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Coryell County COVID-19 Number Reporting Hiccups **Due To State Backlog** 

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By LYNETTE SOWELL

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Cove Leader-Press

Between June 1 and June 26, Coryell County has seen a total of 46 confirmed positive cases of the COVID-19 virus.

The most recent report issued by the Coryell County Office of Emergency Management dated July 2 only lists confirmed positive cases through Friday, June 26. Then, there are three new cases reported on July 1, listed as Copperas Cove, ages not listed, one male, one female, and one "unknown."

Coryell County Emergency Management Coordinator Bob Harrell explained the lag in reporting, in that the county receives numbers from Region 7 of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), which tracks Coryell County's numbers and conducts the contact tracing as well. Right now, there's a backlog as

"(Coryell County) does have funding that will enable it to do more contact tracing," Harrell said. Right now, DSHS does all contact tracing for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 in Coryell County.

Harrell said that one of the answers to increasing numbers is for more testing, that those who haven't been tested already should be tested, especially if they're having symptoms.

"I've been tested, and it's come back negative," Harrell said.

DSHS scrambles to keep up with the numbers in other parts of the state.

While Copperas Cove and Coryell County have not had increasing cases at a pace like Bell and McLennan Counties, cases do continue to increase.

Of those 123 cases, 45 are active, 76 are listed as recovered, and two are deceased. The most recently updated report shows that the majority of the new cases listed are Copperas Cove area

As of July 2, there have been a total of 123 confirmed positive cases in Coryell County, excluding the

inmates who reside in Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities in the county.

residents, except for a Gatesville area female in her 80s and on July 1, two men in the Turnersville area.

The City of Copperas Cove has begun issuing reports on Mondays, for those cases which involve residents within the city limits. Deputy Fire Chief/Emergency Management Coordinator Gary Young receives the information from Harrell's office, from which in turn Young issues his update.

Presently, Coryell County has a disaster declaration in effect through July 27. The city of Copperas Cove does not have a disaster declaration in place, which the previous declaration expiring on June 15.

## Wearing masks, face coverings recommended and in some places, mandatory

Masks or face coverings are not mandatory in public in Coryell County and its cities, although wearing a mask or face covering has been strongly recommended by local officials such as Coryell County Judge Roger Miller and Copperas Cove Mayor Bradi Diaz. As of July 1, H-E-B is requiring customers to wear masks when shopping in its stores, and even distributing

them to customers at store entrances. According to the company, exceptions to this are children under 2 and individuals with health-related issues, in accordance with CDC guidelines. "As an essential service provider during the pandemic, H-E-B is focused on the health and safety of our

Partners, customers and continuous service to our communities. Over 80% of our stores currently operate

under a mandatory mask order. Masks are a proven way to slow the spread of COVID-19. Effective Wednesday, July 1, H-E-B will be requiring masks in all stores companywide. The CDC, State of Texas, and local health officials strongly urge the use of masks or facial coverings in public spaces as a proven way to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Many COVID-19 cases are asymptomatic and as Texans Helping Texans, we wear masks to keep each other and our families safe." A Copperas Cove H-E-B Plus! partner had tested positive for the coronavirus, but was last in the store on June 16. Also, partners and vendors have been required to wear masks while on the job in the store.

distancing cannot be maintained. This week, however, Killeen's mayor implemented a requirement for the wearing of masks or at least some

mandatory effective on June 29, was amended on Monday morning by the Bell County commissioners' court,

Over in Bell County, an order issued by the county judge to make wearing masks/face coverings in public

and instead, businesses were "strongly encouraged" to require masks if a minimum of 6 feet social

Hospitalizations, 7-day positivity rate, new cases all hit new highs

type of face covering to be mandatory in public, in that city.

In Region L, in which Coryell and Bell Counties lie, there are currently 40 lab-confirmed COVID-19 patients in the hospital as of July 1's report by the Texas Department of State Health Services. There are 17 ICU beds available, 101 available ventilators, as of the same date.

On June 1, there were 1,756 Texans hospitalized with COVID-19, and by July 1, that number had grown to nearly 7,000, at 6,904.

The testing positivity rate had increased to 13.58% as of June 30, which is the seven-day average of those tested for the virus having a positive test. On June 1, that rate was only 5.4%. This increase in hospitalizations along with the positivity rate rising above 10% is what led Gov. Abbott to

pause the state's phased reopening plan. The state of Texas had a total of 168,062 confirmed positive cases as of July 1, with an estimated 87,556

having recovered, leaving an estimated 78,025 active cases. There have been 2,481 fatalities. On Wednesday, July 1, there were a total of 8,076 new cases confirmed, the highest increase in new positive

On June 1, there were 26,800 tests conducted in the state, with the number of daily tests in the 20,000+ range through June 20, when the number of daily tests increased to more than 35,900 (June 21) and as many as 44,800 tests by June 30.

EDITOR'S NOTE: After this story went to press on Thursday, Gov. Greg Abbott issued an exeuctive order mandating the wearing of masks/face coverings within the state of Texas in counties with 20 or more positive confirmed cases of COVID-19. We will be following up on what exactly that means for Copperas Cove and

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other surrounding communities, along with responses from local officials. Section: COVID-19

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cases so far. However, the number of daily new tests conducted has also increased.



