"If you test positive in a country, you should seek care in that country," the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. John Nkengasong, told reporters Thursday. "It's not a death sentence."

In Nigeria, some worried their president might be among the victims. Long skittish about President Muhammadu Buhari's absences from public view, including weeks in London for treatment for unspecified health problems, they took to Twitter to ask why he hadn't addressed the nation as virus cases rose.

Buhari's office dismissed speculation about his whereabouts as unfounded rumor. When he did emerge Sunday night, he announced that all private jet flights were suspended. The international airports were already closed.

While the travel restrictions have grounded the merely wealthy, political analyst Alex Rusero said a determined African leader probably could still find a way to go abroad for care.

"They are scared of death so much they will do everything within their disposal, even if it's a private jet to a private hospital in a foreign land," said Rusero, who is based in Zimbabwe, whose late President Robert Mugabe often sought treatment in Asia.

Perhaps nowhere is the situation bleaker than in Zimbabwe, where the health system has collapsed. Even before the pandemic, patients' families were often asked to provide essentials like gloves and clean water. Doctors last year reported using bread bags to collect patients' urine.

Zimbabwe's vice president, Constantino Chiwenga, departed last month for unrelated medical treatment in China, as the outbreak eased in that country. Zimbabwe closed its borders days later after its first virus death.

Chiwenga has since returned — to lead the country's coronavirus task force.

But some in a new generation of African leaders have been eager to show sensitivity to virus-prevention measures.

The president of Botswana, Mokgweetsi Masisi, initially defied his country's restrictions on travel by government employees to visit neighboring Namibia for its leader's inauguration. But he entered self-quarantine and now reminds others to stay home, calling it "literally a matter of life and death."

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced he had tested negative, just ahead of a three-week lockdown in Africa's most developed country. Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina has as well.

Other leaders, including Burkina Faso President Roch Marc Christian Kabore and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, have tweeted images of themselves working via videoconference as countries encourage people to keep their distance.

While African leaders are more tied to home than ever, their access to medical care is still far better than most of their citizens'.

In Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, medical student Franck Bienvenu Zida was self-isolating and worried after having contact with someone who tested positive.

The 26-year-old feared infecting people where he lives, but his efforts to get tested were going nowhere. In three days of calling an emergency number to request a test, he could not get through.

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Associated Press writers Sam Mednick in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Rodney Muhumuza in Kampala, Uganda, contributed to this report.

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## Trump fires watchdog who handled Ukraine complaint

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday abruptly fired the inspector general of the intelligence community, sidelining an independent watchdog who played a pivotal role in his impeachment even as his White House struggled with the deepening coronavirus pandemic.

Trump informed the Senate intelligence committee late Friday of his decision to fire Michael Atkinson,

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 27 of 66

according to a letter obtained by The Associated Press. Atkinson handled the whistleblower complaint that triggered Trump's impeachment last year.

Atkinson's firing, which is part of a shakeup of the intelligence community under Trump, thrusts the president's impeachment back into the spotlight as his administration deals with the deadly spread of coronavirus. As Trump was removing Atkinson, the number of U.S. deaths due to the virus topped 7,000.

Trump said in the letter that it is "vital" that he has confidence in the appointees serving as inspectors general, and "that is no longer the case with regard to this inspector general."

He did not elaborate, except to say that "it is extremely important that we promote the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of federal programs and activities," and that inspectors general are critical to those goals.

Atkinson was the first to inform Congress about an anonymous whistleblower complaint last year that described Trump's pressure on Ukraine to investigate Democrat Joe Biden and his son. That complaint prompted a House investigation that ultimately resulted in Trump's impeachment.

In letters to lawmakers in August and September, Atkinson said he believed the complaint was "urgent" and "credible." But the acting Director of National Intelligence at the time, Joseph Maguire, said he did not believe it met the definition of "urgent," and tried to withhold the complaint from Congress.

The complaint was eventually released after a firestorm, and it revealed that Trump had asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a July call to investigate Democrats. The House launched an inquiry in September, and three months later voted to impeach Trump. The Republican-led Senate acquitted Trump in February.

Trump said in the letter to the Senate that Atkinson would be removed from office in 30 days, the required amount of time he must wait after informing Congress. He wrote that he would nominate an individual "who has my full confidence" at a later date.

According to two congressional officials, Atkinson has been placed on administrative leave, meaning he will not serve out the 30 days. One of the officials said Atkinson was only informed of his removal on Friday night. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because Atkinson's administrative leave has not been announced.

Democrats reacted swiftly to Atkinson's removal. The top Democrat on the Senate intelligence panel, Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, said it was "unconscionable" that Trump would fire Atkinson in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We should all be deeply disturbed by ongoing attempts to politicize the nation's intelligence agencies," Warner said.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who led the House impeachment inquiry, said "the president's dead of night decision puts our country and national security at even greater risk."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said the firing "threatens to have a chilling effect against all willing to speak truth to power." Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Trump "fires people for telling the truth."

Michael Horowitz, Chair of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency and the inspector general at the Department of Justice, criticized the removal of Atkinson and defended his handling of the Ukraine case.

"Inspector General Atkinson is known throughout the Inspector General community for his integrity, professionalism, and commitment to the rule of law and independent oversight," Horowitz said.

Tom Monheim, a career intelligence professional, will become the acting inspector general for the intelligence community, according to an intelligence official who was not authorized to discuss personnel changes and spoke only on condition of anonymity. Monheim is currently the general counsel of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

Atkinson's firing is part of a larger shakeup in the intelligence community. Maguire, the former acting Director of National Intelligence, was also removed by Trump and replaced by a Trump loyalist, Richard Grenell.



The intelligence community, which Trump has always viewed with skepticism, has been in turmoil amid the constant turnover. Atkinson is at least the seventh intelligence official to be fired, ousted or moved aside since last summer.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which was created to improve coordination of the nation's 17 intelligence agencies after 9/11, has been in upheaval since former director Dan Coats, who had a fraught relationship with Trump, announced in July 2019 that he was stepping down.

Trump nominated Rep. John Ratcliffe, R-Texas, to replace Coats, but his selection drew sharp criticism from Democrats and a lukewarm response from some Republicans because of his lack of experience.

Trump withdrew Ratcliffe's name from consideration shortly after he was nominated, but then re-nominated him again in February. The Senate has yet to move on the nomination.

Under the Federal Vacancies Reform Act, Grenell could only serve in his post until March 11 unless the president formally nominated someone else for the job. So by selecting Ratcliffe again, Grenell can stay for up to 210 days while Ratcliffe weaves his way through the Senate confirmation process, and for another 210 days if senators reject Ratcliffe's nomination.

## Military recruiting struggles as enlistment stations close

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Marine Gunnery Sgt. Kevin Meyer does his best recruiting face-to-face. He can look people in the eye, read their body language and get insight into whether they would make a good Marine.

But coronavirus quarantines have shut down most recruiting stations. So Meyer and other recruiters have turned increasingly to social media. And that has its drawbacks.

"They usually won't run away if you're talking to them in person," said Meyer, noting that if they are online or on the phone, they can just hang up. "They just stop responding, and the conversation just ends without a conclusion."

As the coronavirus pandemic worsens and the country turns increasingly to the military for help, America's armed services are struggling to get new recruits as families and communities hunker down. Recruiters scrounging for recruits online are often finding people too consumed with their own financial and health care worries to consider a military commitment right now.

The services, as a result, could fall thousands short of their enlistment goals if the widespread lockdowns drag on, forcing them to pressure current troops to stay on in order to maintain military readiness.

"This is going to have somewhat of a corrosive effect on our ability to have the numbers of people that we really need," said Maj. Gen. Lenny Richoux, director for personnel for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "The concern, it is growing."

He said the military is watching this day-to-day and knows that it could take "a very long time" to rebuild the force.

To entice prospects, recruiters are shifting to a softer sell, talking more broadly about service to the nation in difficult times. And they're hoping to get a recruiting surge during the peak summer months.

They may also benefit from the exposure the military has gotten as Navy hospital ships, Army field hospitals and National Guard troops roll into communities to provide aid and health care during the crisis. And the military could be a popular option for those facing lingering unemployment because of the pandemic.

But shutting recruiting stations is a problem. And the lack of in-person contact with recruits hits the Marine Corps particularly hard. The Corps has long excelled in what it calls the kneecap-to-kneecap sales pitch that keeps new Marines linked with their recruiters as they head to boot camp.

"The heart of our recruiting effort is sending handpicked Marine sergeants and staff sergeants out there to go recruit their own image," said Maj. Gen. James Bierman, commander of Marine Corps Recruiting Command. "And we're never more comfortable than we are when we're sitting down face-to-face with a young man or woman."

Bierman said he's reached about 40% of his roughly 37,000-recruit goal this year.

The key problem is that the 4,000 Marine recruiters now can't get into high schools to meet students



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 29 of 66

and woo recruits, said Meyer, who's in charge of recruiting at a Seattle substation.

Army leaders who struggled in recent years to get recruits had already moved to social media, e-sports tournaments and other online recruiting over the past year. So they had a bit of an advantage.

"We were well ahead of glide path when this thing hit, which is good because it gave us some maneuver room," said Maj. Gen. Frank Muth, head of Army Recruiting Command. He said some recruiting stations had gotten double or triple the number of recruit leads compared to the previous year.

Now, he said, they're changing their pitch, posting information on sites like Instagram and YouTube that focus on what the Army can do.

"Let's go in softer," he said he told recruiters. "Start a dialog. It's a call to service, a call to the nation. Your nation needs you now. More of that. And then let them come to us."

Bierman agreed, saying he doesn't want Marine recruiters "trying to force a meeting or try to force a sale while families are dealing with really, really, tough, challenging circumstances."

Muth, whose enlistment goal for the year is 69,000, and Bierman said they'll need to transition back to regular recruiting as soon as possible, but they don't know when.

Still, recruiters said they've seen some successes — even some fueled by the virus outbreak.

Army Staff Sgt. Bradley Martin, a recruiter in Tampa, said he spoke to a young man who, like many, got laid off because of the pandemic's economic impact.

"He was sitting around thinking about his future and said he wanted to do something to be successful," said Martin, who spoke to the prospect through FaceTime about Army careers and the tuition reimbursement program. "We ended up having a great conversation."

Meyer said he had two successful online interviews. One was referred by a Marine recruit who had signed up earlier this year, and another was referred by his own mother.

"They want to be Marines," Meyer said. "The challenge is what happens next."

Most military movement stalled when the Defense Department froze nonessential moves several weeks ago. But the Army and Marine Corps have continued to send recruits to initial or follow-on training.

New Marines are still going to boot camp on the West Coast, but not to Parris Island, South Carolina, where there have been several cases of the virus at the base. Those finishing boot camp are immediately going to their follow-on infantry training at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, or Camp Pendleton, California, without getting the usual 10-day break at home.

Just last week, the Army chartered 32 buses to carry 812 new soldiers from Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where they had finished basic combat training, to Fort Lee, Virginia, to start quartermaster and logistics training. A similar caravan will take medic trainees from Oklahoma to Texas.

Maj. Gen. Lonnie Hibbard, commanding general of the Army Center for Initial Military Training, said people ask why the Army is still recruiting and training during a pandemic.

"We have to," he said, adding it can be done with minimal risk to health and safety. "It's our responsibility to America right now."

AP National Security Writer Robert Burns contributed to this report.

## Saudi Arabia sharply rebukes Russia over oil price collapse

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia sharply criticized Russia on Saturday over what it described as Moscow blaming the kingdom for the collapse in global energy prices, showing the tensions ahead of an emergency meeting of OPEC and other oil producers.

Oil prices sharply fell after the so-called OPEC+ group of countries including Russia failed to agree to production cuts in early March. A price war began soon after, with Saudi Arabia threatening to pump at a record-breaking pace to seize back market share even as the coronavirus pandemic saw demand sharply drop as airlines worldwide halted flights.

International benchmark Brent crude fell to around \$24 a barrel, compared to prices of over \$70 a year

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 30 of 66

ago. Prices slightly have rebounded with President Donald Trump tweeting and talking about the need for a production cut, but rancor between Saudi Arabia and Russia could imperil a deal emerging from a planned teleconference Monday.

That anger could be seen early Saturday in two critical statements released by the kingdom's state-run Saudi Press Agency. The first came from Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan under the headline: "Statements Attributed to One of Russian President's Media Are Completely Devoid of Truth."

"Russia was the one that refused the agreement, while the kingdom and 22 other countries were trying to persuade Russia to make further cuts and extend the agreement," the prince said.

He also said an alleged Russian contention that "the kingdom was planning to get rid of shale oil producers" was false as well. U.S. shale producers have made America one of the world's top producers, but they've been hurt badly by the price collapse. Trump has met with concerned producers about that.

Prince Faisal did not identify the story, nor the outlet he was critiquing.

A second statement came from Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, one of King Salman's sons. The prince criticized Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak by name for suggesting Saudi Arabia wanted to cut out shale producers.

The prince "expressed his surprise at the attempts to bring Saudi Arabia into hostilities against the shale oil industry, which is completely false as our Russian friends recognize well," the statement said.

Saudi Arabia's statements likely seek to defuse any possible confrontation between the kingdom and Trump, who tweeted Thursday that Moscow and Riyadh "will be cutting back approximately 10 Million Barrels" without elaborating. Trump's tweets and public comments have affected oil prices in the past.

## Trump admin tries to narrow stockpile's role for states

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, AMANDA SEITZ and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has abruptly changed its description of the Strategic National Stockpile and put forward a narrower vision of the role the federal government's repository of life-saving medicines and equipment should play in supplying states' needs.

The change comes as the White House already is facing growing anger and worry from governors over federal assistance to fight the coronavirus outbreak. But it conforms with President Donald Trump's insistence that the stockpile is only a short-term backup for states, not a commitment to ensure supplies get quickly to those who need them most during an emergency, the latest front in a concerted White House effort to try to put the onus for battling the crisis on the states, with Washington meant to play more of a supporting role.

Trump angrily defended the approach in his Friday news conference, his early sunny demeanor darkening as he was pressed on expected death rates and his son-in-law Jared Kushner's comments suggesting the national stockpile is not intended for states. He sparred with reporters and insisted his administration was "doing our best for New York," the pandemic's epicenter, even as Governor Andrew Cuomo warns the state is in danger of not having enough ventilators to help patients stricken with coronavirus in a matter of days.

The alteration of the language describing the stockpile was reflected on government websites on Friday, a day after Kushner, a White House senior adviser who has taken a larger role in the coronavirus response, offered a new argument about the supplies.

After saying that states should use their own stockpiles first, Kushner on Thursday said, "And the notion of the federal stockpile was it's supposed to be our stockpile. It's not supposed to be states' stockpiles that they then use."

And asked what Kushner meant by "our stockpile," Trump snapped at a reporter, "You know what our means: United States of America...our. Our. It means the United States of America."

Trump on Friday touted the number of supplies it was sending to the states, including 8.1 million masks to New York. The president also directed FEMA to prevent export of the N95 masks under the Defense Production Act. In new guidance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urged Americans to wear masks in crowded areas, particularly in hot spots, but Trump immediately said that he would not

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 31 of 66

personally follow the recommendation.

Until Friday, the federal Health and Human Services website had described the stockpile as "the nation's largest supply of life-saving pharmaceuticals and medical supplies for use in a public health emergency severe enough to cause local supplies to run out.

"When state, local, tribal, and territorial responders request federal assistance to support their response efforts, the stockpile ensures that the right medicines and supplies get to those who need them most during an emergency."

