

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Charlie Bermant, with with local news and commentary for Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

With no COVID-19 cases yet reported for the holiday weekend, Jefferson County is holding firm with 416. This reflects a slowdown, with 26 cases reported in May. This compares to 45 cases in April, which itself reflected a sharp increase from just ten cases in March. There are two active cases now in isolation and 18 results pending.

A development grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce supported the completion of a community needs assessment study about the state of child care providers in Jefferson County, and what can be done to fulfill these unmet needs. The assessment process has included interviews with child care providers, human resource leaders from local employers, and other key community members. At the core was a lengthy questionnaire completed by approximately 200 local families with young children, more than 73% of whom reported it was either hard or very hard to find child care in the County, according to a press release from Jefferson Healthcare. Participating parents were also asked about the kinds of child care they need, and the characteristics most important to them. Safety is the first priority, along with proximity of child care to their work. An early learning-focused curriculum and affordability were important to parents as well.

The dream solution is the establishment of a high-quality child care center, serving approximately 40 children, under school age, located near the County's largest employers. To this end, planning about site location, feasibility, and funding approaches is currently underway. The team of childcare advocates receiving the funds, including Jefferson Healthcare, the YMCA, and Peninsula College, has prepared full reports of both the childcare center concept and the needs assessment informing the concept. The reports are available on the Jefferson Healthcare Population Health website (<https://jeffersonhealthcare.org/population-health/>).

Jefferson Healthcare patients currently enrolled with one of the hospital's primary care providers are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine immediately following a regularly scheduled Primary Care appointment at the Sheridan, Watership, or Townsend Clinics in Port Townsend. Walk-in vaccinations continue at the Jefferson Healthcare Express Clinic, adjacent to the hospital's north entrance, without an appointment to receive the single dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine. For information about vaccine activity in the county call 360-344-9791.

The Washington State Ferry System is now 70 years old which means that, if it were a person, it would fit nicely into Port's Townsend's demographic. The system is marking the occasion with a new commemorative logo that will decorate all 21 vessels in the ferry fleet during the anniversary year. This goes along with a special anniversary video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QxtbYvInUo>) that will be shown on ferry video screens throughout the year. The video is 40 minutes long, which means that people on local routes originating from Port Townsend, Kingston and Bainbridge Island will need to take two rides to see the whole thing. In addition, many ferry customers will receive commemorative stickers throughout the first week of June.

And a reminder: Jefferson County's indoor masking mandate is still in effect and will expire this June 30, one year after it was first established,

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org.

This is Charlie Bermant. Thank you for listening.