



STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Facility to fill mental health need

New regional stability center opening soon

By PEGGY WENDEL
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When people having issues with mental health or chemical dependency feel like they just can't cope anymore, there are a handful of facilities in the North Sound region that offer temporary care with professional help.

But finding room in one can be a problem; facilities are near capacity and often full.

Soon, Island County will add a short-term, voluntary stabilization facility to the regional resources that help people in crisis that need a boost to restore and stabilize their health.

Ithua Stabilization Center in Oak Harbor is built and just waiting to be licensed before it opens in late February. The building cost just over \$6 million: \$5 million came from the state and \$1 million from North Sound Behavioral Health Organization.

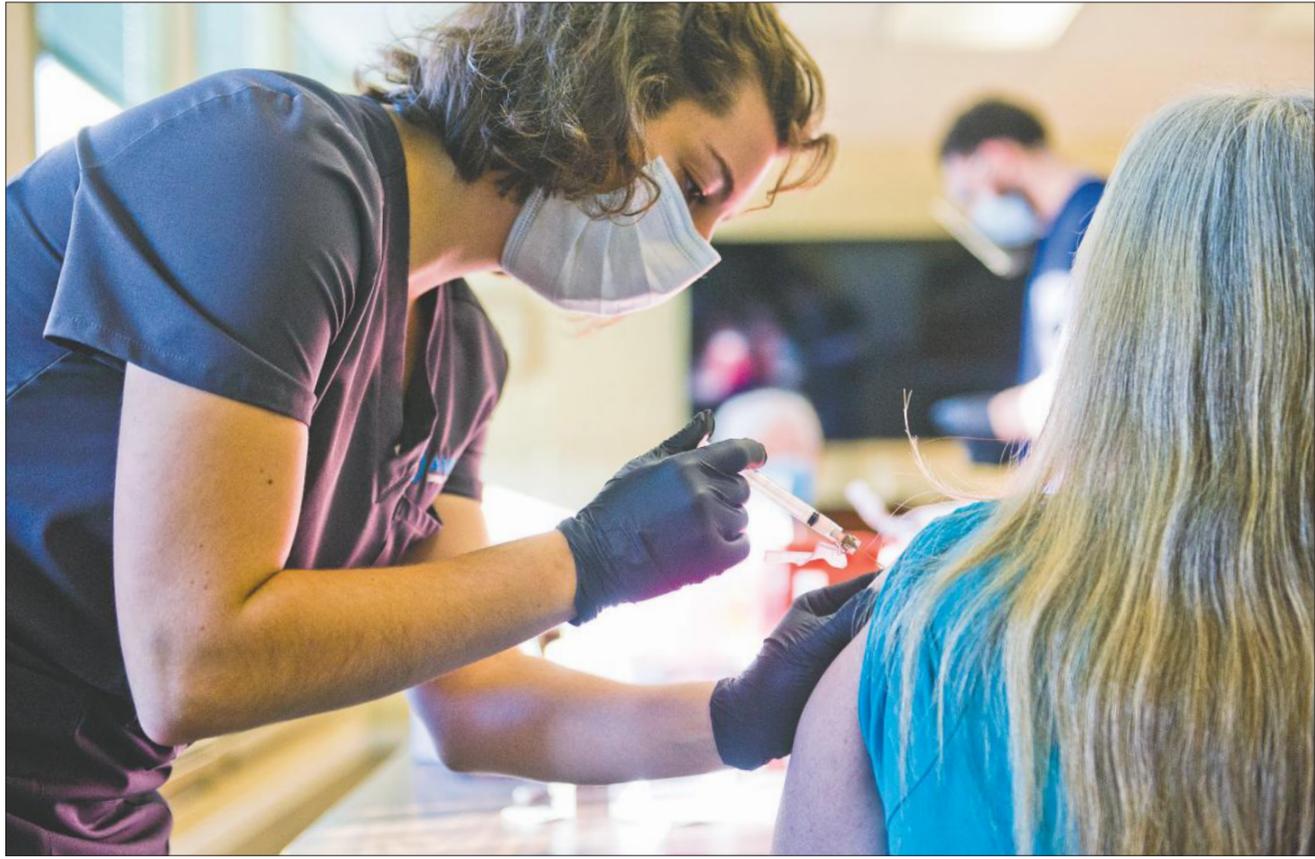
It will be the only facility in Island County. This will ease pressure on regional facilities and give Camano Island residents another option. The facility offers short-term help during a crisis and connections to long-term help as an alternative to hospitalization or arrest.

