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Press Release**

Hillsboro, TX – The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has provided updated and revised information on the cases of COVID-19 in Hill County. Two new cases have been reported and an older case which had been incorrectly assigned to a different county has been moved to the Hill County count bringing the total number of cases to 14. The two new patients are both males from Hillsboro. These were the cases reported yesterday by the Local Health Authority, so DSHS numbers are currently synced with local numbers. The other case that has now been correctly recorded to Hill County is believed to be a female from the Hubbard area who has already recovered from the virus. Statewide numbers report 21,944 cases in Texas with 1,649 patients hospitalized, 561 fatalities and an estimated 8,025 individuals recovered.

“This situation is still very fluid and changing on a daily basis,” said Hill County Judge Justin Lewis. “As more time passes, DSHS is able to refine their process and provide us more information. Sometimes it’s hard to know exactly how many cases are out there, but what we do know is that new cases are still occurring, and we must maintain our diligence in staying home and staying apart whenever possible to keep the spreading to a minimum. We cannot allow our healthcare system to be overwhelmed” continued Lewis.

While case numbers continue to increase, the growth is occurring at a rate that Texas Governor Greg Abbott believes is manageable to allow non-essential retail businesses to reopen under a Retail To Go model beginning on April 24th. A guide provided by the Dayton, Tx Community Development Corporation offers some insight into what exactly Retail To Go means. It is defined as allowing the delivery of products purchased to customers’ cars, homes or other locations if social distancing guidelines are followed. Purchases can also be mailed, but customers may not enter the retail facility. This limited allowance for retail purchases does not allow any service-related businesses such as gyms, hair and nail salons, tattoo and piercing parlors, or massage therapy and spas to reopen.

“We are encouraged by this small glimmer of hope for our local businesses,” said Lewis “but for this to work, social distancing, sanitation and safety practices must be strictly adhered to by everyone. If not, it will slow the process and limit our ability to open other businesses. Everyone, business owners and customers, must be responsible about how they conduct their business to ensure the continued operation of our local businesses.”

In support of local businesses and to provide information on which businesses are open and how they are operating, the Hillsboro, Hubbard, Itasca and Lake Whitney Chambers of Commerce and the Hillsboro Main Street Program have partnered to launch the Raising Hill Campaign. This is an awareness and marketing campaign reminding residents of the importance of shopping, dining, and working with local businesses, especially in these unprecedented times. To find more information on the program, visit www.raisinghilltx.com.

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“The Raising Hill campaign is an exciting effort being put forth by our county Chambers to help us all utilize our local businesses as best we can,” said Lewis. “The businesses have been impressive in how quickly they have pivoted and adjusted their business services, and the Chambers are doing the same thing to support them. As consumers, we must change our practices, too, and by working together, we will all get through this,” said Lewis.

As limited activities are restarting, it is important to note the Governor’s stay-home except for essential activities order is still in place. Residents should continue to take all precautions available to protect their households. More guidelines on the next phases of reopening are expected to come from Governor Abbott’s office on April 27th.

For the best information available on the spread of the Coronavirus across Texas, DSHS has a dashboard website available at <https://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/>. People interested in monitoring updates from Hill County on the situation will find the most current information on the Hill County Emergency Management Facebook Page. The County will also provide regular updates to *KHBR 1560 AM Radio* and the *Hillsboro Reporter*.

In addition, the County has an emergency notification system. If you would like to receive phone call, text or email updates as warranted, you can register with the Hill County Emergency Notification System. Visit the Office of Emergency Management website at www.hilloem.com, scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on emergency alerts. Follow the prompts to set up your account.