

May 8, 2020

For Immediate Release

In response to the positive cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) among employees of Rantoul Foods, OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center has committed its resources to provide COVID-19 testing for all Rantoul Foods employees.

Hundreds of tests are being conducted Friday May 8 and Saturday May 9. The drive-thru testing is conducted by OSF HealthCare Mission Partners (employees) outfitted in proper personal protective equipment (PPE). Spanish speaking staff members are on site to assist this special at-need, at risk population.

“This situation at hand is very time sensitive and important for the community health of our area. Many workers at this vital industry have tested positive for COVID-19 and, therefore, run the risk of spreading it to their loved ones and others in the community,” said Dr. Jared Rogers, President, OSF HealthCare Heart of Mary Medical Center. “It is essential that we are able to assist in getting a handle on who is affected and how best to provide them care as well as help to limit the transmission of this infection to others. It is our pleasure as OSF HealthCare to step in to provide this testing to these important members of our greater community.”

Rantoul Foods has been following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) directives and proactively screening employees for COVID-19 symptoms. Rantoul Foods required workers who exhibited symptoms to stay home until they were symptom-free for a minimum of three days since February when concerns about COVID-19 began to surface around the country. While many other food processing facilities experienced massive outbreaks many weeks ago, Rantoul Foods’ vigilance and transparency has kept this situation from being much worse much sooner.

Rantoul Foods has cooperated fully with all health recommendations from the C-U Public Health District and Jerry Jacobsen, Director of HR, Safety, and Business Administration, has provided a list of all employees to ensure that everyone is tested. The facility has voluntarily shut down part of its operations while testing and additional sanitation procedures are taking place. Testing for employees began earlier this week, but this on-site testing shows the commitment of everyone in the community to determine the extent of the infected population and to take appropriate steps to prevent further spread of infection.

This massive effort has been coordinated by Dr. David Fletcher, MD, MPH, the Medical Director of SafeWorks Illinois Occupational Health Services. The partnership between Rantoul Foods and SafeWorks Illinois is longstanding as Rantoul Foods has a continuing commitment to the health and safety of their employees.

Dr. Fletcher, who is board-certified in Public Health, played a crucial role in communicating with area leaders, legislators, including Senator Chapin Rose, and OSF HealthCare about the need for this testing and facilitating and coordinating the efforts of multiple different stake holders. His team is on-site to

provide key communication between OSF, the employees, and Rantoul Foods. Without his exhaustive work to make this happen so quickly, testing may not have occurred so quickly or on-site at all.

This situation, while unfortunate, shows how the community, businesses, and health care providers can and should come together to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. It is an example of swift and decisive action creating an opportunity to make things better.

For patients who need additional support, OSF HealthCare can also offer access to its Pandemic Health Worker Program (PHWP). Through this program OSF Pandemic Health Workers serve as a connection between medical care providers and individuals who are suspected or have been confirmed to have COVID-19 and are in isolation.

PHWs deliver care kits to these individuals which can include a tablet, pre-loaded with health applications (for individuals who don't have a home computer or tablet), health education materials, a thermometer, hand sanitizer and wipes. After delivery, PHWs check in with clients daily, usually for a two week time period.

For more information on COVID-19, including frequently asked questions, please visit the OSF HealthCare COVID-19 digital health hub: www.osfhealthcare.org/covid19/. If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, you can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the OSF website, or by calling the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).

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