

VERO BEACH 32963

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allegedly pulls pistol. P8**

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County's first death from coronavirus a 'good, sweet lady'

BY RAY MCNULTY
Staff Writer

Adele Jeantinor was unable to celebrate her 89th birthday. Instead, she was fighting for her life at Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital, where she had tested positive for the coronavirus and was diagnosed with pneumonia.

Two days later, she was dead.

Jeantinor's April 8 death is believed to have been the first connected to COVID-19 in Indian River County – something her family didn't know until this past Friday night, when her 36-year-old granddaughter, Idalia Similien, received a phone call from **Vero Beach 32963**.

"The doctor called on April 3 and told me she had tested positive for COVID, but after she passed, nobody told us

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Is Elite Airways hoping to resume Vero flights?

BY RAY MCNULTY
Staff Writer

As of Monday morning, Elite Airways' ticketing website was still accepting bookings for flights into and out of Vero Beach from May through the end of the year, despite the City Council's decision earlier this month to terminate

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Did HarborChase conceal COVID-19 infections?



Ambulances (top) responding to COVID-19 call to HarborChase. Paramedics (bottom) prepare to transport patient to Cleveland Clinic hospital.

PHOTOS BY KAILA JONES

BY MICHELLE GENZ
Staff Writer

The novel coronavirus had not even come to Vero Beach when those with relatives in long-term care facilities began bracing for the worst.

"Oh, my gosh, I had sleepless nights even back in February. I started thinking, oh, God, I just can't handle this," said one island resident with a loved one in HarborChase, an assisted living facility with a memory

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Three deaths at HarborChase up county total to 4

BY LISA ZAHNER
Staff Writer

Indian River County had literally been beating the odds with only 85 cases of the coronavirus among our 140,000 residents plus visitors – a much lower rate of infection than in the country as a whole – but this proved no time to celebrate as the past week took a tragic turn with three more deaths confirmed inside a local nursing home.

At first, Indian River County's cases were largely travel-related but reports as of Monday night show that we have only had one travel-related case in more than two weeks, meaning the virus has definitely spread in our community in general, making it even more important for seniors and those with

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2 local banks capture \$79 million to provide paychecks to workers here



CenterState Bank
Executive VP
Chris Bieber.

BY STEVEN M. THOMAS
Staff Writer

CenterState Bank Executive VP Chris Bieber was in the middle of an interview with **Vero Beach 32963** when the news came through.

Bieber saw a message pop up on one of his computer

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Marine Bank
president and
CEO Bill Penney.

PHOTOS BY BRENDA AHEARN

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**VNA patio concerts
in tune with needs
of the elderly. P17**

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HarborChase

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DeSantis may still face a legal battle from the media for continued secrecy: He has refused to spell out how many cases and deaths are in each facility, a critical piece for concerned families, to say nothing of residents at risk.

What DeSantis did say in his brief Saturday press conference was that he wanted specifically to avoid a scenario in which a family or resident wasn't told about COVID-19 being in their facility – which is exactly what happened to the Vero woman and her loved one.

When the woman called HarborChase around April 10, to confirm what she'd heard from her loved one's caregiver, the executive director, Gloria Tausch, confirmed the fact reluctantly, the woman said.

Tausch excused the lack of disclosure by claiming the cases were in the memory care unit, and not in the assisted living section, the woman recalled.

"That's still in the facility," she countered.

She pressed Tausch for the number of cases – she'd already been told the number by the outside health care provider – but Tausch at first mentioned only one, a resident.

When the woman asked about staff members, Tausch admitted, "Well, there've been a couple of those."

At that point, the woman's distrust came to the fore. "I asked if those were the real numbers. She was very definitely uncomfortable with a direct question and giving me a straight answer."

The robo-call voicemail message Dodson mentioned was a familiar form of communication from HarborChase. The woman said she got such calls two or three times a week, addressing various matters. But she never got one that announced COVID-19 was at HarborChase, she said.

"I'd get this nice little upbeat blast, a recorded phone message, that comes to me from Gloria in a very positive voice, like, 'Hey! We're doing just great here. Everybody's happy. We're doing everything we can to keep them safe and active,'" the island woman said.

"At Easter, it was, 'We're going to have people dressing as Easter bunnies hopping down the halls handing out candy.' All this stuff, but there's not the first mention of COVID-19."

Easter was April 8, a day after HarborChase got its first positive COVID-19.

By late last week, when the woman spoke again with Tausch about her loved one, the number of HarborChase cases reported to the state had doubled to six. Yet Tausch said nothing about the spread.

"There is no shame in this," said the woman. "This is a horrible thing that we're all exposed to, and there is no way that any one of us can be 100 percent sure, even with the multitude of precautions we take, that we're not going to get it."