But the changed version available Friday morning said the stockpile's "role is to supplement state and local supplies during public health emergencies. Many states have products stockpiled, as well. The supplies, medicines, and devices for life-saving care contained in the stockpile can be used as a short-term stopgap buffer when the immediate supply of adequate amounts of these materials may not be immediately available."

Democratic senators, including Tammy Duckworth of Illinois and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, demanded an immediate investigation into the stockpile. Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., called the website alteration "despicable" and said the administration "should be spending every waking moment getting life-saving supplies to our health care providers on the frontlines. Instead, they're spending valuable time editing the Strategic National Stockpile website."

Officials at the agency said the change had been in the works for weeks, downplaying any connection to Kushner's comments. Kushner made his claim during his first appearance at the daily White House briefing, a moment meant to highlight his growing role in managing the federal response to the pandemic, particularly in delivering vital supplies.

Trump has long insisted that the primary responsibility lies with the states in managing the pandemic. He has resisted calls to issue a national stay-at-home order and said that he didn't want to overly use his authority to mobilize private companies for the effort, because he believed the states should take the lead in obtaining supplies.

"I leave it up to the governors," Trump said Friday about whether every state should have a stay-at-home order. "I like that from the standpoint of governing."

But in statehouses across the nation, there has been increasing frustration at the lack of assistance from Washington.

Trump scoffed at New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's request for 30,000 ventilators for the state, a virus hotbed. In neighboring Connecticut, Gov. Ned Lamont told CNN on Tuesday that the state couldn't get personal protective equipment from the national stockpile and was only able to get 50 ventilators from the federal supply. He said he was told that he'll have to secure the rest on his own.

States have also reported multiple issues with the equipment the federal government has managed to send.

Illinois was supposed to receive a federal shipment of 300,000 N95 masks in March, but instead received less-effective surgical masks, Gov. J.B. Pritzker revealed during a Tuesday briefing. California Governor Gavin Newsom announced on Twitter last week that he had received 170 broken ventilators from the national stockpile, far less than the 10,000 breathing machines he's seeking.

Trump said the mask export ban was necessary to assure that the supplies are available for domestic medical use. The move came a day after the White House announced Trump invoked the DPA to compel Minnesota-based 3M to make as many N95 masks as FEMA determines are needed.

Meanwhile, the White House on Friday stepped up precautions to protect Trump and Vice President Mike Pence from contracting the new coronavirus. Anyone who is expected to be in "close proximity" to Trump or Pence will be given a new, quick COVID-19 test, White House spokesman Judd Deere said.

All visitors to the White House complex already have their temperatures taken when entering the building and if they will be near either Trump or Pence. Trump took the new test on Thursday and the White House doctor said results were back in 15 minutes. He tested negative.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 32 of 66

Lemire reported from New York. Seitz reported from Chicago. Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed from Washington.

## Face coverings recommended, but Trump says he won't wear one

By ERIC TUCKER, ZEKE MILLER and MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced new federal guidelines Friday recommending that Americans wear face coverings when in public to help fight the spread of the new coronavirus. The president immediately said he had no intention of following that advice himself, saying, "I'm choosing not to do it."

The new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people, especially in areas hit hard by the spread of the coronavirus, to use rudimentary coverings like T-shirts, bandannas and non-medical masks to cover their faces while outdoors.

The president exempted himself from his administration's own guidelines, saying he could not envision himself covering his face while sitting in the Oval Office greeting world leaders.

"It's a recommendation, they recommend it," Trump said. "I just don't want to wear one myself."

The new guidance, announced as states are bracing for critical shortfalls like those that other parts of the world have experienced, raises concern that it could cause a sudden run on masks.

Trump and other administration officials sought to minimize any burden by stressing the recommendations did not amount to requirements and that a variety of homemade coverings were acceptable. Federal officials said that surgical masks and N95 respirator masks should be left for those on the front lines of fighting the spread of the infection.

Friday's announcement capped an evolution in guidance from the White House that officials acknowledged has at times been inconsistent and confusing, with the administration insisting over the last month that masks were not necessary or even helpful.

"I want to unpack the evolution of our guidance on masks because it has been confusing to the American people," Surgeon General Jerome Adams said Friday.

Adams said that although and he other public health experts initially believed wearing a mask would not have a substantial impact on curbing the spread, the latest evidence makes clear that people who don't show any symptoms can nonetheless pass on the virus.

"We're looking at the data, we're evolving our recommendations, and new recommendations will come as the evidence dictates," Adams said.

First lady Melania Trump embodied the contradictory messaging with a tweet endorsing the new guidance even as her husband chooses to disregard it.

"As the weekend approaches I ask that everyone take social distancing & wearing a mask/face covering seriously," she tweeted.

The administration has said states should have done more to stockpile medical supplies, but it's not clear if anyone is prepared for the potential rush that could ensue if people try to obtain medical masks for themselves from private industry.

In rural Florida, Okeechobee Discount Drugs has been sold out of face masks for almost two weeks, and "we don't know where you can find any masks at this point," said Stacey Nelson, one of the pharmacy's owners.

"It's very hard to get these products, but people want them," Nelson said. "They've been getting mixed messages and people aren't sure if they should be wearing masks in our daily lives. It's very confusing. Wear them, or don't wear them?"

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

In fashioning the recommendations, the administration appeared to be striving to balance political concerns about wanting to preserve as much normalcy as possible with public health concerns that some



infections are being spread by people who seem to be healthy.

The White House has faced pushback against rigorous social distancing guidelines from states with lesser rates of infection. For the hardest-hit areas, where social distancing has already been in place for some time, the White House coronavirus task force thought there would be less risk of people ignoring the other guidance if they covered their faces.

The CDC is recommending that people wearing cloth face coverings in public places, such as grocery stores and pharmacies, where "other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain." The guidance especially applies "in areas of significant community-based transmission."

The White House task force was debating into Friday on the final language of the CDC guidance. CDC scientists wanted to make it national guidance, believing that would do more to slow the spread of the virus.

White House advisers, including Dr. Deborah Birx, wanted to limit the guidance to virus hot spots. Birx said Thursday that she feared wider guidance would lead to a false sense of security for Americans and cause them to back away from more critical social distancing.

In the end, they found a middle ground: a national advisory with special emphasis that those in hard-hit areas should wear masks. Two people familiar with the discussions outlined the internal debate, speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to describe it publicly.

As with other public health guidance, the recommendation on face covering has been a moving target for the administration. Under the previous guidance, only the sick or those at high risk of complications from the respiratory illness were advised to wear masks.

Adams wrote on Twitter at the end of February that people should "STOP BUYING MASKS" and said they were not effective in protecting the general public.

On Monday, he noted that the World Health Organization does not recommend masks for healthy members of the population. Three days later, he tweeted that though there remains "scant" evidence that wearing a mask, especially improperly, can protect the wearer, "emerging data suggests facial coverings may prevent asymptomatic disease transmission to others."

Dr. Michael Ryan, the WHO's emergencies chief, on Friday acknowledged a "very important and very healthy debate" about how masks are used.

"We still believe the main driver of this pandemic is symptomatic (transmission)," he said, not people who may be infected but aren't showing symptoms.

"We can certainly see circumstances in which the use of masks — but homemade or cloth masks — at the community level may help in an overall comprehensive response to this disease," Ryan said.

Schneider reported from Orlando, Florida. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in Washington and Jamey Keaton in Geneva, Switzerland, contributed to this report.

## Some states receive masks with dry rot, broken ventilators

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Some states and cities that have been shipped masks, gloves, ventilators and other essential equipment from the nation's medical stockpile to fight the coronavirus have gotten an unwelcome surprise: the material is unusable.

Nearly 6,000 medical masks sent to Alabama had dry rot and a 2010 expiration date. More than 150 ventilators sent to Los Angeles were broken and had to be repaired. In Oregon, it was masks with faulty elastic that could cause the straps to snap, exposing medical workers to the disease.

"Several of the shipments we have received from the strategic national stockpile contained (personal protective equipment) well past expiration dates and, while we are being told much of the expired equipment is capable of being used for COVID-19 response, they would not be suitable for use in surgical settings," Charles Boyle, a spokesman for Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, said in an email.

He said some of the equipment had been purchased during the H1N1 outbreak more than a decade ago and that the masks with the fragile elastic had been among products previously recalled by the U.S.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 34 of 66

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The state did not distribute them to medical workers.

A shortage of protective gear has imperiled doctors, nurses and other front-line medical workers. Life-saving ventilators have been in short supply as more and more states experience outbreaks of the COVID-19 disease, which typically causes mild or moderate symptoms but can be especially perilous for older adults and people with existing health problems. Many younger adults and medical workers also have succumbed to the disease.

Numerous governors have complained about delays in getting equipment from the Strategic National Stockpile or receiving amounts of gear far below what they had requested. That frustration is compounded when equipment arrives, but can't be used.

Dr. Don Williamson, president of the Alabama Hospital Association and the former top public health official in the state, said he received multiple emails from hospitals about stockpile shipments of N95 masks in which the rubber bands that hold the mask tight around the user's face had dry rot. They couldn't be used unless the bands were replaced.

Montgomery County received nearly 6,000 medical masks of a different type that had dry rot, a shipment that was replaced about a week later.

"It's really alarming because those masks are desperately needed," said U.S. Sen. Doug Jones of Alabama. "When our national stockpile is not monitored enough to know that you've got expired masks and rotted masks out there and not replenished, that is a real problem."

Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado on Friday requested a probe into the management of the supply and distribution of ventilators from the national stockpile. Among other things, he cited reports that maintenance failures were contributing to the lack of operational ventilators "at a time our country desperately needs them."

Los Angeles received about 170 ventilators from the national stockpile that were in disrepair. Gov. Gavin Newsom said they were sent to a company to be fixed.

In New Hampshire, the congressional delegation wrote to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services saying many of the supplies the state received were expired. In addition, more than 16,000 latex gloves couldn't be used in a medical setting because of latex allergies.

The CDC acknowledged late last month that some items in the U.S. stockpile have exceeded their manufacturer-designated shelf life. They were nevertheless being sent to hospitals "due to the potential urgent demand caused by the COVID-19 public health emergency," the CDC said.

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Associated Press writers Adam Beam in Sacramento, California; Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire; and Andrew Selsky in Salem, Oregon, contributed to this report.

## **Pandemic hurts ability of nations to face natural disasters**

**By NICK PERRY Associated Press**

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Before New Zealand began its four-week lockdown to fight the coronavirus, a reporter asked Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern what would happen if an earthquake struck while everybody was sequestered in their homes.

"Why on earth would your mind go there?" Ardern quipped back.

Every year, the world contends with devastating typhoons, wildfires, tsunamis and earthquakes. The dynamic doesn't change just because the globe also happens to be fighting a pandemic.

What has changed for the worse, however, is the ability of nations to prepare for and respond to natural disasters. Not only that, but experts also fear the usual protocols for coping with the aftermath of such disasters could further spread the virus, compounding the death toll from both.

Carlos Valdés, who dealt with two major earthquakes during five years until 2018 as Mexico's disaster response director, said that during his tenure, the Mexican government did not have any protocols for dealing with simultaneous disasters like an earthquake and a pandemic.

"That is a scenario that we hadn't even contemplated," he said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 35 of 66

Valdés, a seismologist who now works in Costa Rica, said he has since sent Mexican authorities his thoughts on how to handle such a situation. Among other things, he said, is the need to reserve one hospital for earthquake victims to separate them from infectious coronavirus patients.

But whether Mexico has taken action on such ideas remains unclear. Xyoli Pérez, the head of the National Seismological Service, said experts who monitor quakes can work from home during the pandemic but she didn't address whether they had specific procedures for a dual disaster.

Some natural disasters are predictable, like the wildfires that scorch California most summers. But already, the virus has hindered preparations there after a particularly dry winter.

The U.S. Forest Service has canceled its planned seasonal burns. The hundreds of firefighters who come to assist each year from other countries may not be able to travel. And the camps that usually house thousands of firefighters from across the U.S. pose a big risk of spreading the virus.

"Picture several hundred tents on a football pitch, rows of porta potties, shared kitchens, and crews of 15 people getting on a bus with all their equipment," said Michael Wara, the director of the Climate and Energy Policy Program at Stanford University. "Well, with this virus, you can't put 15 people on a bus. They're really trying to do a rethink, and they have not yet gotten to the end of that process."

Earthquakes are also an ever-present risk in California, Wara says, but officials haven't yet thought through alternatives to their evacuation plans, which typically involve sheltering hundreds of people together in places like school gymnasiums, another situation primed to spread the virus.

Perhaps most concerning, Wara says, is that hospitals and medical staff swamped with virus patients may not be able to cope with additional victims from a natural disaster.

Japan is prone to devastating earthquakes and tsunamis. But a disaster management official in the Cabinet Office headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that while they have protocols for infectious diseases, they haven't yet developed a specific disaster plan to account for the coronavirus.

In Japan, schools and community centers are often used as shelters during disasters. Hundreds of people cram into confined spaces with little ventilation and questionable hygiene.

The disaster official said one option to slow the spread of the new virus in such situations might be to use easy-to-assemble cardboard beds and partitions. The Cabinet Office is also considering new ways to spread out evacuees, into places like hotels, or corporate gyms.

One of the world's most disaster-prone nations is the Philippines. It is typically lashed by about 20 typhoons and storms each year and has regular volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Often entire villages are moved to emergency shelters such as gyms or basketball courts.

Even without a pandemic, the shelters can be troubled by overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and poor medical services.

"It will complicate the situation," Interior Secretary Eduardo Ano said of the virus. "But whatever disaster comes, we'll face it."

He said they would try to maintain social distancing during a natural disaster "as much as possible."

Even some of the top disaster officials in the Philippines remain in quarantine because they've contracted the virus or have been exposed to it. It's a problem playing out around the world, with the virus afflicting leaders like British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

One of the first natural disasters during the pandemic occurred on March 22 when a magnitude 5.5 earthquake struck Croatia's capital, Zagreb.

The quake killed a 15-year-old girl, injured at least 27 other people and caused panic during a partial lockdown. People fleeing their shaking homes had little choice but to ignore the official advice of avoiding public areas like parks and squares.

In the end, the city's preparedness for the pandemic helped them deal quickly with the quake. The military was mobilized to evacuate damaged hospitals.

Some Zagreb residents said the quake took priority over the virus: get out of your home first, worry about grabbing a mask later. Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic noted that "we have two parallel crises that contradict each other."

Ardern said that as leader of an earthquake-prone country sometimes called the Shaky Isles, she is always planning for the possibility of earthquakes. She said social distancing protocols would clearly need to be sacrificed by any crews who responded to a big quake.

"Of course, at that point, you're in a position of wanting to make sure that you are saving lives," she said.

But saving lives from a natural disaster that requires people working shoulder-to-shoulder and protecting people from a virus by requiring them to keep their distance is a dilemma that many countries are only just beginning to contemplate.

Associated Press writers Mark Stevenson in Mexico City, Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo, Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, and Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade, Serbia, contributed to this report.

## US urges masks as dramatic steps to combat virus roll out

By **MICHELLE R. SMITH, MARINA VILLENEUEVE and REBECCA SANTANA** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Trump administration urged Americans to cover their faces in public and limited exports of medical supplies Friday as New York's governor took his own dramatic step to fight the coronavirus — vowing to seize unused ventilators from private hospitals and companies.

President Donald Trump announced new guidelines that call for everyone to wear makeshift face coverings such as T-shirts and bandannas when leaving the house, especially in areas hit hard by the pandemic, like New York. But the president said he had no intention of following the advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"It's a recommendation, they recommend it," Trump told reporters. "I just don't want to wear one myself."

