Media Information:

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COVID-19 and Influenza in Yellowstone County

Billings, MT – RiverStone Health, Yellowstone County's public health department, reports the death of another Yellowstone County resident from COVID-19 related illness.

On Thursday, December 17, a woman in her 60s died in a Billings hospital.

"My heart goes out to the family and friends of the latest victim of COVID-19 disease in our community," said John Felton, Yellowstone County public health officer and RiverStone Health CEO.

In the first 17 days of December, 13 Yellowstone County residents have died of COVID-19 related illness.

COVID-19 has been compared with influenza because both viruses are contagious and can cause serious, even fatal, respiratory disease. In the past three years, a total of 16 Yellowstone County people have died of influenza. In the past five years, influenza killed 23 Yellowstone County residents – an average of five people per year. So far this year, 147 Yellowstone County residents have died of COVID-19.

"The flu is a serious illness, but COVID-19 is much more deadly," Felton said. "While awaiting arrival of COVID-19 vaccine, we must practice the best COVID-19 prevention measures."

- Wear a mask in public and whenever you are with a person who doesn't live with you.
- Keep your distance of at least 6 feet from others who don't live with you.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Stay home if you are ill.

To date, 13,062 Yellowstone County residents have been infected with COVID-19.

More information on the pandemic is online at covid.riverstonehealth.org.

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