"So, it's not a commentary on them that it crept into their facility. But certainly, it is incumbent upon them to disclose that we have had a problem and come right out with it the day they know about it." ■

JOHN'S ISLAND SERVICE LEAGUE ISSUES \$200,000 CHALLENGE GRANT TO RAISE MONEY FOR COVID-19 FUND

BY MARY SCHENKEL
Staff Writer

The John's Island Community Service League has issued a \$200,000 Challenge Grant to funding organizations to help increase the United Way of Indian River County's COVID-19 Community Response Fund. Donations to the fund, which was established on March 17, will be matched on a one-to-one basis through June 15.

"We believe the United Way's COVID-19 Community Response Fund is the best way to quickly help those who will be most affected in our community, and we believe this matching challenge will help bring in additional funds," said Hope Woodhouse, JICSL board

president. "We thought that a challenge grant to the other umbrella groups would be a good way to get everybody putting money into the COVID Fund."

The Challenge Grant encourages donations from members of the Funders Forum, which includes umbrella groups such as Quail Valley Charities, Grand Harbor Community Outreach, the Indian River Club's Head, Heart and Hands, Impact 100 and the Indian River Community Foundation, as well as from such benevolent organizations as Rotary and Exchange Clubs, the Junior League and other community groups.

"Right now, we can turn the Service League's \$200,000 into \$400,000 if we generate some buzz in the fund-

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NEWS

John's Island Service League

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ing community," said Meredith Egan, United Way COO.

The COVID-19 Community Response Fund has already raised \$668,000, but the needs are great and the crisis ongoing.

"At our league board meeting, we initially were just going to put more money into the fund," said Woodhouse. "But then somebody said, 'Shouldn't we use this as an opportunity to get all the communities that have umbrella funds involved?' So that was the reason it was done as a matching grant. Some of these organizations have already given money; now we're just trying to get that next amount."

Woodhouse added that the Service League has always had a Contingency Fund, precisely for situations like this.

"We've always thought that the Contingency Fund would be used in the event of a hurricane. This is essentially the equivalent of a hurricane for Vero," said Woodhouse.

A United Way Unmet Needs Committee meets weekly to prioritize COVID-19 Fund distribution allocations. As of April 17, the committee had distributed \$408,100 to local agencies, primarily focused on urgent needs.

Distributions are made to United Way Partner agencies, which have experience working with residents in need, to pay for food, rent and utilities. Agencies have included the Treasure Coast Food Bank, United Against Poverty, Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council, and the Senior Resource Association.

Rather than giving money to individual nonprofits, Woodhouse said, "I think it makes it much more efficient and with better oversight to have one party, [the United Way], following up with all of the different agencies."

"From the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Report, we know that 51 percent of our community was already struggling to pay bills prior to this crisis. With layoffs and people's hours being cut short, that number has skyrocketed," said Egan.

The most recent ALICE report, released on Feb. 6, 2019, indicated that between 2010 and 2016, the number of low-income workers struggling paycheck-to-paycheck grew by 13 percent.

"They really can't get through this economic turmoil without help. Missing one day of work, much less weeks work – rent, utilities and food become their highest priorities," said Egan.

The crisis has been made even more difficult for low-income workers, who generally have no savings to

draw from, as unemployment offices throughout the state are now closed, said Egan.

"That's one of the challenges for people trying to file unemployment," said Egan. "If you're already under-resourced and you don't have a computer at home or you don't have a printer to print out the paper application, and you can't go to the library, it creates this hamster wheel of issues and barriers."

The United Way has pledged an additional \$50,000 from its emergency funds and is underwriting all associated costs of the COVID-19 Community Response Fund so that 100 percent of donations will directly to groups helping people in need.

For more information about the fund and distributions already made, visit www.unitedwayirc.org/ResponseFund. ■

Woman, 82, seeking heart medication pulls pistol in Walgreens drive-through

BY LISA ZAHNER
Staff Writer

A drive to a Walgreens pharmacy to pick up needed heart medication turned into a trip to jail for 82-year-old Olympia Ligor of South Vero.

Witnesses say Ligor tried to cut in the drive-through pharmacy line and when she wasn't allowed to go forward, a verbal argument broke out and, police say, Ligor pulled out a .22 caliber revolver. She was initially charged with misdemeanor improper exhibition of a firearm.

Ligor, a retired beachside Realtor who goes by her middle name Judith, said she only had one thing on her mind that day, April 2 – the fact that she was running very low on critical medications for her heart condition. "I just needed to get my pills," she told **Vero Beach 32963**.

"I'm a lot more worried about the coronavirus than I am this," Ligor said of the incident, not seeming to truly understand the gravity of what she's accused of doing.

The alleged victim, a Hutchinson

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Tracy Mincer, Ph.D., assistant professor of biology/biogeochemistry at FAU's Harbor Branch and Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College

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