The change comes amid concerns from health officials that those without symptoms can spread the virus, especially in places like grocery stores or pharmacies. Officials stressed that medical-grade masks should be reserved for health workers and others on the front lines of the pandemic, with critical equipment in short supply.

In one of the most aggressive steps yet in the U.S. to relieve severe shortages of equipment, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he would sign an executive order to take ventilators that aren't being used.

"If they want to sue me for borrowing their excess ventilators to save lives, let them sue me," Cuomo said. He promised to eventually return the equipment or compensate the owners.

The move is aimed at the kind of shortages worldwide that authorities say have caused health care workers to fall sick and forced doctors in Europe to make life-or-death decisions about which patients get a breathing machine. To make matters worse, some U.S. states and cities have received essential equipment from the nation's medical stockpile that's broken or expired.

Cuomo says New York, the nation's worst hot spot, could run out of ventilators next week. Louisiana's governor said New Orleans could exhaust its supply by Tuesday.

Shortages of such things as masks, gowns and ventilators have led to fierce competition among buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere.

Trump took it further Friday, saying he was preventing the export of N95 respirator masks and surgical gloves under the Defense Production Act, a move he said was necessary to ensure that medical supplies are available in the U.S.

A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to find masks a "worldwide treasure hunt," and the French prime minister said he's "fighting hour by hour" to ward off shortages of essential drugs used to keep COVID-19 patients alive.

Cuomo, who has complained that states are being forced to compete against each other for vital equipment, called for a coordinated national approach that would send supplies and people to different areas as their needs peak.

The Democratic governor was praised by a hospital association for moving to seize extra ventilators, but some Republican elected officials outside New York City objected.

"Taking our ventilators by force leaves our people without protection and our hospitals unable to save



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 37 of 66

lives today or respond to a coming surge," 12 of them said in a statement.

The number of people infected in the U.S. exceeded a quarter-million, and the death toll climbed past 7,000, with New York state alone accounting for more than 2,900 dead, an increase of over 560 in just one day. Most of the dead are in New York City, where hospitals are swamped with patients.

The economic damage from the lockdowns and closures mounted. The U.S. snapped its record-breaking hiring streak of nearly 10 years when the government reported that employers slashed over 700,000 jobs last month. But the true picture is far worse, because the figures do not include the last two weeks, when 10 million thrown-out-of-work Americans applied for unemployment benefits.

Worldwide, confirmed infections rose past 1 million and deaths topped 58,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say both numbers are seriously undercounted because of the lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are underplaying the crisis.

Europe's three worst-hit countries — Italy, Spain and France — accounted for more than 32,000 dead, or over half the global toll. The crisis there was seen as a frightening portent for places like New York, where bodies already are being loaded by forklift into refrigerated trucks outside overwhelmed hospitals.

More than 1,200 miles (1,930 kilometers) south, the situation grew more dire in Louisiana, where over 10,000 people have tested positive and deaths reached at least 370, up nearly 20 percent from the day before. Gov. John Bel Edwards warned that the hard-hit New Orleans area is projected to run out of hospital beds in a little more than a week.

Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge has gone from one unit dedicated to coronavirus patients to seven. Nurse Christen Hyde said nurses call families twice a day to give updates on their relatives, in some cases delivering bleak news.

"To have to call a family member and tell them that their family member is not doing well and they are probably going to be passing soon is just devastating," said Hyde, who has had four patients die.

As for the patients, "the last thing that they see is us telling them that they are going to have a tube placed down their throat to help them breathe," she said. "It's awful. It's horrible. It's really affected me."

Italy, the hardest-hit country in Europe, with about 14,700 dead, continued seeing signs that infections and deaths might be leveling off. France reported a surge of more than 1,000 deaths Friday, bringing its overall toll to more than 6,500.

"The work is extremely tough and heavy," said Philippe Montravers, an anesthesiologist in Paris. "We've had doctors, nurses, caregivers who got sick, infected ... but who have come back after recovering. It's a bit like those World War I soldiers who were injured and came back to fight."

Spain recorded over 900 new deaths, down slightly from the record it hit a day earlier. The carnage almost certainly included large numbers of elderly who authorities admit are not getting access to the country's limited breathing machines, which are being used first on healthier, younger patients.

With glorious spring weather likely to tempt stir-crazy European families this weekend, the message remained, "Stay home." Paris police set up roadblocks to stop those trying to escape for Easter vacation.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause pneumonia. Over 200,000 people have recovered, by Johns Hopkins' count.

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Smith reported from Providence, Rhode Island, Villeneuve reported from Albany, New York, and Santana reported from New Orleans. Jocelyn Gecker contributed from San Francisco. Associated Press writers around the world contributed.

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Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

## 'Recovery' search for Kennedy Townsend's daughter, grandson

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Authorities were conducting a "recovery" search for the daughter and a grandson of former Maryland Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, after a canoe they were paddling in the Chesapeake Bay didn't return to shore, the family said Friday.

The missing relatives were identified as Maeve Kennedy Townsend McKean, 40, and McKean's 8-year-old son, Gideon Joseph Kennedy McKean.

"With profound sadness, I share the news that the search for my beloved daughter Maeve and grandson Gideon has turned from rescue to recovery," Kathleen Kennedy Townsend said in a statement Friday night, according to news outlets.

A Maryland Natural Resources Police spokeswoman said authorities suspended the search Friday night but would resume Saturday morning.

Kennedy Townsend, who served two terms as Maryland's lieutenant governor, is the eldest daughter of the late U.S. Attorney General and U.S. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, and niece of the late President John F. Kennedy.

"I reached out to and spoke with Lt. Gov. Townsend this morning and on behalf of the people of Maryland I expressed our most heartfelt sympathies and prayers to her and to her entire family during this difficult time," Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan said Friday afternoon.

The search started Thursday afternoon after the state Natural Resources Police responded to a report of two people on a canoe in the Chesapeake Bay who appeared to be overtaken by strong winds.

A statement from the agency, which didn't name the missing people, said they may have been paddling the canoe from a home in Shady Side, Maryland, to retrieve a ball and couldn't paddle back to shore. An overturned canoe matching the one used by the missing people was found on Thursday night, the agency said.

"News of this tragedy hit me and my family hard this morning," said Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman. "We are holding Kathleen and her family in the light, and holding our own loved ones a little closer as we reflect on their pain and their loss," he said in a statement.

Maeve McKean, a public health and human rights lawyer, served as executive director of the Georgetown University Global Health Initiative, news outlets reported. The initiative's website says her work focused on "the intersection of global health and human rights." McKean previously served as an associate research professor at the City University of New York School of Public Health.

"Our Maeve dedicated her life to society's most vulnerable," Kennedy Townsend said in a statement, adding that her grandson Gideon was a "loving" big brother who excelled at sports, riddles, math and chess. "My heart is crushed, yet we shall try to summon the grace of God and what strength we have to honor the hope, energy and passion that Maeve and Gideon set forth into the world."

## Wisconsin limps toward Tuesday election despite virus fears

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin's attempt to conduct an election in the midst of a coronavirus crisis lurched forward Friday, with a Democratic governor pushing for an all-mail election to replace in-person voting and Republican leaders refusing to budge.

Just three days before Tuesday's spring primary — which features the Democratic presidential contest plus a high-stakes state Supreme Court race — a federal judge had extended absentee voting through April 13 but refused requests to postpone the election.

With thousands of poll workers quitting, Gov. Tony Evers for the first time Friday called for an all-mail election, ordering a special session Saturday and asking the Republican-dominated Legislature to agree.

"I sit here telling you the time is now for leadership and all the people that are part of the Senate and Assembly to step to the plate and do what's necessary to ensure we have safety in the state and we have an election we'll be using mail ballots for," Evers said, expressing confidence that the state would "get

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 39 of 66

there" on shifting the election.

Republicans swiftly made clear their feeling that the election should continue as planned, and accused Evers of waffling under pressure from liberal groups.

"It's so disappointing that Governor Evers has flip-flopped on the very question that we have been discussing over the last month," Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald said in a joint statement. "The only bipartisan discussion we've had was to ensure the election would continue safely and to maximize the opportunity to vote absentee."

Evers wanted the session to begin Saturday afternoon and for lawmakers to take up bills that would allow clerks to mail absentee ballots to voters who haven't requested one by May 19 and give voters until May 26 to return them.

U.S. District Judge William Conley on Thursday ordered absentee voting deadlines extended from Election Day on Tuesday to April 13, in effect extending the election by six days. Republicans appealed, but the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals declined late Friday to stay Conley's order. The court didn't explain its decision.

Other states have delayed their primaries to protect voters and poll workers from the virus. Alaska, Wyoming, Hawaii and Louisiana were set to hold elections Saturday, but they've pushed those contests back. Louisiana's presidential primary is now set for June 20. Democrats in Alaska and Wyoming have decided to hold their party-run contests by mail only and have pushed back the deadline for turning in ballots.

In Wisconsin, the troubled election is playing out in a state certain to be one of the key battlegrounds in the fall presidential race.

Evers said at the beginning of the outbreak that the election should go on as scheduled even amid a stay-at-home order and Republican legislators agreed. But criticism mounted as more and more poll workers walked off the job; more than 100 municipalities have reported they lack enough staff to run even one polling place.

Democrats and liberal groups filed three federal lawsuits demanding Conley postpone in-person voting. The judge declined to delay the election in his Thursday order but extended the absentee voting deadline and lifted a witness requirement.

Attorneys for the Republican National Committee, state Republican Party and Republican legislators turned immediately to the 7th Circuit, arguing that Conley's decision violates core principles that judges shouldn't change the rules in ongoing elections, allows people to vote after Election Day and renders the witness requirement meaningless, opening the door to voter fraud.

The 7th Circuit did stay Conley's decision to exempt absentee voters from the witness signature requirement, saying the judge didn't consider that lifting the mandate might open the door to fraud.

The Republicans' attorneys didn't immediately respond to email messages Friday evening seeking comment on the appellate court's decision.

The governor has said he lacks the power to change election law unilaterally. Calling a special session was Evers' last option to try and force legislative action.

The governor said during a conference call with reporters that holding the election as planned on Tuesday "is a significant concern and a very unnecessary health risk. I can't move this election on my own. My hands are tied."

The primary comes as Joe Biden holds a commanding lead over Bernie Sanders but hasn't formally clinched the Democratic nomination. Tuesday's election also features hundreds of races for local office as well as a Wisconsin Supreme Court seat.

It also comes as Wisconsin's chief medical officer says the state is "flattening the curve" on new COVID-19 infections. Dr. Ryan Westergaard said this week Evers' stay-at-home order "is making a big difference."

President Donald Trump took time out from Friday's briefing on the coronavirus to claim without evidence that the push to delay the election was to hurt a conservative he endorsed, state Supreme Court Justice Daniel Kelly, and not because of the coronavirus pandemic. Kelly faces liberal-backed Jill Karofsky for a 10-year term.

"I hear what happened is his poll numbers went through the roof. And because of that, I think they

delayed the election," Trump said.

Trump also said he opposes mail-in voting because of fraud concerns: "It shouldn't be mailed in. You should vote at the booth and you should have voter ID."

Wisconsin requires voters to provide voter ID even when voting absentee.

Associated Press writers Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta and Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

## What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

The Trump administration urged Americans to wear face coverings in public and limited exports of medical supplies Friday as New York's governor took his own dramatic step to fight the coronavirus by vowing to seize unused ventilators from private hospitals and companies. The new federal guidelines call for Americans, especially in hard-hit areas, to wear makeshift masks like bandanas or T-shirts over their faces.

After Trump announced the face coverings recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control, he said he's not going to wear one.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's dramatic move came as New York state tallied its biggest daily jump yet in deaths—up 562 to 2,935

Stocks fell again on Wall Street following the latest grim reading on the toll the coronavirus is taking on jobs as the economy grinds to a halt. The government reported earlier Friday that more than 700,000 jobs were lost last month because of the pandemic, and investors and economists expect that far worse data is on the way. The unemployment rate jumped to 4.4% from a 50-year low of 3.5%.

Meanwhile, U.S. and European medical workers struggling to save ailing patients watched supplies of medicine, protective equipment and breathing machines dwindle by the hour.

Here are some of AP's top stories Friday on the pandemic. Follow [APNews.com/VirusOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/VirusOutbreak) for updates through the day and [APNews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak) for stories explaining some of its complexities.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

—Does another 2008 Great Recession or even a 1930s-like Great Depression loom in the U.S.? It seems almost certain after nearly 10 million Americans lost their jobs and applied for unemployment benefits in the past two weeks — a record high that reflects the near-complete shutdown of the U.S. economy. Here's what you need to know if you've just lost your job.

—A makeshift intensive-care unit in northeastern Spain looks nothing like the hospital library it once was. Inside, the tension is palpable. Medical workers are under-equipped and wearing improvised protective gear as they treat the critically sick.

—The Trump administration has hastily altered its description of the Strategic National Stockpile, the federal government's repository of life-saving medicines and supplies, to conform with President Donald Trump's insistence that the stockpile is only a short-term backup for states, not a commitment to quickly supply those who need it most during an emergency.

—One population is particularly vulnerable to contracting and spreading the coronavirus: the homeless. Yet, relatively few of California's 150,000 homeless population have been moved into individual quarters, and it's unclear how many may have coronavirus. It's a problem playing out nationwide. Homeless advocates say they are terrified of the illness taking off on the streets.

—A U.S. newspaper industry already under stress is facing an unprecedented new challenge. Readers desperate for information are more reliant than ever on local media as the coronavirus spreads across the U.S. But newspapers and other publications are under pressure as advertising craters. They are cutting jobs, staff hours and pay, dropping print editions — and in some cases shutting down entirely.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as a fever and cough that



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 41 of 66

clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death. The vast majority of people recover.

Here are the symptoms of the virus compared with the common flu.

One of the best ways to prevent spread of the virus is washing your hands with soap and water. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends first washing with warm or cold water and then lathering soap for 20 seconds to get it on the backs of hands, between fingers and under fingernails before rinsing off.

You should wash your phone, too. Here's how.

**TRACKING THE VIRUS:**

Drill down and zoom in at the individual county level, and you can access numbers that will show you the situation where you are, and where loved ones or people you're worried about live.

**ONE NUMBER:**

— 1975: The nearly full point increase in the U.S. unemployment rate from February to March was the sharpest monthly rise since 1975.

**IN OTHER NEWS:**

— **LIFE INTERRUPTED:** The patterns of our daily routines are now replaced by the patterns of empty parking lots, rows of school buses sitting idle and the long shadows of solitary figures in the early spring sunshine.

— **FEEDING THE FRONT LINES:** A group of tech-savvy, entrepreneurial San Francisco friends wanted to help two groups devastated by the coronavirus pandemic. They came up with a plan that involved soliciting donations, tapping friends in the restaurant world and getting San Francisco hospitals to accept free food cooked up by some of the city's top chefs.

— **HOPE IN BLOOD:** Doctors around the world are dusting off a century-old treatment for infections: Infusions of blood plasma teeming with immune molecules that helped survivors beat the new coronavirus. There's no proof it will work, but former patients in Houston and New York were early donors, and now hospitals and blood centers are getting ready for potentially hundreds.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

## **Walmart limits store access; US airlines sign up for grants**

**The Associated Press undefined**

The outbreak of the coronavirus has dealt a shock to the global economy with unprecedented speed. Following are developments on Friday related to the global economy, the work place and the spread of the virus.

**COSTS MOUNT:** The pandemic will cost the global economy as much as \$4.1 trillion, or nearly 5% of all economic activity, according to new estimates from the Asian Development Bank.

The head of the International Monetary Fund said the recession sparked by the coronavirus pandemic is "way worse" than the 2008 global recession. At a press briefing in Geneva on Friday, IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva described the situation as "a crisis like no other."

