



May 2020 Cover Story

May 5, 2020 | 0 comments

COVER STORY – Deep Creek Times May, 2020

Garrett County Community Coming Together to Help its Own

Note: This Cover Story is adapted from a press release issued by the Garrett County Joint Information Center Team, as well as photos from and interviews with, local volunteers and others in the community.

Edited by Mike Tumbarello.

We have been relatively fortunate to-date as a community. While the disruptions to our lives and our way of life have been significant, and many institutions and individuals are impacted, we are blessed to have only five known COVID-19 cases to-date (as of 5/6/20), with no deaths. That is likely due in part to the swift action of state and local authorities, our mountain geography and also to those that have provided help to our community. This Cover Story is dedicated to those that are *volunteering* their time and expertise to help their neighbors and our community.

Before I get to our volunteers, I want to give a very big shout-out to all of those workers on the front lines every day, especially those in health care, and including everyone stocking, driving, delivering, cleaning, cooking, cashiering, policing, etc., etc., etc. We thank you all.

At present, the Garrett County Joint Information Center is directing all questions and local offers of donations related to COVID-19 to Garrett County Community Action. The non-profit has been appointed to manage all local contributions related to COVID-19 such as homemade face coverings, food assistance, volunteer sign-ups, and cash donations.

A volunteer portal has been designed by the Health Department to aid Community Action with critical digital infrastructure and work as the "top of a funnel." The portal collects contact information via short forms and shares the offer with a designated volunteer coordinator who will respond to volunteers individually.

"We launched a survey at the end of March to gauge community needs, especially related to food insecurity, unemployment, and other vulnerabilities as well as how people are helping others," said Shelley Argabrite, Chief Health Strategist for the Population Health, Innovation & Informatics Unit at the Health Department. "In less than 24 hours we received over 1,000 responses. From the survey data, we built the volunteer portal to address the main concerns. We listened to your feedback and are responding with a streamlined way to organize volunteers."

Interested persons can reach the volunteer portal at www.garretthealth.org/community and choose from a variety of

ways to assist the community. Visit the portal frequently to check for updates. For those who are not online, any offer of support can be initiated by contacting Courtni Helmick, Family Self-Sufficiency Manager at Community Action, by calling 301-334-9431 ext. 6143. Cash donations are encouraged by the county COVID-19 response team and will be graciously accepted.

"The outpouring of support from our community has been truly inspiring," said Helmick. "Times are certainly a little scary because there is so much unknown, but that has not stopped Garrett County! The portal is a wonderful tool to get the entire community involved and this pandemic has allowed community partners the opportunity to collaborate and create new ideas to best serve our community."

Community Action is working closely with fire and rescue locations around the county to be convenient drop off sites for food and cleaning supplies. Please check the Portal for contact information, a list of requested food donations, and future donation specifics. Food giveaways are being coordinated by Community Action.

"We deeply appreciate all those who are able and willing to give during this time to those who are struggling to feed their families," Argabrite said. "Agencies are working together to ensure no one goes hungry. A second COVID-19 survey is available here at bit.ly/surveynumbertwo. Your input drives change and helps us understand the needs of this community. Please consider taking this important survey."

"The portal has been a wonderful tool to get the entire community involved. We have already received responses from people wanting to donate food and masks, transport essentials to those who need

them the most, and help in any way they can. Normally, in a crisis people will shut down, but that is not the case for Garrett County. We have come closer together and more willing than ever to help those who are affected most by COVID-19. It has truly been humbling to see so many people from within and outside our community donate needed resources and or their time to fulfill the needs within Garrett County," stated Helmick.

From what we have heard here at Deep Creek Times, the portal has indeed been a huge success to-date, with very significant amounts of food procured and thousands of dollars raised for those in need. With the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic and our economic recovery, I am sure they could still use donations so please check out the site link listed above or call Courtni.

Finally, here's a few "action photos" below of our local volunteers for you. Please feel free to send in your own photos and we will run them in an upcoming Daily Notes. Thanks for reading and thanks for caring and Sarah and I wish all of our readers a safe and healthy future.

Photos:



Donated Food at Southern Rescue Squad



Making Masks Made by Oakland Civic Club - Darla and Bill Soles



Southern Rescue Volunteer Trista Aronhalt



Linda Bradley of Oakland Civic Club Making Masks

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