

COVID-19 cases dip nationwide, reason unknown

TRISTAN BENNETT

NEWS EDITOR

The number of COVID-19 cases across the country, including in Arkansas and Craighead county, have experienced a drop within the past week.

Dr. Shane Speights, NYIT College of Medicine at Arkansas State University dean, said while cases and hospitalizations across the state are following a downward trend, deaths are remaining steady.

"The numbers are still higher than they ever were before we started back in even August," he said. "We are on a downward decline. We're not where we want to be, and we want to continue to see that go down, in terms of cases and hospitalizations, but we're certainly moving in the right direction."

Speights said while no one knows for sure why cases are dipping, there are several theories floating around the medical community.

"They're all theories," he said. "None of these have played out. None of these have science or evidence behind them to prove them one way or the other."

One theory is that the virus mutations are causing it to fizzle out on its own much like what happened with SARS-CoV-1 in the early 2000s.

"It hit several countries and was spreading pretty rapidly, and then all of a sudden it kind of shifted and mutated to the point where it just kind of fizzled out," Speights said. "We were hoping to see that with this COVID-19 virus last spring. It was kind of at the point where it was either going to burn itself out or turn a corner and continue to spread significantly,

and that's what happened."

While mutations are possible, it could be that the virus is coming in contact with more people that have already been infected and therefore have antibodies.

"When we talk about the number of people that have been infected by this, that number is low," Speights said. "That number is off by about a factor of eight. Really, in the state of Arkansas, you're probably more like at 1.6 million that have actually been infected."

Those that have been infected have more antibodies in their system and are less likely to spread the virus on to other people.

Another theory involves the closing of schools for the holidays. As students were not in classrooms, more people were more isolated, which could have caused the dip in the numbers.

"We'll know better probably in the next few weeks or so because it takes that long to see a trend," Speights said. "By the first or second week of February we should have an idea of whether this is really going to continue to go down or whether it's going to come back up because you have more people spreading it amongst those age groups."

The dip in cases comes as more in the state are receiving the vaccine as well. Progress in the vaccination plan is moving rather slowly though.

"The state of Arkansas is only getting about 35,000 to 39,000 doses per week," Speights said.

"The group that we need to vaccinate now, which is group phase 1-B, is about 450,000 people. It's going to take about two to three months to get all those people vaccinated."

Phase 1-B includes

everyone that works within K-12 and higher education as well as individuals over 70.

"We're hoping that we're going to see the vaccine efforts pick up from the federal government. We're hoping that our numbers will go up in terms of the amount of vaccine that we get," Speights said. "We're really, fingers crossed, hoping we'll be in a better spot by this summer, but it's kind of a wait and see right now."

As vaccination efforts continue, myths about the vaccine continue to circulate. Speights said one of the biggest myths is that the vaccine causes COVID.

"That's actually scientifically impossible," he said. "It doesn't have the virus in it. The vaccine has a piece of the genetic code of the virus which is what your body uses as kind of a blueprint to create immunity."

It is also a common misconception that the vaccine was rushed due in part to the name Operation Warp Speed, which the government gave to the vaccine effort.

"The technology that was used is called an mRNA vaccine," Speights said. "We've not used it in mass vaccinations, but we've used this technology for decades. Even back in the '90s we were using this, so we're very familiar with it."

Speights and his wife took the vaccine themselves.

"If I was worried about it I certainly wouldn't have taken it myself or had my wife take it," he said. "I'm encouraging people to take it, so I think that's important."

Campus Recreation holds annual Fit Six Fitness Challenge

AN NGUYEN

NEWS WRITER

The Fit Six Fitness Challenge, hosted by the Red W.O.L.F. Center, made its annual debut this week. Registration began on Jan. 18 and continues through Jan. 31. The challenge lasts until Feb. 28.

The purpose of this challenge serves to motivate students to pursue a healthy lifestyle by exercising and examining other aspects of fitness, according to Carol Cummings, the director of Campus Recreation. An individual must complete 840 minutes of exercise over six weeks, which can be broken down into 140 minutes a week.

"If you were to exercise three times a week for about 45 minutes, you would

meet that goal of 840 minutes over the six-week period," said Cummings.

After completing the workout, the student will need to see one of the attendants at the desk to record the minutes they have completed that day into a logbook.

