



## Joint News Release

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020

For Immediate Release

**Berrien County Health Department Contact:**

Gillian Conrad

(269) 927-5624

[gconrad@bchdmi.org](mailto:gconrad@bchdmi.org)

**Spectrum Health Lakeland Contact:**

Megan Yore

(269) 930-5417

[myore@lakelandhealth.org](mailto:myore@lakelandhealth.org)

### **Berrien County Reports First Positive Cases of COVID-19**

(Berrien County, Michigan) – The Berrien County Health Department has identified the first two positive cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Berrien County.

The positive persons are both adult women under the age of sixty years old; they have both been self-isolating at home for several days and they are in good condition. Both of these individuals had close personal contact with singer Sandi Patty, when she performed a concert at Andrews University in Berrien Springs on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Since the concert, Ms. Patty announced that she had tested positive for COVID-19 on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

The Berrien County Health Department and Andrews University are communicating directly with the people who had been in close contact with the individuals who have tested positive. All close contacts of the COVID-19 positive individuals will be asked to self-quarantine and will be assessed for symptoms and monitored appropriately. The Berrien County Health Department is also advising anyone who attended the March 8<sup>th</sup> Sandi Patty concert and had close personal contact with Ms. Patty to self-quarantine and monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath through March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. Any individuals who experienced or are still experiencing symptoms are asked to call the Berrien County Health Department hotline at 1-800-815-5485.

"Our team has been preparing for weeks to ensure that we have the structures in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Berrien County, including a partial activation of the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). We are not yet seeing widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in Berrien County, although we anticipate this to change," says Nicki Britten, Berrien County Health Department health officer. "Everyone has a role to play in helping us prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as other viruses that can cause respiratory illness. It is very important that our residents remain committed to individual prevention efforts, staying updated on the situation with information from credible sources, and prepare for an ongoing response to this virus in the community."

"This is sobering news and these are sobering times," said Loren B. Hamel, MD, president, Spectrum Health Lakeland. "The first cases of COVID-19 in Berrien County don't come as a surprise. We have been preparing for weeks and working closely with local and state partners to ensure we are ready to care for our friends and

neighbors. The most important thing you can do is be diligent about keeping social distance, wash your hands, don't touch your face, and call ahead before you come to the hospital or doctor's office if you are sick."

COVID-19 symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. "To prevent the spread of COVID-19, people should wash their hands, stay home when sick, avoid close contact with sick people, and disinfect commonly touched surfaces," says Dr. Rick Johansen, medical director at the Berrien County Health Department. "Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes are at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness." There is currently no vaccine or specific treatment for COVID-19.

The Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland continue to work closely to slow the spread of illness and provide reliable and accurate information to the public. Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 in Berrien County by visiting [www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org) or [www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org](http://www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org).

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## **Berrien County Statement for Joint Press Release**

**3/21/20 10:19 AM**

On March 18 2020 the Berrien County Emergency Operation Center (EOC) was activated in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The EOC is established to provide a single point of contact, coordination and avenue to share information to all 39 municipalities, first responders and volunteer organizations in Berrien County. The EOC is working with our local health officials as we continue to monitor and respond to this health crisis.

Out of an abundance of caution and based on the current spread of COVID-19, Berrien County has closed public access to all County buildings. Many county services will remain available via telephone, email, fax, and through the website. Some services may be available by making an appointment. The County is committed to serving its residents to the greatest extent possible, especially during times of crisis. Residents may access a detailed contact list for the various departments on the Berrien County website at [www.berriencounty.org](http://www.berriencounty.org). In addition, all departments have their own page within the website.