

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM. I'm Jim Burke, with local news and commentary for Tuesday, March 28, 2023.

\*\*\*

Jefferson County Public Health's COVID-19 weekly reports and the transmission risk dial are being replaced with state data and perennial safety recommendations beginning next Monday, April 3, 2023. Jefferson County Health Officer Dr. Allison Berry recommends mask-wearing when entering crowded, indoor settings or when feeling under the weather. That recommendation will stand even after the state rescinds its masking order for healthcare settings on Monday, April 3.

Jefferson County Public Health's Communicable Disease Team will continue to post information about COVID-19 on their website, however that information will now come solely from the Washington State Department of Health. The state's information will be embedded onto the county's website here: <https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1429/COVID-19>. Residents may report their positive home tests results to the state directly via an online portal here: <https://safercovid.org/mytest/index.html?lang=en>. Jefferson County will be retiring its own online portal.

\*\*\*

Jefferson County Public Health reports the two-week COVID-19 case rate is 190 cases per 100,000 people. The risk of COVID-19 transmission in public, indoor places is moderate. Jefferson County Public Health staff estimate that 1 in 10 COVID-19 cases in Jefferson County were reported to public health last week. No one is currently hospitalized with COVID-19 in Jefferson County. One death due to COVID was reported this week. The total number of those who have died due to COVID in Jefferson County is now 37.

Dr. Berry said last week that due to our high vaccination rates, with Jefferson County having one of the highest vaccination rates in the nation, there is a 'decoupling' of case rates and severe disease and deaths in Clallam, and especially Jefferson County. There are still risks from COVID, and people are more likely to get, "long Covid" if they have had multiple infections. You can listen to Dr. Berry's full remarks from last week on our website, KPTZ.org.

Next Monday, Dr. Berry will speak again to the Board of County Commissioners. You can listen at 9:45am right here on KPTZ 91.9 FM and streaming at KPTZ.org. If you have questions for Dr. Berry or Willie Bence, Director of Emergency Management, send them by this Friday, March 31 at noon to [contactus@kptz.org](mailto:contactus@kptz.org). Please note that the health reports to the BOCC are being scaled back once again to one a month, on the first Monday of the month.

\*\*\*

A Port Townsend Psychologist has been recognized for contributions to youth mental health. The Benji Project board member Dr. Lexa Murphy has received the prestigious Distinguished Psychologist Award from the Washington State Psychological Association (WSPA) for her contributions to youth mental health, the Jefferson County nonprofit organization announced. Named in memory of a local youth who died by suicide, The Benji Project teaches teenagers stress management and emotional resilience skills using an evidence-based curriculum of mindful self-compassion.

WSPA said in its citation that Dr. Murphy won the annual award for bringing "expertise and professionalism in service of youth mental health and suicide prevention in a community historically underserved by psychology." – referring to Jefferson County. The citation continued, "Dr. Murphy has been and continues to be a much-

needed force for psychology on the Peninsula. This award recognizes her effort and thanks her for her continued effort with youth.”

After opening her practice in Port Townsend in 2020, Dr. Murphy joined the board of The Benji Project and has provided guidance on emerging research, best practices, and program assessment. Cynthia Osterman, board chair of The Benji Project, said, “Lexa has been a key contributor to community-wide initiatives to improve mental health care for all children and families, and we are especially grateful for her volunteer work and dedication to our board.” Dr. Murphy, who with her husband has two children, earned her PhD at Vanderbilt University and completed residency and fellowship at Seattle Children's Hospital. She works with youth who suffer with anxiety, depression, PTSD, and ADHD, and she has specialty training in supporting children with chronic medical conditions and LGBTQ+ youth.

\*\*\*

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening!