

# Health officials: Stay home this weekend

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR  
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — South Carolina health officials are calling for residents to stay home for the Fourth of July weekend as COVID-19 cases surge throughout the state.

S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control officials say drops in social distancing and mask-wearing are contributing to the rise in numbers.

On the first day of June, 450 hospital beds across the state were occupied by patients who tested positive or were under investigation for COVID-19. On June 30, 1,021 hospital beds were taken up by patients under the same circumstances.

"We've all given so much for so long, and we all want to be at our beautiful beaches, at our parks, our friends' houses, our block parties and community events, but I'm asking all of us to stay vigilant in the fight against this deadly virus," DHEC public health director Dr. Joan Duwve said in

a release. "While we celebrate our country's birthday, please help your communities, especially those who are at increased risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death. If we all pledge to wear our face masks, stay 6 feet apart and wash our hands often, together we will reduce the spread of COVID-19 and save lives."

Since April 4, the agency's data is reporting a 966 percent increase for those ages 11 to 20 testing positive for the virus and a 413 percent

increase in those from ages 21-30.

"In addition to the disheartening increases in young people transmitting the virus to their family and friends, new data indicate that asymptomatic people can spread the virus more easily than initially thought," state epidemiologist Dr. Linda Bell said. "If you've tested positive but don't have symptoms, it's imperative that you complete your quarantine period in order to not spread the virus to others while you're contagious."

According to DHEC's county case data, there have been 215 confirmed virus cases in Oconee County for the month of June. Since the department began tracking cases in mid-March, there have been 260 total cases and one confirmed death in the county.

## LOCAL EVENTS STILL ON

Locally, Independence Day celebrations are still on in Seneca and Walhalla.

On Facebook, Seneca city officials said bounce houses have been canceled, and instead, officials have opted to hand out glow sticks to children on Saturday. The free event on Gignilliat Field will begin at 5 p.m., with a fireworks show set to start at 9:30 p.m. Masks are not required to be worn, but are preferred.

Walhalla's Independence Eve Celebration will run from 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. Friday, with special sales at downtown shops and restaurants. In a release, Walhalla Performing Arts Center director Mark

## 31 new COVID-19 cases, another death reported in Pickens County on Tuesday

COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control reported 31 new COVID-19 cases and another virus-related death in Pickens County on Tuesday.

The county now has a total of 832 COVID-19 cases and five deaths related to the virus.

The new cases announced Tuesday were part of 1,741 new confirmed cases statewide — a single-day record.

DHEC also reported seven new COVID-19 cases Tuesday in Oconee County, where the total number of cases is now 260.

*The Journal staff*

Thompson said goody bags, shaved ice and obstacle courses will be available for children. Music will begin at 6 p.m. downtown, and fireworks are set to start at 9:15 p.m.

Two weeks ago, the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce announced the cancellation of ClemsonFest. The communitywide celebration had gone on for 26 years in celebration of the holiday and was scheduled for Friday.

At the time of the announcement, the Clemson ZIP code reported 22 confirmed virus cases in the area. As of Tuesday afternoon, there were 175 cases and another 1,075 estimated cases in the ZIP code.

DHEC said it supports local governments and event organizers that elected to cancel celebrations. It recommends residents celebrate with "home-based festivities" and watch fireworks shows in their vehicles or virtually.

**'While we celebrate our country's birthday, please help your communities, especially those who are at increased risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death.'**

**Dr. Joan Duwve**  
DHEC public health director