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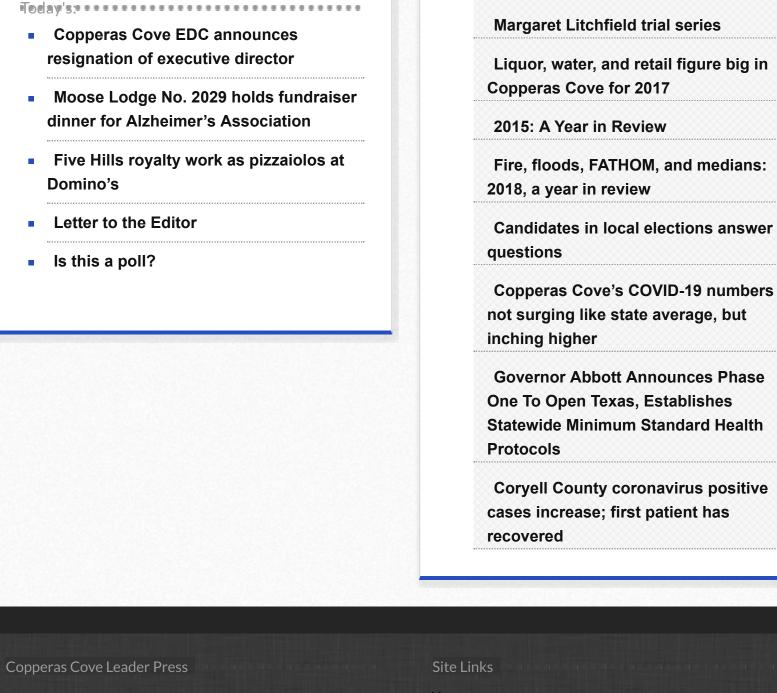


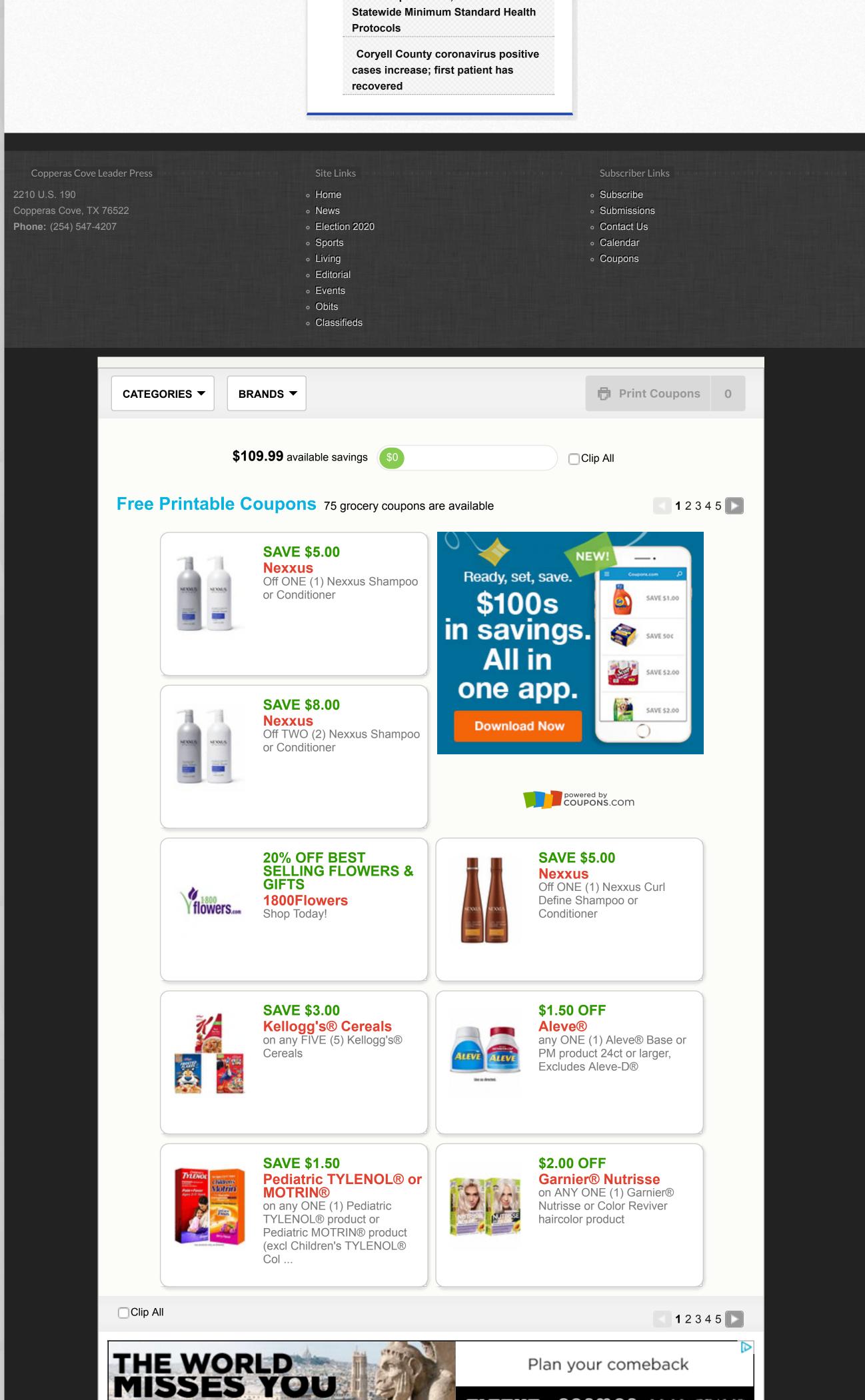
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