



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2020

UAMS to bring free COVID-19 testing to Hot Springs

HOT SPRINGS – As COVID-19 restrictions in Arkansas become lifted, the Hot Springs/Garland County COVID-19 Task Force is working to extend the area's already high testing capacity.

At the task force's virtual meeting on May 4, it was announced that UAMS is scheduled to bring their free COVID-19 community drive-thru evaluation clinic to downtown Hot Springs at the Farmers & Artisans Market, 121 Orange Street, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday, May 11.

The clinic will be conducted by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) along with the City of Hot Springs and the Garland County Office of Emergency Services. The primary focus for this screening/testing event is for symptomatic individuals who are experiencing homelessness, as well as underserved minority groups and those living near the downtown area who may not have access to the five evaluation/testing sites in Garland County. However, the event is open to anyone who is experiencing flu-like symptoms, including cough, fever and shortness of breath.

Those coming for evaluation and possible COVID-19 testing can use the drive-through option, or can walk up to the site. Vehicles will be greeted at the south driveway entrance to the Farmers & Artisans Market located off Broadway Avenue behind Crystal Ridge Distillery.

You do not have to be a UAMS patient to be seen. UAMS physicians will evaluate you to see if you need to be tested. If you are not tested, you will be given instructions on how to take care of yourself and your family at home. If you are tested, results take several days to come back and you will receive a phone call about your test results.

If you feel well and do not have any symptoms, continue to stay home, wash your hands regularly, and practice social distancing by staying at least six feet away from other people when in public places. An online screening tool is available at uamshealth.com/healthnow. Phone screening is available through the UAMS Health hotline at 800-632-4502.

For those experiencing homelessness, following their COVID-19 screening there will be a mobile shower unit provided by the Garland County Office of Emergency Management. There will also be food and fresh clothes available. This event is being coordinated by Sally Carder, outreach coordinator with St. Luke's Episcopal Church, along with the City of Hot Springs and the Garland County Office of Emergency Management.

For anyone homeless whose evaluation warrants a test, a local hotel has offered a wing of their facility to be used as quarantine for the remainder of the individual's symptoms or bout with the virus.

Judge Darryl Mahoney applauded the work of Bo Robertson, Garland County emergency management director, for his tireless efforts in coordinating with UAMS to have their mobile unit come to Hot Springs, as well as his work in distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) to hospitals throughout the southwest quadrant of the state. The County is continuing to apply for grants to help with obtaining additional testing supplies, which will be needed during the phased reopening process.

Garland County Health Officer Dr. Gene Shelby provided an update on testing countywide. Since the previous week's meeting, there have been 493 tests completed with a total of seven positive results. That equates to a positive test rate of 1.4%.

Shelby referred to the state's phased reopening and guidelines being put into place by the Governor's office in coordination with the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), which can be found by clicking on the COVID-19 banner on the ADH website – healthy.arkansas.gov. As phone calls to the area COVID-19 Call Center (501-760-4307) are expected to increase, staff are familiarizing themselves with the state's guidelines.

Fire Chief Ed Davis said that any business owner needing guidance on their facility's occupancy numbers can contact their local fire department.

There have been minor changes to the hours at some of the five drive-through COVID-19 evaluation centers in Garland County, and the full list of locations and open times is as follows:

- Convenient Care Clinic (100 McGowan Court, Hot Springs): 7 a.m. – 7 p.m., Monday – Friday; 8 a.m. – 7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday
- Convenient Care Clinic (4419 Hwy 7 North, Hot Springs Village): 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday; 8 a.m. – 3 p.m., Saturday
- Lakeside Family Medicine (124 Hollywood Avenue, Hot Springs): 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday
- First Care Walk-In Clinic (120 Adcock Road, Garland County): 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday; 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., Saturday; 1 p.m. – 6 p.m., Sunday
- Fountain Lake Family Medicine (4517 Park Avenue): 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday

CHI St. Vincent and National Park Medical Center both reported they have started scheduling a small volume of elective surgical procedures. Both hospitals are keeping their COVID-19 visitation policies in place for the time being, in which no visitors are allowed, and both have implemented mandatory wearing of face masks for employees and patients.

The United Way of the Ouachitas (UWO) has begun receiving applications from individuals and families to request assistance as they have suffered loss of employment of income as a result of COVID-19. The application is available at <https://www.unitedwayouachitas.org/covid-19-application>, and applicants can choose for assistance in several categories, including food, rent, utility bills, medical/prescription costs and costs for gas or public transportation. Applications will be reviewed weekly, and payment of approved funds will go directly to pay the holder of the bill(s) or expense(s).

Also beginning this week for those with approved applications will be distribution of food boxes in coordination with Project HOPE Food Bank and Sheep Dog Impact Assistance of Central Arkansas.

To donate to the COVID-19 Relief Fund, visit www.bit.ly/UWO-COVID, call 501-623-2505 or send a check by mail at 233 Hobson Avenue, Hot Springs, AR 71913.

Public health officials continue to stress the importance of washing hands often, keeping social distance, staying home when sick and disinfecting surfaces often. For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>.