Pioneer Human Services will run the facility. PHS operates facilities in Bellingham, Mount Vernon, Spokane and in King and Pierce counties, offering a range of counseling, treatment and transitional programs that help people who might otherwise end up in the hospital or in jail.

■ SEE HEALTH, A6

Vaccine provides hope

Local seniors largely isolated since March relieved, excited as COVID-19 vaccine signals 'light at the end of the tunnel'



PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Sophie Klein, from Anesis Spine & Pain Care in Renton, administers the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to residents and staff Friday at Stanwood Community and Senior Center. About 75 received doses at the clinic.



Klein draws a dose of the vaccine from a vial Friday at Stanwood Community and Senior Center. Read more about local vaccine distribution plans on Page A8.

By EVAN CALDWELL
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Jennifer Flax sprung out of the chair wearing a giant smile. "I feel so relieved," she exclaimed moments after receiving the first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Friday at Stanwood Community & Senior Center.

Flax, 68, was one of 75 residents to get the first dose of the vaccine from Anesis Spine and Pain Care in Renton, who had extra doses and was connected with the Stanwood facility via the Snohomish Health District.

"I'm so excited," Flax said. "I have three grandsons in town who I haven't seen. I just want to hug them, and this gets me a step closer. When I heard about the vaccine clinic, I couldn't get down here fast enough."

After a former resident who had moved out at the onset of the pandemic tested positive, the Stanwood Community & Senior Center went

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on lockdown with residents mostly staying in their rooms and getting items delivered. There have been no COVID cases at the facility since.

The vaccine clinic Friday became one of the few social events in the past 10 months, allowing masked residents to visit briefly from a safe distance.

"If I hadn't had my dog, I'd probably have gone nuts," said resident Ken Jobe, 93. "I like to depend on myself. This (isolation) has been one of the hardest things."

Jobe said the vaccine is a step toward normalcy. "I wanted the shot because I need to keep myself going. I plan on making it to 100," he said, adding that when able, he plans to visit his daughter and "go downtown and have a good big breakfast."

A mix of excitement and relief flowed through the building, said Julie Vess, executive director of the Stanwood Community & Senior Center.

■ SEE VACCINE, A8

Mother of man shot by police in 2018 files for damages

Stanwood man died after officers responded to domestic violence call

By PEGGY WENDEL
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A civil trial is scheduled for a 2018 Stanwood homicide case after the mother of a man shot by police filed to sue the county last month.

In December, Paula Dow filed a

civil action for \$5 million in damages against Snohomish County and three county law enforcement officers, deputies Kevin Pelleboer, William Westsik and Sgt. Chad Gwordske.

Westsik fatally shot her 43-year-old son Adam Christopher Jensen on Sept. 9, 2018. The incident occurred

after his girlfriend, Isabel Craig, called for help during a domestic violence incident in her home on Port Susan Place in Stanwood.

The trial is scheduled for March 2022.

The incident was originally evaluated by the Snohomish County Multiple Agency Response Team, which analyzed the scene and independently interviewed Craig and the officers.

■ SEE DAMAGES, A6


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Washington's coronavirus vaccine phases

Estimated timeline for Phases 1 and 2, according to the state Department of Health. For more info, visit FindYourPhaseWA.org and CovidVaccineWA.org

Dec./Jan. 1A1/1A2	Jan./Feb. 1B1	Feb. 1B2	March 1B3	April 1B4	May-Dec. Phase 2-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-risk healthcare workers in health care settings High-risk first responders Long-term care facility residents All other workers at risk in health care settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All people 65 years or older All people 50 years or older in multi-generational households (home where individuals from 2 or more generations reside such as an elder and a grandchild) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-risk critical workers 50 years or older who work in certain congregate settings: Agriculture; food processing; grocery stores; K-12 (educators & staff); childcare; corrections; prisons, jails or detention centers; public transit; fire; law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People 16 years or older with 2 or more comorbidities or underlying conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-risk critical workers younger than 50 who work in B2 settings People, staff, and volunteers in congregate living settings: Correctional facilities; group homes for people with disabilities; people experiencing homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on Phases 2, 3 & 4 coming soon.

Vaccine

► FROM A1

“There is light at the end of the tunnel,” Vess said. “We’re starting to look toward the future. There’s some hope.”