Due to COVID-19, the requirements for group fitness classes have been removed since the capacity of the center is limited to 90 students. Before the pandemic, the facility allowed a capacity of 150-175 depending on which activities were being offered.

All students visiting the Red W.O.L.F. Center are required to wear a mask and practice social distancing. They are also required to use disinfectant wipes to clean the equipment

after use. Cummings said that besides cleaning the machines frequently throughout the day, full-time staff members and student workers would use a disinfectant gun to spray all of the machines and equipment used in the evening to let them sit overnight.

In order to inform students about the challenge, the Campus Recreation staff took advantage of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and the A-State app. The staff also handed out flyers and posted them within the facility at the students' check-in, as well as the registration forms, according to Cummings.

Alyssa Cohn, one of the desk attendants working at the Red W.O.L.F. Center for more than a

year, noticed the drastic change regarding the number of students going to the gym since COVID started.

"I think because students don't really want to come to the facility when they can't work out with their friends," Cohn said. "Or be close together as they used to be."

The challenge keeps students active and helps them stay in shape, especially during the pandemic, when they can't get out of the house as much going to public places, according to Cohn.

Sophomore student Angela Brown participates in the challenge.

"My goal is to be able to go to the gym more, and be motivated to consistently work out," Brown said.

To help with her fitness goal,

Brown makes sure to include protein in her diet and remains cautious about what she eats during the day.

"Anyone completing the challenge will win a free T-shirt. It's a custom Comfort Color T-shirt," Cummings said.

Brown also revealed her main reason for joining the challenge: the shirt.

"I really like T-shirts," Cohn said. "I think it's a great way to get students motivated."

Whether students are motivated by a T-shirt or the desire to stay fit, having the opportunity to resume some semblance of normalcy shows a promising start to 2021.

JANUARY 18TH - FEBRUARY 28TH



**FIT SIX
FITNESS CHALLENGE**

FINISHERS RECEIVE A CUSTOM T-SHIRT.
SIGN UP TODAY!

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAMPUS RECREATION

Students can sign up for the Fit Six Fitness Challenge at the Red W.O.L.F. Center until Feb. 28. Finishers will receive a free T-shirt.

CAMPUS CRIME

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NEWS EDITOR

Jan. 24 | 12:15 a.m.

An officer made contact with Henry Nguyen at Pack Place Building 1 because his mother had requested a welfare check. The officer introduced himself and asked Nguyen several questions regarding his wellbeing. He answered each question with "I'm fine." The officer told him his mother was worried and offered to get a counselor. Nguyen once again stated he was fine, told the officer he was going to bed and shut the door. The officer knocked again, and his roommate answered and let him in. He attempted to explain to Nguyen through his bedroom door that he was trying to help, but he got no answer. Dispatch advised his mother that officers did see him and spoke with him briefly.

Jan. 24 | 12:39 a.m.

University Police and Jonesboro Police responded to a call from Stadium View in regards to a loud party. Upon

arrival, officers could hear music coming from the balcony of the apartment in question. They made contact and immediately smelled marijuana and saw alcohol inside. Tamia Denson and Kobie Johnson told officers they lived there, but Johnson began cursing at them. Nia Savage, Latavia Brown-Miller and Keeleigh Smith were also present in the apartment.

While an officer was attempting to question Denson, Savage began jumping in between them and interrupting. When the officer attempted to move her outside with another officer, Johnson grabbed him by the wrist. He was then detained.

Savage continued to get in the officers' faces even though she was asked to move several times to allow them to speak to each individual.

Only Johnson was arrested on disorderly conduct and obstruction of governmental operations. He was transported to the Craighead County Detention Center and issued a University Referral for assaulting an officer.

Jan. 24 | 2:20 a.m.

Officers were dispatched to Wolf Creek Apartments to assist the Jonesboro Police Department. University arrived at building nine and met several JPD officers on the third floor. The officers were informed that a police car had been damaged by Logan McPherson and several inside had damaged the building by ripping off the exterior and emergency lights, taking the fire extinguisher, discharging it and throwing it in the swimming pool. JPD totaled the damages at \$8,000.

McPherson admitted to the damage and was arrested and transported to the Craighead County Detention Center. Richard Lewis was arrested for eight counts of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Students present at the time of the damage were Alexandria Cupp, Patrick Hilson, Daniel Stephens, Carson Williams, Bryant Guerra and Carlee Weatherford. They were given University Referrals.