**AIRLINES:** Delta Air Lines, American Airlines, United Airlines, Southwest and JetBlue said they applied Friday for their share of \$25 billion in federal grants designed to cover airline payrolls for the next six months. None disclosed the amount they are seeking.

The grant money was part of \$2.2 trillion relief bill approved last week. Delta's CEO says his airline is burning more than \$60 million cash per day, and United's president puts it at \$100 million a day. Airline revenue has cratered during the coronavirus outbreak. Delta carried 38,000 passengers last Saturday. On

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 42 of 66

a normal Saturday in late March it flies 600,000.

The number of travelers screened Thursday at airports nationwide was 124,000, a 95% drop from the same day last year.

And the global airline industry passed a milestone Friday: Half of all passenger jets are now grounded as airlines cut flights sharply. Aviation-data firm Cirium said that with another 530 parked since Thursday, there are now 12,635 jets in service and 13,655 grounded. The number of commercial flights is down 75%, according to tracking service

The Transportation Department, meanwhile, said it is getting more complaints from consumers who say airlines are giving travel vouchers instead of refunds after canceling flights. The department says vouchers aren't easy to use because airlines are cutting so many flights due to the coronavirus outbreak. Airlines can offer vouchers — and usually do, even in normal times — but the Transportation Department said it is reminding carriers of a longstanding requirement to issue prompt refunds to passengers who want them.

**SMALL BUSINESS:** More than \$875 million in loan applications had been processed through the new small business loan program, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said via Twitter, “almost all from community banks!” Mnuchin said in that tweet that big banks were also taking applications and would be submitting them shortly. However, there were signs that the program is off to a rough start.

**CROWD CONTROL:** Walmart still wants customers, just fewer of them at a time. The nation's largest retailer said it will now allow no more than five customers for each 1,000 square feet at a given time, roughly about 20% of the average store's capacity. To oversee the restriction, workers will mark a queue at a single-entry door, and direct arriving customers there, where they'll be admitted one by one. Walmart joins Target and others in trying to limit the number of customers in the store to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

**HEAVY INDUSTRY:** Toyota is halting production at five of its 18 plants in Japan as sales evaporate. The stoppage will last three days for most of the plants, but one plant will close until mid-April.

The affected plants produce vehicles for export, including Lexus luxury models and the Prius hybrid. Other Japanese automakers, such as Honda Motor Co., have also suspended production.

The U.S. auto industry is completely shut down.

**CORONA SIDELINED BY CORONAVIRUS:** The coronavirus pandemic is even closing the taps on Corona beer — along with most other brews across Mexico.

Major breweries announced Friday they are suspending operations in response to government orders for non-essential businesses to keep their workers at home.

Grupo Modelo, maker of Corona among other popular brands, said it will suspend its operations at plants around the country by Sunday. The company pointed out in a statement that thousands of farmers depend on it buying their grain. It said it has a plan that would allow it to continue production with 75% of its workforce at home if the government decides to allow it to continue operating.

Some Mexican states have also imposed dry laws that restrict the sale of alcohol during the health crisis.

**MARKETS:** U.S. stocks fell Friday, leaving the S&P 500 down 26.5% since its record set in February.

The losses came after the government reported that U.S. employers cut 701,000 jobs in March, the monthly decline in nearly a decade. Because of the timing of the spread of COVID-19, the March report did not capture the extent of the damage. Economists are warning policy makers to brace for worse.

**ROUNDING IT OUT:** The U.S. typically has a unique response to crisis, and the coronavirus is no different.

Firearm sales spiked 85% last month compared with the March last year, according an analysis of the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System by Small Arms Analytics and Forecasting.

The laws of supply and demand also apply to arming up, of course, and the cost of adding guns the the shopping list will cost you.

“Much of the industry's inventory will have been depleted, so that we anticipate that weapons and ammunition prices increased as well,” said Jurgen Brauer, SAAF's chief economist.

Data on prices will be released soon.

## Insurance marketplaces offer help with coronavirus job cuts

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

More than a million people could swamp the Affordable Care Act's health insurance marketplaces in the coming months as employers lay off staff during the coronavirus pandemic.

The health insurance markets are a backbone of the Obama-era law that President Donald Trump has tried to demolish. They are now seen as a key option to help protect people from devastating medical bills while they search for another job and new coverage.

Nearly 10 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits in the final two weeks of March, far exceeding the figure for any corresponding period on record.

Here's a closer look at the issue.

### WHAT'S THE RISK OF REMAINING UNINSURED?

People would not have an insurer's leverage to knock down the price of routine care like a doctor visit, but the real financial peril comes from expensive care like emergency room visits and hospital stays.

Researchers say a hospital stay of several days could cost well over \$20,000 depending on factors like where the patient lives and how much time is spent in an intensive care unit.

"Now's not the time to roll the dice (without insurance) and hope you don't get sick," said Peter Lee, executive director of California's state-based health insurance exchange.

### WHAT PROTECTION CAN YOU GET?

Insurers will typically pick up most of the bill for a hospital stay as long as the care takes place in their coverage network.

Several major insurers have recently announced that they also will waive patient out-of-pocket expenses like copayments or deductibles through the end of May or June for coronavirus-related care.

That includes hospital stays, which can stick patients with a deductible of several thousand dollars, depending on coverage. Since insurance is complicated, patients should call the 800 number on the back of their card to clarify that coverage.

### WHAT IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DOING?

The White House said Friday it would reimburse hospitals that treat uninsured patients for COVID-19. Last week's massive rescue package set aside \$100 billion in funding for hospitals to handle uncompensated care and other coronavirus-related losses.

"This should alleviate any concern uninsured Americans may have about seeking the coronavirus treatment," Trump said Friday.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said part of the \$100 billion total would be used for those reimbursements. Providers will be paid at Medicare rates and would be barred from billing patients for anything above those rates.

### WHO CAN SHOP ON THE INSURANCE MARKETPLACES?

HealthCare.gov and state-run insurance markets normally limit enrollment to a regular sign-up window that starts each fall. But losing your health insurance triggers an opening that allows you to shop for a new plan.

In addition to that, several states have started so-called "special enrollment periods" for people who didn't sign up during the regular window but now want protection in case the coronavirus hits. Those states include Massachusetts, New York and Nevada.

Governors and some advocacy groups are calling on the Trump administration to open a similar window for more Americans. But the administration has sent mixed messages on whether it will do so.

Consumers may qualify for income-based tax credits to help pay for the coverage.

"It's an important option to try and connect people who are uninsured to some form of coverage during this public health crisis," said Jennifer Tolbert, state health reform director at the non-profit Kaiser Family Foundation.

More than 11 million people are covered through the health law's insurance markets, which offer subsidized private policies to people who don't have coverage on their jobs.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 44 of 66

The consulting firm Health Management Associates estimates that the individual market could increase by 365,000 to 2.1 million people due to the coronavirus pandemic. That depends on how high unemployment rates climb.

Health Management Associates also predicts that the uninsured population could climb from around 29 million people to as much as 40 million with high unemployment.

## ARE THERE OTHER OPTIONS?

Some people who have lost jobs might be able to switch to a spouse's employer-based coverage. Others may see their income levels fall far enough to qualify for a state's Medicaid program.

Employers also may help. The benefits consultant Mercer found through recent online polling that some companies are providing subsidies to help their laid-off workers keep their coverage for a period of time.

Mercer also found that many companies that put employees on a temporary furlough will continue to provide benefits, although some may commit to doing so for only a couple weeks.

That will vary depending on things like the industry and the financial hit the employer expect to take from the downturn, said Beth Umland, Mercer's director of research for health and benefits.

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Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Andrew Taylor contributed to this report from Washington, D.C. Murphy reported from Indianapolis.

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Follow Tom Murphy on Twitter: @thpmurphy

## **NOT REAL NEWS: False coronavirus claims and phony remedies**

By **BEATRICE DUPUY, ARIJETA LAJKA and AMANDA SEITZ** Associated Press

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

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**CLAIM:** Eating alkaline foods will stave off the novel coronavirus, which has a pH level of 5.5 to 8.5.

**THE FACTS:** A false post circulating on social media claims that COVID-19 has a pH level between 5.5 to 8.5, and in order to fend off the virus people must consume alkaline foods. Both points are false. First, a virus does not have a pH level. Second, the body's pH levels cannot be changed through diet. "A virus itself does not have a pH," said Sarah Stanley, associate professor of infectious diseases and vaccinology at the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health. Stanley explained in an email that "pH is something that applies to a water based solution, which a virus is not." In addition, she said, it's not possible for diet to change the pH of blood, cells or tissues. The body regulates pH levels; it's not something a person would want to change. "Eating a healthy and balanced diet supports immunity and can be helpful for fighting off infections. However, there is no evidence that consuming alkaline foods specifically is beneficial," she said. The post cites the "Journal of Virology & Antiviral Research" and states: "This is to inform us all that the pH for corona virus varies from 5.5 to 8.5. All we need to do, to beat coronavirus, we need to take more of an alkaline foods that are above the pH level of the virus." It lists a number of foods to fight off the novel coronavirus, including lemons, limes and pineapples, but the pH levels provided for them are incorrect. For example, it gives a pH level of 9 for lemons and a level of 9.2 for limes, when both have a pH of about 2, a food science specialist noted. "These pH values for these foods are completely wrong," Donald Schaffner, extension specialist in food science at Rutgers University, told the AP. "The human body is designed to be really good at maintaining its pH." Schaffner said people should eat those foods if they want, but "the best way to keep from getting a virus is to stay away from people."

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**CLAIM:** Drinking alcoholic beverages can prevent coronavirus.

**THE FACTS:** A Facebook post with the caption "Time to disinfect our insides" featured a fabricated memo made to appear like a recommendation from a Kansas City hospital that drinking alcoholic beverages



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 45 of 66

ages would reduce the risk of coronavirus. The manufactured memo attributed to St. Luke's Hospital said, "After extensive research, our findings show that consuming alcoholic beverages may help reduce the risk of infection by the novel coronavirus; COVID-19. Vodka is the most recommended for drinking, cleaning, and sanitizing." Saint Luke's Health System, a hospital network that includes the hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, issued a statement in response on March 11, stating: "False reports are circulating that say drinking alcohol can reduce the risk of COVID-19. THIS IS NOT TRUE. Saint Luke's follows CDC guidance." The hospital suggests practicing good hand hygiene, washing hands for at least 20 seconds, and when soap and water is not available, using a hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol. Dr. Robert Legare Atmar, an infectious disease specialist at Baylor College, said consuming alcohol will not protect against infectious diseases like COVID-19. "Alcohol consumption has long been touted as a means to prevent infection with a variety of pathogens, but there is no evidence that such alcohol consumption protects against any infection," Dr. Atmar told the AP in an email. "In fact, the evidence is often the opposite — that alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk of infection."

**CLAIM:** Put a small pea-sized amount of antibiotic ointment like mupirocin inside your nostrils. The ointment will kill any infectious germs when you breathe and should kill the coronavirus before it gets to your lungs.

**THE FACTS:** The antibiotic ointment will not protect you from the coronavirus. Antibacterial medications like mupirocin will only help fight off bacteria like staphylococcus and streptococcus, not COVID-19, which is a virus, said Dr. Daniela Kroshinsky, director of inpatient dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital. "The most important steps to prevent infection with COVID are physical distancing, good hand washing, and avoiding touching your face," she said in an email. The false posts circulating online, which included a photo of mupirocin, recommended that people protect themselves and others by putting a "small pea-sized amount on the tip of a Q-tip" and swabbing the inside of their nostrils. Dr. Carrie Kovarik, an associate professor of dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania, said mupirocin can be used in the nose of patients who have bacterial infections like methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, also known as MRSA. "It's an antibiotic not an antiviral and does not have activity against viruses," she said. "People are just sort of grasping at straws."

**CLAIM:** Israel has had no deaths from coronavirus because people in the country have been cured by drinking hot water with lemon and bicarbonate of soda at night.

**THE FACTS:** The drink is not a cure for the coronavirus, and there have been deaths attributed to the coronavirus in Israel. As of Friday, Israel had confirmed more than 7,030 cases of the virus and 39 deaths. Posts predominantly shared on Facebook and WhatsApps falsely state that "the action of the lemon with hotter baking soda immediately kills the virus, completely eliminates it from the body." Dr. Shira Doron, an infectious disease physician and hospital epidemiologist at Tufts Medical Center, told The Associated Press that nothing should be presumed to prevent or treat the virus unless it has gone through clinical trials. "There are no herbal remedies I would recommend for COVID-19," she said. Medical experts have said that developing a vaccine for the virus could take at least 12 to 18 months. Dr. Doron recommends that people keep a well-rounded healthy diet, get sleep and minimize their stress, because those factors affect the immune system.

**CLAIM:** The proper way to wear a medical mask is with the colored side on the outside if you are sick and don't want to spread your germs and with the white side out if you're not sick and want to stop germs from getting in.

**THE FACTS:** Medical officials say the colored side of the mask should be worn on the outside, away from your face, regardless of whether you are sick or healthy. Social media users have been sharing the false claim since January, but it recently gained prominence in the U.S. as more Americans consider wearing face masks in an effort to protect themselves from the new coronavirus. Dr. Seto Wing Hong, co-director

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 46 of 66

of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Control, said in January that the correct way to wear a mask is with the blue side on the outside and the white side on your face. "You see it has the blue color on the outside because it is waterproof and then you have white on the inside because it is absorbent," he said. "So, if I cough, it absorbs it." Surgical face masks like the one shown with the false claim online typically have a blue side and a white side. One post on Twitter with the false claim had 80,000 likes. The post shows a document from someone who says they went to a doctor's office and a nurse taught them how to properly wear a medical mask depending if they are sick or healthy. The document includes two photos of women wearing masks. "Colored side out if you are sick and do not want to spread your germs around. White side out (this is the filter part) for when you're not sick and you want to stop germs from getting in," the document reads. Experts stressed it is best to follow the instructions from the mask supplier.

**CLAIM:** Just three days after Attorney General William Barr announced the Department of Justice will prosecute hoarders of personal protective equipment needed to combat the coronavirus, a California union suddenly located a stockpile of 39 million N95 masks.

**THE FACTS:** That's not what happened. The United Health Care Workers West chapter of the Service Employees International Union simply connected state governments and hospitals to a vendor. The union did not have a stockpile of masks. Social media posts that the California union was hoarding crucial medical supplies followed President Donald Trump's March 23 signing of an order making it a crime to stockpile personal protective equipment needed by medical workers fighting the coronavirus pandemic. Barr also announced his agency was investigating people who were hoarding or price gouging medical supplies. Three days after the signing, the Services Employees International Union chapter announced it was connecting several counties in California, the state, and hospital networks with a vendor that could provide 39 million N95 masks. Fringe news sites and social media posts falsely suggested the union had been hoarding the masks all along, only handing them over once the federal government had threatened to prosecute such activity. "Hmm ... SEIU Union in California Suddenly Finds Mysterious Stash of 39 Million Face Masks -- 3 Days After AG Bill Barr Announces They're Going After Hoarders," one headline stated. The union didn't stock or sell the masks, Steve Trossman, a spokesman for the union chapter, confirmed to The Associated Press. It searched for leads and potential suppliers for the masks. "We had nothing to do with the transactions," Trossman said. "We found suppliers, we had hospitals and health systems that needed supplies and connected them." Brian Ferguson, a spokesman for the California governor's emergency services office, also confirmed to the AP that the state bought them from a vendor.