However, vaccine supplies are still just trickling into Washington. Snohomish County received just over 3,000 doses last week, yet there are 200,000 people eligible under Phase 1A and 1B1. To date, more than 25,000 in Snohomish County have received the first dose. At this rate, local health officials said they expect it to take up to three months to work through Phase 1B1.



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Amit Perlin, from Anesis Spine & Pain Care in Renton, holds the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in sunlight to draw a dose to give residents and staff at Stanwood Community and Senior Center.

“We sadly don’t yet have 150,000 vaccines to give out today,” said Dr. Chris Spitters, Health Officer for the Snohomish Health District. “While we currently have the capacity to give at least 30,000 doses per week, vaccine supplies are extremely limited and nowhere near where we need them to be to achieve that speed.”

Because of low supply, Snohomish County stopped scheduling appointments for its three drive-thru mass vaccination clinics.

“I am frustrated,” Snohomish County executive Dave Somers said, “and find it frustrating that we’re having to fight for extra doses each week.”

Camano clinics

Two organizations on Camano Island received approval to administer COVID vaccines last week. Camano Island Fire & Rescue and Camano Island Health System were approved by the state to give eligible people the vaccine. However, like elsewhere in the state, getting the vaccine is the current hurdle.

CIFR is partnering with the Camano Center and Island County to operate a vaccination clinic at the Camano Center, and they expect to open the site as early as next week.

While CIFR is awaiting approval on their vaccination plan from Island County, officials tested the tentative plan and trained volunteers Monday by administering 50 doses.

“Once we get the vaccine, we need to have enough clinical and nonclinical volunteers to facilitate day-to-day operations, and enough training

to make sure the whole process runs smoothly,” CIFR spokeswoman Bronlea Mishler said.

Anyone interested in volunteering at the Camano site can email Pat Waters, the Island County Emergency Management volunteer coordinator, at p.waters@islandcountywa.gov.

When the site is operational, the plan is for residents to make appointments online at camano-fire.com or over the phone.

“The message right now is to please have patience,” CIFR Chief Levon Yengoyan said. “We have already been inundated with so many phone calls.”

Meanwhile, the other Camano vaccination provider has also been swamped in requests. Camano Island Health System officials said there is not enough vaccine supplies, and they are making a list of eligible residents who contact them, according to a notice on their website, camanoisland-health.com.

To determine eligibility and find vaccine clinics, visit FindYourPhaseWA.org or call 800-525-0127.

COVID rate falls

But regions remain in Phase 1

By EVAN CALDWELL
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Virus transmission dropped last week in Snohomish County and officials renewed calls to help push the infection rate even lower.

The rolling two-week case rate in Snohomish County fell to 253 cases per 100,000 residents down from 376 infections per 100,000 people, according to data released Monday from the Snohomish Health District.

The situation comes one year after a Snohomish County man went to a walk-in clinic displaying symptoms after having returned from Wuhan, China. Less than 24 hours after specimens were flown to CDC labs in Atlanta, the Health District was notified that his lab results were confirmed as the first positive case of COVID-19 in the United States.

In the 12 months since, “thousands in this county have sacrificed time with friends and families, lost jobs or businesses, or have lost loved ones to COVID,” Snohomish Health District health officer Dr. Chris Spitters said at a media briefing last week. “I recognize that the decisions made have both short-term and lasting impacts as we move through this, and we have a long road of recovery ahead. Our collective response has saved lives, spared hospital capacity, and prevented further suffering.”

Overall, COVID rates in the region are still high, Spitters said.

“Let’s try to ... bend this curve and get things back down again,” he said. “Vaccine alone is not going to open up society in the short run. We need your help to reduce transmission using the old fashioned methods that we’ve been promoting for months and months, but they work.”

Over the weekend, Snohomish County recorded 345 new COVID-19 cases. As of Monday, there were 58 COVID-19 patients in Snohomish County hospitals — down nearly 50% from a few weeks ago, according to county data.

Stanwood has recorded 40 new cases during the past two weeks, down from the 85 detected in the previous two weeks. The case rate in the Stanwood ZIP code is between 300-399, according to the Health District data from Dec. 27-Jan. 9. That’s down from more than 500 infections per 100,000 people in late November.

On Camano Island, there were 12 new cases of COVID during the past two weeks, down from 30 during the previous two week period, according to Island County Public Health data as of Jan. 21.

In Island County, the COVID infection rate rose again last week to 173 cases per 100,000 people. The rate has steadily increased each week since dipping to 89 infections per 100,000 in late December.

