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CARE CLINIC

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Summit Community Care Clinic works to take pressure off the hospital emergency department during coronavirus outbreak

By: Taylor Sienkiewicz, tsienkiewicz@summitdaily.com, March 31, 2020

FRISCO — The Summit Community Care Clinic's doors are open and workers are providing care amid the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Kathleen Cowie said the clinic is seeing patients via telehealth services as well as scheduling in-person visits for those who have more severe symptoms. If a telehealth medical provider is concerned that a patient is very ill, an on-site assessment can be scheduled at the clinic on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

The goal, Cowie said, is to treat as many patients at the clinic as possible so that they don't need to go to the hospital's emergency department.

"By doing this, it really offloads the burden on the emergency department and the doctors there by us seeing some of the less severely ill patients," Cowie said.

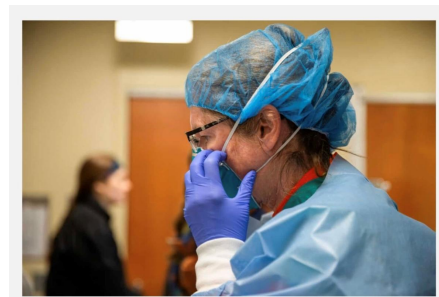
When patients enter the Community Care Clinic building, they have their temperature taken and are asked whether they have any COVID-19 related symptoms and whether they have had known exposure to someone with the novel coronavirus. Some patients then are tested for COVID-19, but the clinic is not immune to the testing shortage: It had only 14 unused test kits as of Monday.

Cowie explained that, based on a person's symptoms, a flu and strep test easily can be administered because they are much more readily available. The center is also able to give a patient a chest X-ray, if needed.

"We're testing most of the people that come in for influenza, which we can do a rapid test right here," Cowie said. "We can also do a rapid strep test, as well. The last two weeks, we were doing more COVID testing because ... we're trying to establish our numbers that we know are here, but we just haven't been able to prove with positive tests."

Cowie estimated that about half of the calls the clinic receives these days are related to some sort of respiratory illness. She added that callers' symptoms are being tracked and submitted to public health, which is giving health officials a better idea of the spread of the virus.

Cowie said that four of the tests the clinic has submitted have returned positive while five are pending. She said the clinic is expecting to receive two more test kits but does not know how many it will receive after that.



Physician's assistant Stephanie Kuenn adjusts her N95 mask at the Summit Community Care Clinic in Frisco on Monday, March 30.

Liz Copan / ecopan@summitdaily.com

Cowie said more people ask if they need to be tested for COVID-19, but with the limited test kits available, testing is often not necessary.

“The biggest question is, ‘Do I need a test?’ And the answer is generally, ‘No, you don’t,” Cowie said. “... The majority of people do not need a test to tell them that they have symptoms. The ones that do need a test are the ones that are very, very ill or who have many other risk factors.”

Cowie reminded people that if they have symptoms of a respiratory illness, they should self-isolate and not leave their home unless they have been symptom and fever-free for three days. She said that even if symptoms are mild, people should self-isolate so that they do not expose others.

Lately, the clinic has been seeing an average of five patients at each of the prearranged sessions, which occur three days per week. However, Cowie said that number is starting to ramp up after the clinic had eight patients Friday.

“We’ve seen things pick up just from the end of last week to now, but it’s really hard to say. Nobody really knows,” Cowie said about anticipated caseloads. “We keep waiting for the big tsunami, in a sense, to come. We’re just trying to be as prepared as we can be.”

For now, the clinic’s patient numbers are down from what is typical. But unlike the hospital, it isn’t because of a lack of visitors.

“A large volume of what we do are wellness visits, which people aren’t going to come in as much for wellness visits during this nor would we want them to,” Cowie said. “But what we do want people to know is we still are here for you whether there’s a pandemic or not. So if you have diabetes, if you have high blood pressure, we can still help you through all this.”

Summit Community Care Clinic CEO Helen Royal explained that the purpose of the clinic is to serve the community, and while visitors are welcome, they aren’t the primary focus.

“Our target population is people who are vulnerable, and that can be people who are uninsured, people who might have language barriers, cultural barriers around health care, don’t have access to specialty care, those types of things,” Royal said. “That is certainly our mission, and we serve all levels.”

Royal said that while the clinic typically serves medical, dental and mental health needs, the dental department is currently only open for emergencies, and mental health services are being offered virtually. Royal said that since patient volume is currently so low, the clinic has some “huge financial stressors coming up.”

Cowie commented that staff morale is high, and Royal noted how the community has stepped up by bringing tents and heaters for the open-air section of the clinic, buying staff members lunch and volunteering to direct traffic.

“In these kind of times, you see people shine,” Royal said. “When it feels pretty overwhelming, that’s been something for people to grab onto.”

As for staff, Cowie said some staff members have had to be quarantined after they had exposure to COVID-19. Overall, Cowie said her biggest concern with the virus is that the medical system is ill-equipped to handle such an outbreak.

Personally, she said she is worried about bringing the virus home to her family.

“My concern for humanity first and foremost, but also for our community and then our clinic, is how long is this going to take,” Royal said.