**CLAIM:** If you are in Las Vegas and you get a knock on your door from Nevada Power, 2020 Census or COVID-19 testers do NOT open your door! They are robbing people at gunpoint.

**THE FACTS:** No verified reports of such criminal activity have occurred in the city, the Las Vegas Police Department confirmed to The Associated Press. Facebook posts are spreading an old hoax that homeowners shouldn't answer the door if they get a knock from people claiming to represent certain government agencies. The U.S. Census Bureau has seen false reports of criminals posing as census workers hoping to rob anyone who answers the door since last year. A new twist on the unsubstantiated report circulating in recent days on Facebook warned Las Vegas residents not to answer the door for someone offering to swab for the coronavirus, or claiming to be from the U.S. Census Bureau or Nevada's public utility. "There are no verified reports of this going on in the Las Vegas valley," a spokesman for the Las Vegas Police Department said in an emailed statement to The Associated Press. The Census Bureau, which has repeatedly knocked down online hoaxes that people are impersonating census workers and robbing homes, has delayed dispatching census workers to collect answers to the once-every-decade survey until April 29 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

This is part of The Associated Press' ongoing effort to fact-check misinformation that is shared widely

online, including work with Facebook to identify and reduce the circulation of false stories on the platform.

Find all AP Fact Checks here: <https://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

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## AP Sources: Shipping tycoon helps Venezuela in quest for gas

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and SCOTT SMITH Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — With gas lines across Venezuela growing, a controversial shipping magnate has stepped in to prevent the country from running out of fuel amid the coronavirus pandemic, The Associated Press has learned.

The fuel shortage, in the nation that sits atop the world largest crude reserves, is the latest threat to Nicolas Maduro's rule at a time he is under intense U.S. pressure to resign.

Wilmer Ruperti's Maroil Trading Inc. billed state-owned oil monopoly PDVSA 12 million euros last month for the purchase of up to 250,000 barrels of 95-octane gasoline, according to a copy of the invoice obtained by AP. The gasoline was purchased from an undisclosed Middle Eastern country, said two people familiar with the transaction. They agreed to discuss the sensitive dealings only on condition of anonymity.

The single gas shipment isn't going to resolve Venezuela's supply problems. But with the economy paralyzed, any amount of fuel is welcome relief, analysts said.

Ruperti, a former oil tanker captain, has a history coming to the rescue of Venezuela's socialist government at critical junctures, something that endeared him to the late President Hugo Chávez.

But his latest gambit, which could help stave off a deepening humanitarian crisis, is bound to irritate the Trump administration, which this week doubled down on its campaign of support for opposition leader Juan Guaidó by sending Navy ships to the Caribbean on a counternarcotics mission following Maduro's indictment in the U.S. on narcoterrorist charges.

Venezuela's oil fields and refineries have crumbled from years of mismanagement. More recently, fuel imports have dried up as the Trump administration tightened sanctions, targeting two trading houses owned by Russia's Rosneft for providing a lifeline to Maduro. Then came the coronavirus, which sent crude prices crashing and paralyzed what little was left of domestic production.

"In Venezuela, the only thing spreading faster than the coronavirus are the gasoline shortages," said Russ Dallen, head of Caracas Capital Markets.

In recent days, gas lines have popped up across Caracas, which is typically immune from days' long waits common in the rest of the country. Most stations had closed as supplies ran out.

At one of the few gas stations still open in the capital Thursday, hundreds of cars, taxis and trucks hugged the shoulder of a highway as heavily armed soldiers stared down motorists, some of whom had been waiting three days to fill up.

Among those in the 3-kilometer long line was Javier Serrano, who relies on a beat-up blue 1968 Ford Falcon to eke out a meager living as a taxi driver.

"There's a curfew at night and no public transportation," he said. "One of my relatives could die at home because they don't have a vehicle."

The government blames the gas shortages on U.S. aggression. On Friday, it said it was formulating a "special fuel supply plan" to restore stockpiles in the "shortest possible time," allowing the nation to combat the coronavirus.

"We deplore the position of extremist sectors of the Venezuelan opposition that collude with foreign governments to plan and execute these actions against the Venezuelan people," said Industry Minister Tareck El Aissami. "History will mercilessly judge these traitors."

Enter Ruperti to help again. In 2002, he chartered a fleet of Russian tankers to import gasoline amid a months' long strike at PDVSA seeking to remove Chavez. More recently, he funded the defense of first lady Cilia Flores' two nephews in a politically charged U.S. narcotics trial as well as that of American Joshua

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 48 of 66

Holt, who was held for two years in a Caracas jail on what were seen as trumped-up weapons charges. Rupert was decorated by Chavez with military honors for breaking the strike and saw his business as a prized PDVSA contractor boom. Rupert showed his gratitude by giving the leftist leader two pistols used by independence hero Simon Bolivar, which reportedly cost him \$1.6 million. Later, however, he was sued by a unit of the Russian shipping company for allegedly paying millions in bribes.

Rupert declined to comment.

While U.S. sanctions have driven away from Venezuela many established shipping companies and commodity traders, Rupert appears to be little fazed.

One of the documents obtained by AP shows his Swiss-based Maroil Trading AG opened accounts in dollars, euros and rubles at Moscow-based Derzhava Bank in November. One person said the gas that Maroil billed to PDVSA should arrive to Venezuela in the coming days. Dallen estimates it's enough to supply current demand for about a week.

There have been only five deaths in Venezuela so far due to the coronavirus and most Venezuelans are closely observing a government-mandated lock-down, but concerns are rising that the already collapsed health care system will be overwhelmed if more people are infected. Protests have started to emerge among farmers who complain that their produce is rotting because they can't transport it to urban centers.

"An acute gasoline shortage at this juncture would bring about a serious worsening of the country's humanitarian crisis, putting Venezuelans' lives at even greater risk," said Francisco Rodriguez, a Venezuelan economist who launched Oil For Venezuela, a U.S.-based group lobbying for sanctions relief.

Joshua Goodman on Twitter: @APjoshgoodman

Scott Smith on Twitter: @ScottSmithAP

Goodman reported from Miami.

## **VIRUS DIARY: Fantasy baseball, when real ball is the fantasy**

**By DAN SEWELL Associated Press**

CINCINNATI (AP) — "People ask me what I do in winter when there is no baseball. I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring." — Rogers Hornsby (1896-1963), baseball Hall of Famer

Updating my brackets, I looked forward to a dream second-round game: the 1919 Chicago White Sox against the 1976 Cincinnati Reds. The two greatest players ever banned because of betting scandals, Shoeless Joe Jackson and Pete Rose, on the same field!

The field is made of cardboard, a game played with dice and statistically accurate cards.

Instead of cleaning out the basement as planned two weeks ago in our self-isolating home, I returned upstairs carrying a box of Strat-O-Matic cards and drew up a March Madness baseball tournament with the best teams of all time.

"The only church that feeds the soul, day in, day out, is the church of baseball." — Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon) in "Bull Durham"

Opening Day is a big deal in Cincinnati: eclectic parade, office parties with hot dogs; block parties with live music. But the coronavirus outbreak forced baseball to postpone first games March 26 to no sooner than mid-May.

Right now, there's no watching from lawn chairs the grandkids' games of tee-ball, with kids piling on each other fighting for the ball while a coach windmills his arm to a confused runner. There's no coach-pitch, where dads learn the shame of accidentally striking out their own child. No Little League, where you start seeing slick fielding and savvy batting.

"This field, this game, is a part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that once was good, and that could



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 49 of 66

be again." — Terence Mann (James Earl Jones) to Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) in "Field of Dreams"

We're trying to get our baseball fixes.

A friend, media attorney Jack Greiner, has organized daily trivia and a Thursday night baseball conference chat among two dozen aficionados. Another baseball buddy, investment adviser Buck Newsome, brought smiles Tuesday night by sharing a photo of Rose wearing a self-made protective mask with the Reds' wishbone "C" logo.

Robert Crotty, who has sold off his extensive baseball memorabilia collection, entertains Facebook friends by posting vintage baseball photos with captions such as umpire Jocko Conlan admonishing brawling players to "stay six feet apart!"

Fox Sports Ohio is replaying classic games. This week, it's the four 1975 World Series games that the Reds won. Sorry, Red Sox fans, no dramatic Carlton Fisk Game Six-winning homer on here.

"Is this heaven?" — Shoeless Joe (Ray Liotta) in "Field of Dreams"

Baseball video games are fine, but this board game I first played at age 11 still spurs flights of imagination: Rose in his jut-jawed prime and a shyly smiling Shoeless Joe Jackson hanging around the batting cage on a sunny afternoon, talking hitting.

Jackson and pitcher Eddie Cicotte, also banned after the 1919 "Black Sox" scandal, starred in a play-in round win over the 1994 Montreal Expos. I'm hoping to get to the second round this weekend.

When this crisis has ended and baseball resumes, it will lift spirits that need it, as the 2001 Yankees did for New York after 9/11 with a thrilling postseason run that fell one game short. And we will feel comforted as fans did in 1946 when Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio and Stan Musial returned to the field after World War II military service.

"One guy died and he went to heaven, and he came back down and he told his buddy, 'You know, I've got good news and bad news.' ... 'So what's the good news?' 'Well, there's baseball in heaven.' 'What's the bad news?' 'You're pitching next Thursday.'" — Rose, telling a favorite joke on ESPN.

"Virus Diary," an occasional feature, will showcase the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow Dan Sewell, The AP's Cincinnati correspondent, on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/dansewell>

## Anick Jesdanun, longtime AP technology writer, dies at 51

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

He ran marathons on every continent, including Antarctica — 83 of them in all, many followed by a visit to an obscure craft brewery. Last year, he watched 365 movies — most of them in theaters. And Anick Jesdanun made sure — always — that when millions of people read his coverage of the internet and its ripples, they got all the facts and the context they needed.

Jesdanun, 51, deputy technology editor for The Associated Press, died in New York City on Thursday of coronavirus-related complications, his family said.

For more than two decades, Jesdanun helped generations of readers understand the emerging internet and its impact on the world. And while his work may have been about screens and computers and virtual networks, Jesdanun's large life was about the world and exploring all of the corners of it that he could, virtual and physical alike.

"Before people knew the internet was full of falsehoods, he was the guy who said, 'We'd better check that,'" said his colleague, AP technology writer Michael Liedtke.

Jesdanun, known as Nick, was the first AP reporter to be given the "internet writer" byline two decades ago, when the world was less than 10 years into using the network widely.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 50 of 66

His early work focused on how the internet was changing everything: dating, reading, photography, democracy, access to health care. In 2000, he wrote about how internet-connected devices would be tracking our locations — something that was still years in the future.

By example, conversation and hands-on editing, Jesdanun, working from a desk renowned for its messiness, taught a generation of AP journalists how to cover technology in ways that were understandable and accessible but unparalleled in their depth.

"Nick was the steady bulwark of AP's tech team for two decades," said Frank Bajak, AP's first technology editor. "He had the deepest institutional memory of AP's tech coverage and patiently educated dozens of novice colleagues in all things digital."

As the internet grew and its pitfalls become more evident, Jesdanun wrote about everything from Facebook's privacy travails to government regulations. He also found time to cover things closer to his heart, one of which appeared under this headline in February: "How to binge on Oscar movies in cinemas for cheap."

"There's still no substitute for a movie theater," he wrote in a first-person story last year.

Quick with a smile, Jesdanun sometimes let his sillier side loose in AP's "Tech Tests." These often included video shorts in which he would run new gadgets through the paces (and occasionally give his nieces cameo roles). When the iPhone's face-recognition model came out in 2017, he filmed a mostly deadpan video of him trying to stump it with everything from a Santa beard to a fake nose and mustache.

While Jesdanun could seem reserved to those who didn't know him, his colleagues talked of an embrace of the world that he carried into his work and that ensured his technology journalism was grounded in what people cared about.

"His depth of knowledge was unmatched," said his boss, current AP technology editor David Hamilton.

And tech writer Mae Anderson, whose office desk was by Jesdanun's, remembered how they'd visit tech industry events and Jesdanun wouldn't relent until his sources produced the information he was looking for.

"He always kept asking questions and pressing people to answer questions," she said, "much past the point I ever would. And it made the subsequent stories much better."

Jesdanun's running, which he embraced "later in life," was part of that commitment to engaging with his surroundings, said his cousin, Risa Harms.

"It was a life force for him, a way for him to see the world and to meet people," she said. "He's a doer. He's not somebody who felt comfortable being a recreational tourist. He visited a place and wanted to have something to do there. So he did a marathon."

She added: "I feel fairly confident that there was nothing on his bucket list. There was nothing he wanted to do that he didn't have a chance to do."

Jesdanun, a Pittsburgh native who grew up in New Jersey, was a 1991 graduate of Swarthmore College. He worked in AP bureaus in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Washington before moving to New York. When he left Philadelphia for Harrisburg in 1993, he sublet his apartment to a colleague and left behind only a few pieces of furniture and, hanging from the ceiling, a glittering disco ball.

"Do what you want with the rest," Jesdanun told his tenant, "but the disco ball stays."

Barbara Ortutay, an AP tech writer and Jesdanun's close friend, spent countless nights over the past 15 years hanging out with him at outdoor philharmonic concerts and movies around New York City. He was serious about photography and "was always documenting everything," she said.

"He loved Chinese pork buns and always bought some for the rest of us in the office," Ortutay said Friday. "One of our last texts was about pork buns, and I thought he'd turned a corner because he said he wanted one."

Jesdanun is survived by his parents, Adisak and Orabhin Jesdanun; a brother, Gary Jesdanun; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. The AP, the only employer Jesdanun ever worked for, is planning a virtual memorial service at some point to give colleagues and friends the opportunity — in an undesired but perhaps appropriate forum — to remember its first internet writer.

"Nick was a kind and gentle colleague who was deeply admired by everyone he worked with," said AP

deputy managing editor Sarah Nordgren, who oversees technology news. "He loved the AP and his work, and it showed every day."

## A bleak US jobs report likely portends even deeper losses

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A grim snapshot of the U.S. job market's sudden collapse emerged Friday with a report that employers shed hundreds of thousands of jobs last month because of the viral outbreak that's brought the economy to a near-standstill.

The loss of 701,000 jobs, reported by the Labor Department, ended nearly a decade of uninterrupted job growth, the longest such streak on record. The unemployment rate surged in March from a 50-year low of 3.5% to 4.4% — the sharpest one-month jump in the jobless rate since 1975.

And that's just a hint of what's to come.

For the April jobs report that will be released in early May, economists expect as many as a record 20 million losses and an unemployment rate of around 15%, which would be the highest since the 1930s.

The enormous magnitude of the job cuts is inflicting far-reaching damage on economies in the United States and abroad, which are widely believed to be sinking into severe recessions. As rising numbers of people lose jobs — or fear they will — consumer spending is shrinking. That pullback in spending, which is the primary driver of the economy, is intensifying pressure on those businesses that are still operating.

Economists are holding out hope that an extraordinary series of rescue actions from Congress and the Federal Reserve will help stabilize the U.S. economy in the months ahead. The key goals of Congress' just-enacted \$2.2 trillion relief package are to quickly put cash in people's hands and incentivize companies to avoid job cuts or quickly recall laid-off employees.

The package includes an extra \$600 a week in unemployment benefits on top of the usual state payments and will ideally enable the millions of newly jobless to pay their rent and other bills. But it won't make up for the vast array of spending that Americans typically engage in that has now been lost — from eating out and paying for gym memberships to buying new furniture, autos and electronic gadgets. Indeed, Oxford Economics says that for the April-June quarter, that pullback will likely cause the sharpest quarterly drop in consumer spending on record.

