



PHOTOS BY SAVANNAH BLAKE | THE JOURNAL

Several lines of cars are seen where free COVID-19 tests were being administered Tuesday in Seneca.

Official: More people coming for community testing

BY NORM CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — By mid-morning Tuesday, the right lane of W. South 4th St. was lined with cars going from the Shaver Recreation Complex to Seneca Middle School, where community testing for COVID-19 had begun more than two hours earlier.

About 100 cars were counted in the line.

“We had a ton of cars lined up before 7:30 (a.m.),” said Jennifer Snow, executive director of Prisma Health’s Accountable Communities.

The program, which helps get health care to “vulnerable” communities, now includes the free, community testing events where people get tested without a doctor’s order — and get results in a few days.



A medical worker puts on her PPE before helping out with COVID-19 screenings.

A total of 482 people were tested at the Seneca Middle School at Tuesday’s drive-thru event — nearly double the 243 people who were

tested in the first of Prisma’s community testing events in Oconee County on May 16 at Blue Ridge Elementary School. Snow said the aver-

age number of people getting tested at these events is now about 400.

“People were driving from all over,” Snow said. “When I was filling out forms, I only had two individuals from that (local) area. So it was Taylors, it was Anderson, it was Laurens, it was Greenville, Greer, Mauldin. Now the need is there, and you’re seeing cases go up and more people asking for negative tests to return to work or school. We’re seeing that people are driving to wherever testing is. That has changed from the beginning, in my opinion. When we first started, we were seeing local individuals from the communities we’re at. The volumes were lower. (Tuesday) we did 482.”

TESTING: 'That way, everyone had access'

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While she doesn't have data to explain why more people are coming, Snow said she has ideas from talking to those who drive in.

"Just from being on site and talking to individuals (Tuesday), someone they worked with tested positive, maybe a child was symptomatic, or they know someone," she said.

"DHEC has also started their contact tracing program," Snow added. "We are seeing an increase of individuals coming and saying, 'I've been in contact with someone.' You do have those who are symptomatic — actively sick — that think they have it. They want to get tested. But then there are others that just know they've been somewhere at work or school. Someone (Tuesday) worked at a day care ... and a child tested positive. I think, now that we've seen more positives, people know that they've been exposed more. ... That's the stories that I'm hearing when I'm out."

Snow added she has heard the reasons people are giving for getting tested has changed.

Prisma expands testing hours at Oconee Memorial Hospital

SENECA — Prisma Health has expanded the hours of its hospital-based testing at Oconee Memorial Hospital.

The testing is now open from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Friday in an area adjacent to the patient tower at the hospital. Patients will be asked for their name, date of birth and last four digits of their Social Security number, but will not need an ID, according to a news release.

Hospital-based testing is only for those patients who have received orders from their physician or a provider through the Prisma Health Virtual Visit platform. Virtual Visit at prismahealth.org/virtual-visit, is providing COVID-19 screening for free by using the promo code COVID19.

For information on Prisma Health's community testing, which doesn't require a provider order, visit prismahealth.org/coronavirus.

— The Journal staff

"In the beginning, it was more of 'I'm sick, I don't feel well. Where should I get tested? I don't have a doctor I'm not sure how to get an order,'" she said. "It is shifting as we're seeing positive cases come up to more, 'I'm afraid I've been exposed. I know someone that has it. I take care of my elderly parent or grandparent.' We are seeing more of that come through the lines than we did."

Snow said Prisma began offering community testing on May 2, looking to provide testing to people in

areas "where we knew there was a need," including those who may not have transportation or enough data on their phone for a virtual visit with a health care provider.

"When we started these community testing efforts, our goal was to get in the communities that we felt pretty strongly — with what data we had at that point — to make sure we were in the right areas," she said. "That way, everyone had access to COVID testing."