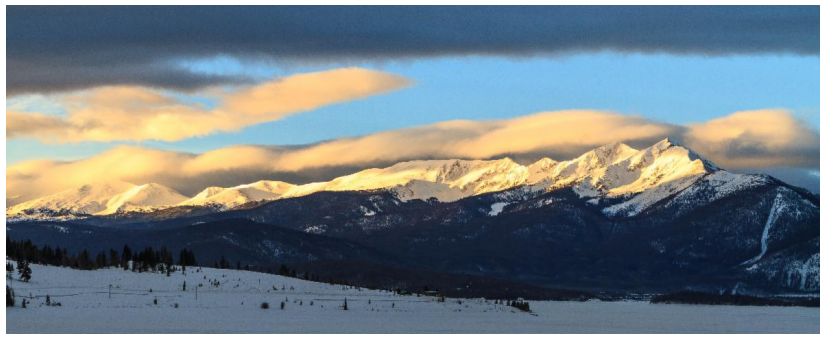
Our community supports one another

The Summit Foundation has established a specific Community Fund to help our partner nonprofits in the community address emergency needs during COVID-19. The Fund is part of the “Summit County Cares” effort in our community.

These funds will be provided directly to trusted local community-based organizations including FIRC, food banks and other nonprofits in order to assist with providing **immediate emergency needs** such as food, critical medication or help for those who are immobile or otherwise compromised. The Summit Foundation will make sure 100% of the Fund goes to critical needs and not duplicate any other available resources.

We are honored to be a part of this community where people step up and help one another!

For more information visit: <https://www.summitfoundation.org/>



Changes to charitable deductions

From the New York Times article "[F.A.Q. on Stimulus Checks, Unemployment and the Coronavirus Plan](#)"

Charitable Contributions

I want to help people who are suffering from the pandemic. Does the bill do anything about charitable donations?



Yes. The bill makes a new deduction available — and not just for 2020 — for up to \$300 in annual charitable contributions. It's available only to people who don't itemize their deductions, and you calculate this new one by subtracting the amount you give from your gross income.

To qualify, you have to give cash to a qualified charity and not to a donor-advised fund, which is a charitable account that affluent people often use to bunch contributions in a particular year in order to maximize deductions. If you've already given money since Jan. 1, that contribution counts toward the \$300 cap.

I am lucky to have substantial wealth, and I want to give more to charity than I usually do. Have the limits on charitable deductions changed?

Yes, they have. As part of the bill, donors can deduct 100 percent of their gift against their 2020 adjusted gross income. If you have \$1 million of income, you can give \$1 million to a public charity and deduct the full amount in 2020.

The new deduction is only for cash gifts that go to a public charity. If you give cash to, say, your private foundation, the old deduction rules apply. And while the organizations that manage donor-advised funds are public charities, you do not get the higher deduction for donating cash to your donor-advised fund.

If your assets are substantial enough that you can give more than your income this year, you won't lose the deduction for the excess amount. You can use it next year, as has always been the case.

Soup for the Soul - postponed

As many of you know, we postponed our 13th Annual Soup for the Soul event originally scheduled for March 28. We were looking forward to gathering with all of our friends of the Care Clinic and dancing the night away to the incomparable Hazel Miller & the Collective! We will let everyone know when we have a new date. In the meantime, **please enjoy a song from Hazel during these challenging times - click on the photo to hear "Bridge Over Troubled Water."**



Hopeful

History will remember when the world stopped
And the flights stayed on the ground
And the cars parked in the street
And the trains didn't run

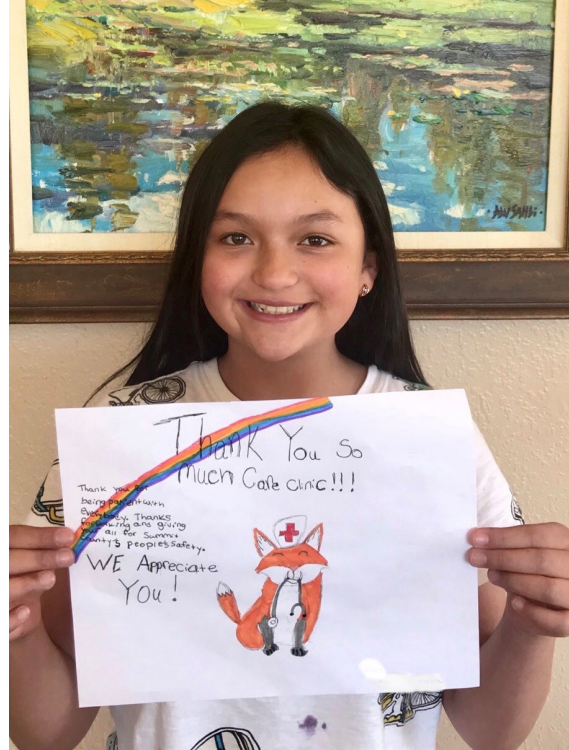
History will remember when the schools closed
And the children stayed indoors
And the medical staff walked towards the fire
And they didn't run

History will remember when the people sang
On their balconies, in isolation
But so much together
In courage and song

History will remember when the people fought
For their old and their weak
Protected the vulnerable by doing nothing at all

History will remember when the virus left
And the houses opened
And the people came out
And hugged and kissed
And started again
Kinder than before.

-Donna Ashworth



Helpful COVID-19 resources:

[Summit County Government](#) local information and includes a link to the county symptom tracker

[Colorado Department of Health and Environment](#) state-wide information

[211 Colorado](#) confidential and multilingual service connecting people to vital resources across the state

The Summit Community Care Clinic (970) 668-4040

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