Katharine Abraham, an economist at the University of Maryland, said that if the extra aid manages to help many of the unemployed avoid building up excessive debt, "when businesses open back up ... they should be able to spend money."

Still, even factoring in the government's intervention, Joel Prakken, chief US economist at IHS Markit, predicts that the economy will sharply contract in the April-June quarter — by a 26.5% annual rate, the worst on records dating to just after World War II.

Many economists say that additional government support will be needed, particularly if the virus persists into the late summer.

The job losses during March were likely even larger than what was reported Friday because the government surveyed employers before the heaviest layoffs hit in the past two weeks. Nearly 10 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits in the final two weeks of March, far exceeding the figure for any corresponding period on record. Those layoffs will be reflected in the jobs report for April.

"This was an ugly jobs report, showing that the pain in the economy started in early March, well before the spike in the weekly initial jobless claims data," said Joseph Song, an economist at Bank of America Securities. "It is going to get much worse in coming reports."

Brad Hershbein, senior economist at the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, said that last month's job loss likely reflected nervousness among businesses that had cut back on hiring even before the flood of layoffs.

One sign of how painfully deep the job losses will likely prove to be: During its nearly decade-long hiring streak, the U.S. economy added 22.8 million jobs. Economists expect the April jobs report being released in early May to show that all those jobs could have been lost.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 52 of 66

Lower-income service workers bore the brunt of the job cuts in March, with restaurants, hotels and casinos accounting for roughly two-thirds of them — a loss of 459,000 jobs. Retailers shed 46,000.

Yet the layoffs have also begun to creep into many other corners of the economy. Doctor's offices sliced 12,000 jobs, the most on records dating to 1972. Law firms cut 1,700. Banks and real estate companies also shed jobs.

Many employers have cut hours for some staffers. The number of part-time employees who would prefer full-time work jumped by one-third in March to 5.8 million.

Bridget Hughes had had her work hours cut in half before she was forced to take two weeks off from her job at Burger King and self-isolate after her aunt tested positive for COVID 19. She'll be quarantined until next week. The restaurant where she worked in Kansas City, Missouri, has cut about two-thirds of its staff and is providing drive-thru service only. Hughes, 49, doesn't know when she'll be able to return to work.

She applied for unemployment benefits, but state officials told her it might be up to 30 days before her claim is processed and her first check is issued.

"We were already living paycheck to paycheck," she said. "I don't know if we're going to make rent this month. We are struggling to get food on the table."

A key determinant of the economy's future will be whether businesses can survive the shutdown and quickly rehire those workers who consider themselves to be temporarily laid off. If so, that would help the economy snap back and avoid the type of weak recovery that followed the past three downturns.

But if the virus outbreak forces businesses to stay closed into the late summer, many may go bankrupt or won't have the money to rehire their old employees. That would mean that many workers who now consider themselves on temporary layoff could lose their jobs.

So far, some large and small businesses are still paying for health care benefits and keeping in touch with their newly laid-off workers, a slightly hopeful sign amid the flood of job cuts.

Still, many worry that their jobs are gone for good.

Megan-Claire Chase, 43, of Dunwoody, Georgia, was laid off a week ago from her job as a marketing manager at a staffing company. Chase, a four-year cancer survivor, was laid off back in 2008, and it took her two years to find a job. This time, she's even more fearful.

"There is so much uncertainty," she said. "How do you bounce back? There is no timeline because there is no history."

AP Retail Writer Anne D'Innocenzio contributed to this report from New York.

## Feeding the front lines, one duck confit at a time

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — On a break from the front lines, nurse practitioner Gabe Westhemier tucked into a plate of duck confit, the work of one of the city's celebrity chefs. ("It was wonderful.")

Meanwhile, at another San Francisco emergency room, nurse Liz Sanderson still savors a sea salt caramel bread pudding from another posh eatery. ("It was possibly the best thing I have ever eaten.")

The best of foods is being sampled in the worst of times by the most besieged of heroes -- all thanks to a group of San Francisco friends who had the idea of helping both local restaurants that need customers, and health care workers who need nourishment during their long, stressful shifts.

They sought donations and started small, with one restaurant and one hospital. Two weeks later, 42 restaurants -- among them some of the city's finest -- are churning out hundreds of meals a day to feed clinicians in emergency rooms and ICUs at San Francisco's six biggest hospitals.

They have so far raised over \$350,000 and have delivered about 5,000 meals, with funding for thousands more. And a newly formed network, aptly named Frontline Foods, has linked up with similar projects in more than a dozen cities. It's also in touch with groups like Help Feed the Frontline LA to the south, to ensure they don't double deliver to the same hospital.

The original idea was born March 12 in a text message exchange between entrepreneur Frank Barbieri



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 53 of 66

and his friend Sydney Gressel, an emergency room nurse at UCSF Medical Center at Mission Bay.

Barbieri knew Gressel was working double shifts in the battle against COVID-19, and texted: "What can I do to help?"

"I suggested he could buy us dinner," Gressel said. "He took it to the next level."

Ryan Sarver, a tech-savvy venture capitalist, tapped contacts in the restaurant world and helped solicit donations, initially for \$1,000 that would fund 50 meals for health care workers priced at \$20 each. Now smaller donations can be made. The money goes straight to the restaurants.

"We tell them you've got \$20 to spend and we need a well-balanced, healthy meal -- a starch, protein and vegetable -- that is going to sustain these people," said Sarver.

That \$20 has to cover the cost of food and delivery, but many chefs have been personally delivering their own food, after spending the day cooking and packing it into hundreds of individual boxes.

Chef Kim Alter, who usually charges about \$150 for a meal at Nightbird, her acclaimed San Francisco restaurant, has been donning mask and gloves -- in the kitchen and when she pulls her car up to hospitals to deliver her meals.

"People are afraid of going to a hospital. I feel like it's my responsibility to do it," said Alter.

Nightbird, known for its 10-course tasting menus, doesn't do take-out so effectively lost all business when San Francisco went into a lockdown. Alter says now she can keep her staff employed.

"We try to make everything beautiful," she said. One of her early meals included flowers and microgreens still in her restaurant's refrigerator, so "their salads had \$100 worth of flowers on it."

That the meals are appreciated is an understatement.

"It puts a smile on my face for sure," said nurse Sanderson, "and it feels like everyone is supporting us. It makes me want to work even harder."

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus has become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

## At Madrid field hospital, staff seeks to provide human touch

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — There's a bookshelf filled with donated novels. Hotel toiletries rest on cardboard boxes turned into bedside tables. Meals are served with personalized notes from the staff. And an army of volunteers do their best to keep up an air of optimism amid the pandemic.

At a cavernous convention center that has become Spain's largest makeshift hospital, these touches of kindness and camaraderie are helping to make the days and nights more bearable for patients afflicted with COVID-19.

"Despite the distance that we keep from each other, there is a sense of community," said Jonan Basterra as he waited for the oxygen in his blood to reach a level high enough so he can go home.

The 50-year-old patient dreams about defeating the virus so he can shave off the beard he has grown and celebrate with ice cream. In the meantime, he rests in bed No. 15.18, making friends with others or reading the books that a nurse brought from home and offered in an improvised open library.

"We are all in this together and we are all going to get out of here together," he told The Associated Press via video call shortly before he was delivered a potato omelet — one of Spain's national dishes — with a personalized note from the hospital's makeshift kitchen. The cooks had learned on social media about Basterra's craving for the food.

Most of the 1,850 patients brought to the Ifema field hospital are not in serious condition. In fact, 800 had been discharged by Thursday, although six have died since doors opened 12 days ago.

But the facility is helping to free up space in overburdened hospitals nearby. Madrid has recorded nearly 4,500 of Spain's 11,000 deaths, so many that a new ice skating rink was being prepared on Friday to receive bodies, the third temporary morgue in the region.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 54 of 66

The two large halls that normally host traders and booths with corporate displays now have 1,300 regular beds and 16 intensive care units. Rows of beds are separated by panels, some of them still bearing photos of machinery or resorts from past conventions. Outside, medical workers take breaks by basking in the sun near three food trucks. A soldier smokes a cigarette while pop music blasts from speakers.

Only four months ago, politicians and activists like Greta Thunberg roamed the same grounds for a U.N.-sponsored climate change summit that relocated to Madrid from protest-hit Chile.

That seems a world away now. When Spaniards come to their windows each evening to honor weary doctors and nurses risking infection, the silence at the makeshift hospital is broken by applause from the patients. On a recent night, speakers played the 1960s Spanish pop song "Resistiré" ("I Will Resist") that has become an anthem during the outbreak.

Among those applauding was Esteban Pinadero, in bed No. 01.18. The 87-year-old was moved from a crowded hospital to Ifema on Wednesday. But his family couldn't find him until a volunteer finally brought him fresh batteries for his hearing aid. His daughter, Vicki, told AP how she contacted Basterra through social media and managed to arrange a video call with her father.

"I'm very good, I love you," Pinadero told half a dozen relatives on the call in a recorded video that the daughter shared with AP. With his face half-hidden by a surgical mask, Pinadero joked: "I will run away as soon as I can." On the other side of the screen, relatives could be seen sobbing.

"Everybody here misses the nonverbal language, the physical touch, the smiles that are hidden by the masks," said Dr. Jesús San Román, who runs an improvised call center at the facility.

Recent medical school graduates volunteer to keep relatives of the patients updated on their condition by phone, a far cry from the face-to-face communication that San Román is used to at his regular hospital job.

"But here we try our best to overcome that, with video calls and lots of personal involvement," he said.

Despite those efforts, the tragedy of the outbreak is never far away.

Four rooms in the facility are labeled with signs that read, "Information for relatives." The door leads to a space divided by a curtain, one side with a bed, the other with chairs.

This is where the dying are taken for a final moment of privacy with their family, explained Dr. Antonio Zapatero, the field hospital's director, adding that it's the only time when visitors are allowed in the facility.

The rooms were used for the first time this week.

"It's my hope that we don't have to use them again," Zapatero said.

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Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

## Mormons hold signature conference virtually due to pandemic

By BRADY McCOMBS Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — For the first time in more than 70 years, top leaders from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will deliver speeches at the faith's signature conference this weekend without an in-person audience in the latest illustration of how the coronavirus pandemic is altering worship practices around the world.

The twice-yearly conference normally brings some 100,000 people to the church conference center in Salt Lake City to attend five sessions over two days.

This event, though, will be only a virtual one.

Church leaders will be inside a small auditorium with only a few other people as the speeches are broadcast live online in 33 different languages. Even the faith's well-known choir will stay at home. The music will be prerecorded.

Leaders from the Utah-based faith that counts 16 million members worldwide utilize the conference to provide spiritual guidance, underscore the religion's key beliefs and, sometimes, announce new initiatives or rules.

The last time the church conference was held without people in attendance was during World War II

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 55 of 66

because of wartime travel restrictions. Flu epidemics forced the church to postpone the conference in 1919 by two months and cancel the conference in the fall of 1957, according to a church history of the conference.

Staying home and watching the speeches on TV or their computers or tablets won't feel much different for many church members, since most watch from their living rooms and attend only occasionally or on special occasions because tickets are limited.

The religion has been planning since last year to use this conference to commemorate the 200th anniversary of when their founder Joseph Smith, then a teenager, says he had a vision of God and Jesus Christ in the woods of upstate New York that led to the formation of the church 10 years later.

That will likely still be the centerpiece theme of the weekend, with leaders also providing message of reassurance to weary members, said Patrick Mason, a religious scholar who is the Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture at Utah State University.

"I expect that we are going to hear a lot of messages of reassurance, like 'God is still in charge,' 'God still loves us,' 'God is still taking care of us,'" Mason said. "I think they are going to do a lot to ease people's fears, ease people's anxieties."

Like most religions, the faith known widely as the Mormon church has taken significant steps to prevent gatherings and religious activities that could contribute to the spread of COVID-19. The faith has shut down its temples that are used for the most sacred rituals including weddings, shuttered normal Sunday worship services at churches and brought home thousands of young people who were serving missions in foreign countries.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia. More than 56,000 people have died from the virus while more than 220,000 people worldwide have recovered, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Mason said it will be interesting to see if the church takes any precautions to adhere to social distancing guidelines for the leaders who will be speaking and in attendance, many of whom are 75 or older.

Church President Russell M. Nelson is 95, his first counselor Dallin H. Oaks is 87 and his second counselor Henry B. Eyring is 86. They usually sit side-by-side on stage along with the other members of the top governing board called The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Russia detains activists trying to help hospital amid virus

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — An activist doctor who had criticized Russia's response to the coronavirus outbreak was forcibly detained as she and some of her colleagues tried to deliver protective gear to a hospital in need.

Dr. Anastasia Vasilyeva of the Alliance of Doctors union was trying to bring more than 500 masks, sanitizers, hazmat suits, gloves and protective glasses to a hospital in the Novgorod region about 400 kilometers (about 250 miles) northwest of Moscow on Thursday when she and the others were stopped by police on a highway.

They were accused by police of violating self-isolation regulations, currently in place in many regions, including Moscow and Novgorod. The group was taken to a police station and held for hours, and the activists had to ask hospital workers to come to the station to pick up the gear.

After a night in custody, Vasilyeva appeared in court on charges of defying police orders. Two long court hearings later, she was ordered to pay fines totaling the equivalent of \$20.

"It was not about the money for them, It was about breaking me," Vasilyeva said afterward. "But I'm even more convinced that we're doing the right thing, and we will definitely keep on doing it."

Just two weeks ago, Russia reported only a few hundred coronavirus cases and insisted the outbreak was under control. As the virus spread and more infections were reported this week, however, residents of Moscow and other cities were ordered to stay home.

On Friday, officials reported 4,149 cases in the country -- four times more than a week ago. The govern-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 56 of 66

ment sought to reassure the public that Russia has everything it needs to fight the outbreak and even sent planeloads of protective gear and medical equipment to Italy, the U.S. and other countries. Still, hospitals across the country complained about shortages of equipment and supplies, and earlier this week, the union began a fundraising campaign to buy protective gear for hospitals.

Vasilyeva, who has become the most vocal critic of the Kremlin's response to the virus, accused authorities of playing down the scale of the outbreak and pressuring medics to work without sufficient protection.

"We realized that we can't just sit and watch; otherwise it is going to be too late," she said in a tweet Monday announcing the campaign.

After being released from the police station, Vasilyeva was almost immediately detained again and charged with defying police orders. Video posted on Twitter by activists shows a dozen police officers gathering around Vasilyeva and two of them dragging her into the station.

According to Ivan Konovalov, spokesman of the Alliance of Doctors, Vasilyeva was physically assaulted in the process and even fainted briefly. "We thought we may run into some difficulties, but no one could even imagine anything like that," said Konovalov, who accompanied Vasilyeva to the Novgorod region.

The incident elicited outrage from other activists.

"Why are they harassing this person, because she brought masks for the doctors? Bastards," tweeted opposition politician Alexei Navalny, who supports the Alliance of Doctors and works closely with Vasilyeva.

Natalia Zviagina, Russia director of Amnesty International, said in a statement that "it is staggering that the Russian authorities appear to fear criticism more than the deadly COVID-19 pandemic."

"By keeping her behind bars, they expose their true motive — they are willing to punish health professionals who dare contradict the official Russian narrative and expose flaws in the public health system," Zviagina said.

With the outbreak dominating the agenda in Russia, anyone who criticizes the country's struggling health system becomes a thorn in the Kremlin's side, said Abbas Gallyamov, a former Kremlin speechwriter-turned-political analyst.

"The pressure will continue, because right now the most important political issue is on the table: How will the voters will see the authorities after the crisis — as effective and acting in people's interests, or ineffective, out of touch with the people, and in need of being replaced?" Gallyamov said.