To date, there have been 792 confirmed COVID-19 cases of Stanwood residents and 256 cases of Camano Island residents, according to data from each county.

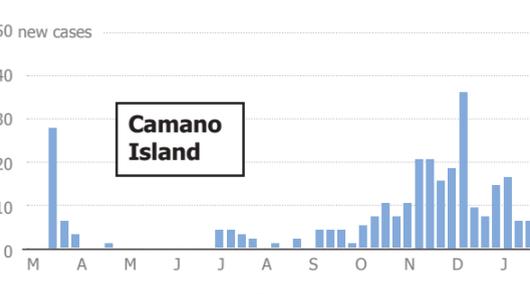
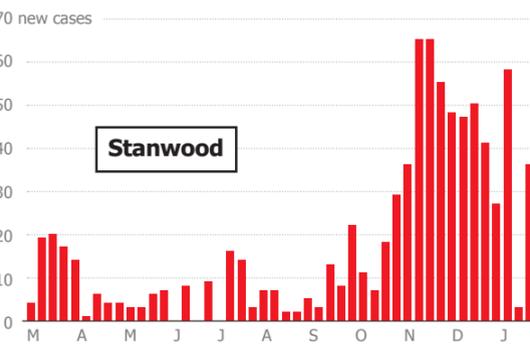
Still in Phase 1

The Puget Sound Region — which contains Stanwood — and the North Region — which contains Camano — will remain in

Snohomish County COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 people



New COVID-19 cases per week



SOURCES: Snohomish Health District; Island County Health

Phase 1, the state Health Department announced Friday. None of the eight regions in the state qualified to advance to Phase 2.

In the North Region, new COVID-19 cases increased by 89% over the 14 days prior to Jan. 9, and new hospitalizations increased by 50% in the 14 days prior to Jan. 16, according to the state’s Healthy Washington — Roadmap to Recovery data dashboard.

A spike in cases in Whatcom County played a role in keeping the four-county North Region from meeting two of the metrics needed to advance to Phase 2 in Gov. Jay Inslee’s Roadmap to Recovery plan.

The Puget Sound Region, which includes Snohomish, King and Pierce counties, is also failing the same two criteria. The region had a 23% increase in the rate of new COVID hospital admission rates per 100,000 in the most recent 14-day period, and it saw a 9% decrease in test positivity rate.

To meet the new cases and new hospitalizations metrics, regions need to have decreases of at least 10%.

During Phase 1, indoor dining is prohibited and indoor gatherings banned. Gyms are limited to appointment-only and to one customer per 500 square feet, and bowling alleys and other entertainment facilities are restricted to private parties of individual households of no more than six people.

New virus strain found in SnoCo

Two cases of a new COVID-19 variant have been found in two Snohomish County residents, the state Department of Health, the Snohomish Health District and the University of Washington Medicine Virology Lab confirmed Saturday.

“The Snohomish Health District had already instituted standard case investigation, isolation, and contact tracing prior to learning about these cases,” Spitters said. “Containment protocols are no different for B.1.1.7 variants than they are for all other cases of COVID-19. Follow-up investigation is underway

to learn more about these cases and the individuals who tested positive for this strain.”

The new B.1.1.7 variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants but there is no conclusive evidence that it causes more severe illness or increased risk of death, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As of Friday, there were 195 detections of this version in 22 states.

The U.K. variant appeared in September 2020 and has spread throughout London and southeast England. It is expected to be the dominant strain in the U.S. later this year.

“While finding the B.1.1.7 variant is concerning, we knew it was only a matter of time before we found evidence of it here in Washington,” state Secretary of Health Umair A. Shah said. “Now that this variant has been found, it underscores the absolute importance of doubling down on all the prevention measures to protect Washingtonians against COVID-19.”

More students expected back

Students who are attending in-person — K-3 hybrid, small groups and special education programs — will be joined by fourth- and fifth-grade students on Feb. 1 in a hybrid model.

The Snohomish Health District has recommended schools bring high-needs children and K-5 students into buildings under a hybrid model, citing schools that follow safety protocols for younger children have not been a source of major outbreaks.

According to the most recent state health metrics for schools, middle school students can return in a hybrid schedule when COVID-19 case rates are less than 350 infections per 100,000 residents and trending downward for two weeks, in addition to meeting other health metrics such as case positivity and hospitalization rates.

High school students could start returning in a hybrid setting when case rates drop below 200 infections per 100,000 people.

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