Doctors' unions say shortages of protective equipment is one of the most pressing problems amid the outbreak. Konovalov said the Alliance of Doctors has gotten about 30 requests for protective gear from hospitals and medical facilities across Russia, and 100 more generic complaints about lack of protective equipment.

Andrei Konoval, chairman of the Action medical union, echoed his sentiment.

"It is a serious problem that the authorities have started to solve, but not as fast as we want them to," Konoval said, adding that his union is getting complaints from ambulance workers, who are often the first to come in contact with potentially infected patients.

Several hospitals have reported that their staff had become infected with the coronavirus and the workers had to be quarantined, according to Russian media reports. In one district in the Chelyabinsk region, almost the entire ambulance service had to be quarantined after coming in contact with a patient without sufficient protection, Konoval said.

Russian authorities sought to put a good face on the crisis. The Health Ministry said the outbreak has so far taken a "fortunate" course, while the Defense Ministry said it was sending another 11 planes with medical specialists and equipment to Serbia, a close ally of Moscow.

In Moscow, which has the largest number of cases reported in the country, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill was driven around the city in a van carrying an icon, praying for the epidemic to end. Media reports said the motorcade caused traffic jams as it traveled around the capital.



## Coronavirus survivor: 'In my blood, there may be answers'

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MARSHALL RITZEL Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Tiffany Pinckney remembers the fear when COVID-19 stole her breath. So when she recovered, the New York City mother became one of the country's first survivors to donate her blood to help treat other seriously ill patients.

"It is definitely overwhelming to know that in my blood, there may be answers," Pinckney told The Associated Press.

Doctors around the world are dusting off a century-old treatment for infections: Infusions of blood plasma teeming with immune molecules that helped survivors beat the new coronavirus. There's no proof it will work. But former patients in Houston and New York were early donors, and now hospitals and blood centers are getting ready for potentially hundreds of survivors to follow.

The Food and Drug Administration Friday announced a national study, led by the Mayo Clinic, that will help hospitals offer the experimental plasma therapy and track how they fare. The American Red Cross will help collect and distribute the plasma.

"There's a tremendous call to action," said Dr. David Reich, president of New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, which declared Pinckney recovered and raced to collect her blood. "People feel very helpless in the face of this disease. And this is one thing that people can do to help their fellow human beings."

As treatments get underway, "we just hope it works," he said.

What the history books call "convalescent serum" was most famously used during the 1918 flu pandemic, and also against measles, bacterial pneumonia and numerous other infections before modern medicine came along. Why? When infection strikes, the body starts making proteins called antibodies specially designed to target that germ. Those antibodies float in survivors' blood — specifically plasma, the yellowish liquid part of blood — for months, even years.

When new diseases erupt and scientists are scrambling for vaccines or drugs, it's "a stopgap measure that we can put into place quickly," said Dr. Jeffrey Henderson of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, who is helping to develop a nationwide study.

This "is not a cure per se, but rather it is a way to reduce the severity of illness," Henderson said.

Doctors don't know how long survivors' antibodies against COVID-19 will persist.

But for now, "they're the safest ones on the street," said Dr. Rebecca Haley of Bloodworks Northwest in Seattle, which is working to identify donors. "We would not be making a dent in their antibody supply for themselves."

Last week, the Food and Drug Administration told hospitals how to seek case-by-case emergency permission to use convalescent plasma, and Houston Methodist Hospital and Mount Sinai jumped at the chance.

And a desperate public responded, with families taking to social media to plead on behalf of sick loved ones and people recovering asking how they could donate. According to Michigan State University, more than 1,000 people signed up with the National COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma Project alone. Dozens of hospitals formed that group to spur plasma donation and research.

Would-be donors can't just show up at a blood center. Those with a proven infection who've been symptom-free for several weeks must get tested to ensure the virus is gone. They also must be healthy enough to meet the other requirements for blood donation — plus get an additional test to see if their antibody level is high enough.

"You don't want to take plasma from someone who had a mediocre immune response. That wouldn't be helpful," said Dr. Julie Ledgerwood of the National Institutes of Health.

Chinese doctors last week reported that five patients given convalescent plasma all showed some improvement about a week later. But they also received other therapies, and without a rigorous study, there's no way to know if the plasma made the difference.

Studies are being planned to test convalescent plasma against regular care in sick patients, and to prevent infections among people at high risk of exposure such as health care workers.

Another approach: Spain-based plasma manufacturer Grifols aims to concentrate donor plasma in a North

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 58 of 66

Carolina factory, creating a high-dose version that also would need testing.

Separately, NIH researchers are measuring survivors' antibody levels to learn how strong the vaccines under development must be to protect. Other teams, including at Beijing's Tsinghua University, are hunting which antibodies are most potent, to copy in a lab and turn into drugs.

But donations from people like Pinckney could be used as fast as blood centers can process it. She got sick the first week of March. First came the fever and chills. She couldn't catch her breath, and deep breathing caused chest pains. The single mother worried about her sons, 9 and 16.

"I remember being on my bathroom floor crying and praying," the 39-year-old said.

So when Mount Sinai, which diagnosed her, called Pinckney to check on her recovery and ask if she'd consider donating, she didn't hesitate.

"It's humbling. And for me, it's also a beacon of hope for someone else," she said.

Neergaard reported from Washington. AP National Writer Allen G. Breed in North Carolina contributed to this report.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

## 'Lean On Me,' 'Lovely Day' singer Bill Withers dies at 81

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Bill Withers, who wrote and sang a string of soulful songs in the 1970s that have stood the test of time, including "Lean on Me," "Lovely Day" and "Ain't No Sunshine," has died from heart complications, his family said in a statement to The Associated Press. He was 81.

The three-time Grammy Award winner, who withdrew from making music in the mid-1980s, died on Monday in Los Angeles, the statement said. His death comes as the public has drawn inspiration from his music during the coronavirus pandemic, with health care workers, choirs, artists and more posting their own renditions on "Lean on Me" to help get through the difficult times.

"We are devastated by the loss of our beloved, devoted husband and father. A solitary man with a heart driven to connect to the world at large, with his poetry and music, he spoke honestly to people and connected them to each other," the family statement read. "As private a life as he lived close to intimate family and friends, his music forever belongs to the world. In this difficult time, we pray his music offers comfort and entertainment as fans hold tight to loved ones."

Withers' songs during his brief career have become the soundtracks of countless engagements, weddings and backyard parties. They have powerful melodies and perfect grooves melded with a smooth voice that conveys honesty and complex emotions without vocal acrobatics.

"Lean on Me," a paean to friendship, was performed at the inaugurations of both Barack Obama and Bill Clinton. "Ain't No Sunshine" and "Lean on Me" are among Rolling Stone's list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.

"He's the last African-American Everyman," musician and band leader Questlove told Rolling Stone in 2015. "Bill Withers is the closest thing black people have to a Bruce Springsteen."

His death caused a torrent of appreciation on social media, including from former Obama adviser Valerie Jarrett, who said Withers' music has been a cherished part of her life. "It added to my joy in the good times, and also gave me comfort and inspiration when I needed it most," she tweeted.

Billy Dee Williams tweeted "your music cheered my heart and soothed my soul" and Chance the Rapper said Withers' songs are "some of the best songs of all time" and "my heart really hurts for him." Lenny Kravitz said "My soul always has and always will be full of your music."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 59 of 66

"We lost a giant of songwriting today," ASCAP President and Chairman Paul Williams said in a statement. "Bill Withers' songs are among the most treasured and profound in the American songbook — universal in the way they touch people all over the world, transcending genre and generation. He was a beautiful man with a stunning sense of humor and a gift for truth."

Withers, who overcame a childhood stutter, was born the last of six children in the coal mining town of Slab Fork, West Virginia. After his parents divorced when he was 3, Withers was raised by his mother's family in nearby Beckley.

He joined the Navy at 17 and spent nine years in the service as an aircraft mechanic installing toilets. After his discharge, he moved to Los Angeles, worked at an aircraft parts factory, bought a guitar at a pawn shop and recorded demos of his tunes in hopes of landing a recording contract.

In 1971, signed to Sussex Records, he put out his first album, "Just As I Am," with the legendary Booker T. Jones at the helm. It had the hits "Grandma's Hands" and "Ain't No Sunshine," which was inspired by the Jack Lemmon film "Days of Wine and Roses." He was photographed on the cover, smiling and holding his lunch pail.

"Ain't No Sunshine" was originally released as the B-side of his debut single, "Harlem." But radio DJs flipped the disc and the song climbed to No. 3 on the Billboard charts and spent a total of 16 weeks in the top 40.

Withers went on to generate more hits a year later with the inspirational "Lean on Me," the menacing "Who Is He (and What Is He to You)" and the slinky "Use Me" on his second album, "Still Bill."

Later would come the striking "Lovely Day," co-written with Skip Scarborough and featuring Withers holding the word "day" for almost 19 seconds, and "Just the Two Of Us," co-written with Ralph MacDonald and William Salter. His "Live at Carnegie Hall" in 1973 made Rolling Stone's 50 Greatest Live Albums of All Time.

"The hardest thing in songwriting is to be simple and yet profound. And Bill seemed to understand, intrinsically and instinctively, how to do that," Sting said in "Still Bill," a 2010 documentary of Withers.

But Withers' career stalled when Sussex Records went bankrupt and he was scooped up by Columbia Records. He no longer had complete control over his music and chafed when it was suggested he do an Elvis cover. His new executives found Withers difficult.

None of his Columbia albums reached the Top 40 except for 1977's "Menagerie," which produced "Lovely Day." (His hit duet with Grover Washington Jr. "Just the Two of Us" was on Washington's label). Withers' last album was 1985's "Watching You Watching Me."

Though his songs often dealt with relationships, Withers also wrote ones with social commentary, including "Better Off Dead" about an alcoholic's suicide, and "I Can't Write Left-Handed," about an injured Vietnam War veteran.

He was awarded Grammys as a songwriter for "Ain't No Sunshine" in 1971 and for "Just the Two Of Us" in 1981. In 1987, Bill received his ninth Grammy nomination and third Grammy as a songwriter for the re-recording of the 1972 hit "Lean on Me" by Club Nouveau.

He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015 by Stevie Wonder. Withers thanked his wife as well as the R&B pioneers who helped his career like Ray Jackson, Al Bell and Booker T. Jones. He also got in a few jabs at the record industry, saying A&R stood for "antagonistic and redundant." Withers also was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2005.

His music has been covered by such artists as Barbra Streisand, Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Tom Jones, Linda Ronstadt, Paul McCartney, Sting, Johnny Mathis, Aaron Neville, Al Jarreau, Mick Jagger, Nancy Wilson, Diana Ross. His music has been sampled for BlackStreet's "No Diggity," Will Smith's version of "Just the Two Of Us," Black Eyed Peas' "Bridging the Gap" and Twista's "Sunshine." The song "Lean on Me" was the title theme of a 1989 movie starring Morgan Freeman.

His songs are often used on the big screen, including "The Hangover," "28 Days," "American Beauty," "Jerry Maguire," "Crooklyn," "Flight," "Beauty Shop," "The Secret Life of Pets" and "Flight."

"I'm not a virtuoso, but I was able to write songs that people could identify with. I don't think I've done bad for a guy from Slab Fork, West Virginia," Withers told Rolling Stone in 2015.

He is survived by his wife, Marcia, and children, Todd and Kori.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

## 'Modern Family' promises satisfying end to its 11-season run

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Writer-producers Steven Levitan and Christopher Lloyd were mulling ideas for the 2009 TV season when they landed on an intriguing sitcom approach, one revolving around an extended family and done in the “mockumentary” style made popular by “The Office.”

“All these things are familiar enough, but different enough that we have a shot with this one,” Lloyd recalled thinking as he and Levitan tackled the first “Modern Family” script. “Having said that, I didn’t believe in it. I was at a party with one of my ‘Frasier’ friends, and said, ‘I think it’s a good piece of writing, but I’d sell the thing to you for 10 bucks because I don’t think it’s going anywhere.’”

Then the ensemble cast of familiar TV faces such as Ed O’Neill (“Married ... With Children”) and Julie Bowen (“Lost,” “Ed”) and relative newcomers was gathered. Once the first episode was shot, Lloyd moved “all the way to hopeful,” as he put it.

ABC’s “Modern Family,” which ends its 11-season run with an hour-long finale (9 p.m. EDT Wednesday), went on to earn five best comedy Emmy Awards to equal the record set by “Frasier,” which counted Levitan and Lloyd among its writers. The critically lauded series proved to be an increasingly rare TV bird: It gently pushed at social boundaries while remaining a treat that kids and parents could enjoy together, even as the explosion of screens and edgier fare drove solitary viewing.

Largely living up to its title, “Modern Family” built its comic storytelling around a mix of characters and couples — young and older, straight and gay, mostly white but not entirely — that reflected the change in American households while acknowledging that tolerance and understanding still lagged.

The show’s creators tip their hats to “Will & Grace” for being first to bring gay characters to the forefront, but “Modern Family” had a different perspective than that NBC show’s rowdy riff on the single life. Cameron and Mitchell, played by Eric Stonestreet and Jesse Tyler Ferguson, were a devoted couple and loving parents to Lily (Aubrey Anderson-Emmons).

“As someone who’s a LGBTQ equality activist, it was a job that I took very seriously,” said Ferguson. “And I am so proud to say that Mitch and Cam have become pop culture touchstones for the fight for marriage equality, and brought a gay couple into so many people’s living rooms.”

The message he’s gotten from fans: “I don’t actually have any friends who are gay, and it’s like I do now because I know Mitch and Cam.”

Rico Rodriguez, who played precocious son Manny to Sofia Vergara’s exuberant Gloria, also takes pride in what he helped bring to TV.

“Portraying a Latino on screen was the biggest honor. Growing up, you didn’t see too many people who looked like me or who related to my family. I have a bunch of Glorias and a bunch of Mannys in my family,” Rodriguez said.

“Modern Family” didn’t escape criticism, including for its portrayal of Claire (Bowen) and Gloria as stay-at-home moms overshadowed by their husband’s career success, although Claire ultimately proved her workplace prowess.

Wrapping a long-running show may not be the hardest thing to do in TV but it’s got to be close, given the weight of fan expectations and the hovering ghosts of great endings (“Cheers,” “The Mary Tyler Moore Show”) and widely panned ones (“Seinfeld”).

“I personally like finales where there is some sense of characters experiencing what the audience is experiencing, which is having to say goodbye,” said Levitan, who wrote the finale’s first half-hour. “It’s an emotional thing for many people. They spend a lot of time with these characters .... so giving them the emotionally satisfying ending that they seek/want is, for me, the best way to go.”

For Lloyd, who wrote part two, the ending of a family show “really needs to be a beginning.”



"It felt like a better approach to me was to set people off on new journeys and sort of turn the stewardship of these characters over to the audience at that point," he said. "Hopefully, the audience will be happy imagining the characters off on new adventures, new challenges ... The audience provides their own futures for these characters."

"Modern Family" wrapped taping before the coronavirus forced a halt to movie and TV production. The finale will be preceded at 8 p.m. EDT by the documentary "A Modern Farewell," a look back at the show's creation and run, which included five seasons among the 30 top-rated series.

Levitan said he never regretted the mockumentary approach, which was intended to make "Modern Family" feel true-to-life and appeal to adults as more than a "cutesy kid's show." It also allowed the cast to punctuate a scene with a spontaneous "can you believe what that person just said?" look and other wordless commentary, Bowen said.

"There's times in my house, I'm embarrassed to say, my children will say something so ridiculous and I find there's this impulse to look at the camera," she said. "That's an 11-year habit I'm going to have to break."

Lynn Elber can be reached at [lelber@ap.org](mailto:lelber@ap.org) or on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/lynnelber>.

## Cuban docs fighting coronavirus around world, defying US

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — For two years the Trump administration has been trying to stamp out one of Cuba's signature programs — state-employed medical workers treating patients around the globe in a show of soft power that also earns billions in badly needed hard currency.

Labeling the doctors and nurses as both exploited workers and agents of communist indoctrination, the U.S. has notched a series of victories as Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia sent home thousands after leftist governments allied with Havana were replaced with ones friendlier to Washington.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought a reversal of fortune for Cuban medical diplomacy, as doctors have flown off on new missions to battle COVID-19 in at least 14 countries including Italy and the tiny principality of Andorra on the Spanish-French border, burnishing the island's international image in the middle of a global crisis.

"I am aware of the position of the United States, but we are a sovereign country and we can choose the partners with which we are going to have cooperation," Andorran Foreign Minister María Ubach said.

In the city of Crema in the hard-hit Lombardy region of northern Italy, 52 Cuban doctors and nurses set up a field hospital with 32 beds equipped with oxygen and three ICU beds.

"This is a strongly symbolic moment because the Crema hospital has been going through an extremely complicated situation from the start," Lombardy's top social welfare official, Giulio Gallera, said at the inauguration last week. "The number of patients who have filled and continue to fill the emergency room and departments has truly put the medical personnel to a hard test."

The Trump administration has sought to cut off income to Havana as part of a long-term tightening of sanctions. And it continues to discourage countries from contracting Cuban medical workers despite the pandemic, arguing that their pay and conditions fall short of industry standards.

"The government of #Cuba keeps most of the salary its doctors and nurses earn while serving in its international medical missions while exposing them to egregious labor conditions," the State Department said on Twitter last week. "Host countries seeking Cuba's help for #COVID-19 should scrutinize agreements and end labor abuses."

Cuba currently has about 37,000 medical workers in 67 countries, most in longstanding missions. Some doctors have been sent as part of free aid missions, but many countries pay the government directly for their services. In some other cases international health bodies have paid.

The most recent deployments of at least 593 doctors from the Henry Reeve Brigade — founded by Fidel Castro in 2005 and named after a 19th-century American volunteer who fought for Cuban independence

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 62 of 66

from Spain — have also been to Suriname, Jamaica, Dominica, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Venezuela and Nicaragua, some of them reinforcing existing medical missions.

All have been billed as tied to the coronavirus epidemic, even though some of the countries have few confirmed cases so far. None of the agreements or financial terms have been made public.

Havana has said it receives about \$6 billion a year from the export of public services, and medical services make up most of that. When Brazil expelled Cuban doctors in 2018, a few details emerged including that the country had been paying \$3,100 per month for each doctor with 70% of that going into the pockets of the Cuban government.

Doctors typically make less than \$100 per month working on the island, so doing an overseas mission means a significant pay hike even if those salaries remain low by international standards.

Andorran newspaper Diari d'Andorra reported Wednesday, citing Health Minister Joan Martínez Benazet, that one of the 39 Cuban doctors in the country had tested positive for coronavirus and was quarantined in a hotel. The Cuban government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Infection is a serious risk for those on the front lines. In Italy alone, over 10,000 medical workers have contracted the coronavirus and more than at least 69 doctors have died.

For most people the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause severe, life-threatening symptoms like pneumonia.

Cuban officials have been proudly posting videos of doctors being applauded as they arrive to begin work, and blasting the Trump administration for its criticisms.

"Shame on you. Instead of attacking Cuba and its committed doctors, you should be caring about the thousands of sick Americans who are suffering due to the scandalous neglect of your government and the inability of your failed health system to care for them," Josefina Vidal, Cuba's ambassador to Canada, wrote on Twitter.

Argentine officials have also said they are discussing possible coronavirus help from Cuba, and another mission should leave soon for Angola.

Cuba has a relatively high number of medical workers per capita — officials say there are currently about 90,000 in the country of 11 million.

The Henry Reeve Brigade has deployed previously on infectious disease missions, famously helping fight Ebola in West Africa in 2014.

That effort took place in cooperation with the administration of then-President Barack Obama, seen as easing relations ahead of the diplomatic thaw between the two countries later that year.

Andrea Rodríguez on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/ARodriguezAP](https://www.twitter.com/ARodriguezAP)

## Dr. Fauci's face will soon be on a bobblehead

By CARRIE ANTLFINGER Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The United States' top infectious disease specialist is getting his own bobblehead.

The creation from the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum in Milwaukee features Dr. Anthony Fauci wearing a suit as he makes a motion showing how the nation needs to "flatten the curve" in the coronavirus pandemic.

The museum in Milwaukee picked Fauci because many people see the plain-speaking expert on the coronavirus as a hero right now, said co-founder and CEO Phil Sklar.

"He isn't trying to spin things," he said. "He isn't trying to make people happy and tell him what they want to hear. He's actually telling them, you know, how he sees it as an expert. And I think that's really what we need him this time."

Fauci said on "Fox & Friends" Friday: "That's nice if people want to do it, but I have other things to worry about."

Fauci's face also appears on socks. And a Rochester, New York, shop is selling doughnuts with his face, surrounded by white frosting and topped off with red, white and blue sprinkles.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 63 of 66

Sklar said the bobblehead museum plans to donate \$5 from every \$25 Fauci bobblehead that's sold to the American Hospital Association, in support of that group's effort to get masks and other personal protective equipment for health care workers.

"Hopefully it does help a lot of people through the donation and also brings a smile to people's faces as we all could also use something to smile about right now," he said.

Told Friday that the bobblehead would help support the American Hospital Association's effort, Fauci said that was "great."

Fauci, who is director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has served as an adviser to every president since Ronald Reagan. President Donald Trump has called him a star on his administration's coronavirus task force.

## Scramble for virus supplies strains global solidarity

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — San Marino needed medical masks. Badly.

The tiny republic, wedged next to what would be two of Italy's hardest-hit provinces in the COVID-19 outbreak, had already registered 11 deaths by March 17 — a sizeable number in a country of just 33,000, and a harbinger of worse to come. So authorities sent off a bank transfer to a supplier in Lugano, Switzerland, to pay for a half-million masks, to be shared with Italian neighbors.

The next day, the truck returned, empty. The company was refusing to provide the masks.

Said Dr. Gabriele Rinaldi, director of San Marino's Health Authority: "It was a very bitter lesson."

It's not clear whether the mask supplier, which was not identified, refused to deliver because another customer offered more. But what is clear is that the oft-proclaimed solidarity among nations waging battle against the pandemic has been tested — if not shattered — by national and corporate self-interest.

A health official in France's hard-hit eastern region said U.S. officials swooped in at a Chinese airport to spirit away a planeload of masks that France had ordered.

"On the tarmac, the Americans arrive, take out cash and pay three or four times more for our orders, so we really have to fight," Dr. Jean Rottner, an emergency room doctor in Mulhouse, told RTL radio.

The U.S. Embassy in Paris on Friday insisted that no one from the federal government bought masks destined for France. President Donald Trump has suggested, however, that states get their own medical equipment to fight the virus, setting off a mad scramble among state officials.

France, meanwhile, has laid claim to supplies within its borders. In Lyon, inside the main southern European distribution facility of the Swedish medical supply company Molnlycke, were millions of masks that France was reluctant to let go for export.

"We recognize that France has imposed an export ban for face masks and this ban was just extended," said Jenny Johansson, the company's global manager for corporate communications. She declined to comment on reports that France ultimately allowed a million masks apiece to go to Spain and Italy.

"However, this is not only about France," she said. "We see government restrictions across most countries in which we are active."

The European Union, a bloc of 27 nations built upon open borders and markets, has tried to temper this every-country-for-itself free-for-all.

The day after San Marino's health minister publicly lamented the rejected acquisition, Switzerland enacted an ordinance obliging companies to seek government authorization to export protective medical devices. But Swiss embassy political attache Lorenza Faessler noted that the ordinance specifically exempts the EU and several other countries in Europe, including San Marino.

In any case, Faessler on Wednesday acknowledged that confusion and complexities mark the frantic scramble to acquire vital supplies like masks. "Brussels tried to regulate" this commerce, she said, but many countries have gone their own way.

The EU's internal market commissioner, Thierry Breton, told the Italian daily Corriere della Sera that progress had been made in dealing with exports of medical equipment by France, Germany and some

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 64 of 66

other nations.

"At the moment, only Poland and Slovakia are keeping the ban, but we're discussing it, and a solution will be reached," Breton was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, Spain and Italy, which together have over one-half of the world's 54,000 coronavirus deaths, are increasingly taking steps to restrict the flow of supplies.

Four days after Italy's first COVID-19 case surfaced in northern Italy in late February, Civil Protection agency chief Angelo Borrelli signed an ordinance banning any export of medical supplies unless he personally approved an exception.

As the daily number of infections in Italy grew by the dozens, then hundreds, then thousands, many nations blocked exports to keep their own medical supplies production within their borders, said Agostino Miozzo, director general of international relations for Italy's Civil Protection agency.

"We found ourselves in extreme difficulty in acquiring" medical supplies, he said.

Last month, Italian customs police seized some 800,000 masks and disposable gloves that were about to be sent to Switzerland.

Spain has launched three weekly flights to China to directly ferry home medical supplies. Spanish Health Minister Salvador Illa has called China's medical supply market "crazy." Italy, too, has taken to using military planes to fly in masks and respirators from China and elsewhere, minimizing the risks that supplies will be diverted or seized by third countries.

The United States, which has twice as many infections as any other nation now, is also moving supplies like thermometers, gowns, masks and gloves via air bridge, notably from Asia and Central America, according to the U.S. agency FEMA.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker took an unconventional approach in the scramble for supplies in his state: He called on the New England Patriots, the American football team.

The team's private plane landed in Boston from China on Thursday evening carrying more than a million masks. Baker secured the N95 masks from Chinese manufacturers but had no way of getting them to the U.S. without the assist from the team.

After some incidents in which the flow of materials were blocked, countries have tried to make amends for what they say were missteps.

Last month, Czech Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek, apologizing to Italy, said the Italians were being given 110,000 masks and thousands of respirators to compensate for those mistakenly seized in a raid on a warehouse in the Czech town of Lovosice.

The devices had been donated by China's Red Cross for the Chinese community in Italy. The raid had been launched to break up what Czech Interior Minister Jan Hamacek called an "immoral" scheme to jack up the prices a company was charging the Prague government.

Recently, Tunisia accused Italy of blocking a shipment of alcohol used to make hand-cleansing gel. Trade Minister Mohamed Sellini later backtracked.

"I didn't say Italy. I said it was hijacked at sea," the minister insisted, adding, "All of the European Union is living in a state of hysteria."

David Keyton in Stockholm, Bouazza Ben Bouazza in Tunis, Karel Janicek in Prague, Joseph Wilson in Madrid, Angela Charlton in Paris and Ben Fox in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 65 of 66

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 4, the 95th day of 2020. There are 271 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., 39, was shot and killed while standing on a balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee; his slaying was followed by a wave of rioting (Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Chicago were among cities particularly hard hit.) Suspected gunman James Earl Ray later pleaded guilty to assassinating King, then spent the rest of his life claiming he'd been the victim of a setup.

On this date:

In 1841, President William Henry Harrison succumbed to pneumonia one month after his inaugural, becoming the first U.S. chief executive to die in office.

In 1850, the city of Los Angeles was incorporated.

In 1917, the U.S. Senate voted 82-6 in favor of declaring war against Germany (the House followed suit two days later by a vote of 373-50).

In 1933, the Navy airship USS Akron crashed in severe weather off the New Jersey coast with the loss of 73 lives.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces liberated the Nazi concentration camp Ohrdruf in Germany. Hungary was liberated as Soviet forces cleared out remaining German troops.

In 1975, more than 130 people, most of them children, were killed when a U.S. Air Force transport plane evacuating Vietnamese orphans crash-landed shortly after takeoff from Saigon. Microsoft was founded by Bill Gates and Paul Allen in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In 1983, the space shuttle Challenger roared into orbit on its maiden voyage. (It was destroyed in the disaster of January 1986.)

In 1988, the Arizona Senate convicted Gov. Evan Mecham (MEE'-kuhm) of two charges of official misconduct and removed him from office; Mecham was the first U.S. governor to be impeached and removed from office in nearly six decades.

In 1991, Sen. John Heinz, R-Pa., and six other people, including two children, were killed when a helicopter collided with Heinz's plane over a schoolyard in Merion, Pennsylvania.

Ten years ago: At least 42 people were killed as suicide attackers detonated car bombs near embassies in Baghdad. A magnitude-7.2 earthquake struck Mexicali, Mexico. A U.S.-Russian space team sent Easter greetings down to Earth after their Soyuz spacecraft docked flawlessly at the International Space Station.

Five years ago: In North Charleston, South Carolina, Walter Scott, a 50-year-old black motorist, was shot to death while running away from a traffic stop; Officer Michael Thomas Slager, seen in a cellphone video opening fire at Scott, was charged with murder. (The charge, which lingered after a first state trial ended in a mistrial, was dropped as part of a deal under which Slager pleaded guilty to a federal civil rights violation; he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.) More than 300 enslaved migrant fishermen, mostly from Myanmar, were brought to freedom by an Indonesia delegation following a dramatic rescue from a remote island that was the result of an Associated Press investigation.

One year ago: President Donald Trump abandoned his threat to immediately seal the southern border and warned instead that he would slap tariffs on cars coming to the U.S. from Mexico unless the Mexicans did more to stop the flow of migrants and drugs. Cardi B. received 21 nominations for the Billboard Music Awards; Drake and Post Malone were close behind with 17 nominations each. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints repealed rules that banned baptisms for children of gay parents and that labeled same-sex couples as sinners eligible for expulsion. Pope Francis named Atlanta Archbishop Wilton Gregory as the new archbishop of Washington D.C., choosing a moderate and the first African-American to lead the archdiocese that had become the epicenter of the clergy sex abuse crisis in the U.S.

Today's Birthdays: Recording executive Clive Davis is 88. Author Kitty Kelley is 78. Actor Craig T. Nelson is

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, April 04, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 266 ~ 66 of 66**

76. Actor Walter Charles is 75. Actress Christine Lahti is 70. Country singer Steve Gatlin (The Gatlin Brothers) is 69. Actress Mary-Margaret Humes is 66. Writer-producer David E. Kelley is 64. Actress Constance Shulman is 62. Actor Phil Morris is 61. Actress Lorraine Toussaint is 60. Actor Hugo Weaving is 60. Rock musician Craig Adams (The Cult) is 58. Talk show host/comic Graham Norton is 57. Actor David Cross is 56. Actor Robert Downey Jr. is 55. Actress Nancy McKeon is 54. Actor Barry Pepper is 50. Country singer Clay Davidson is 49. Rock singer Josh Todd (Buckcherry) is 49. Singer Jill Scott is 48. Rock musician Magnus Sveningsson (The Cardigans) is 48. Magician David Blaine is 47. Singer Kelly Price is 47. Rhythm-and-blues singer Andre Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 46. Country musician Josh McSwain (Parmalee) is 45. Actor James Roday is 44. Actress Natasha Lyonne is 41. Actor Eric Andre is 37. Actress Amanda Righetti is 37. Actress-singer Jamie Lynn Spears is 29. Actress Daniela Bobadilla is 27. Pop singer Austin Mahone (muh-HOHN') is 24. Actress Aliyah Royale is 20.

Thought for Today: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." — Martin Luther King Junior (1929-1968).