Media Information:

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COVID-19 claims 300 Yellowstone County lives

Billings, MT – Three more Yellowstone County residents have died of COVID-19, bringing the county's pandemic toll to 300 lives lost since April 2020, RiverStone Health reported Tuesday. Statewide, at least 1,818 Montanans have died of COVID-19 related illness.

The most recent Yellowstone County pandemic victims are:

- A woman in her 20s who died on Saturday, Sept. 4, at a Billings hospital. She was unvaccinated and didn't have underlying health conditions. This woman is the youngest Yellowstone County resident to die of COVID-19 illness.
- A woman in her 70s who died Friday at a Billings hospital. She was unvaccinated and had underlying health conditions.
- A woman in her 80s who died on Aug. 29 at a Yellowstone County elder care facility. She was vaccinated and had underlying health conditions. Her death was reported through a death certificate review by the Yellowstone County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

"Yellowstone County marks a tragic milestone with the COVID-19 deaths of 300 of our neighbors over the past 17 months," said John Felton, Yellowstone County health officer and RiverStone Health CEO and president. "As we offer sympathy to grieving families, let us reflect on the magnitude of the continuing COVID-19 toll. During the May Memorial Day holiday, volunteers created the Pandemic Memorial Pathway through Swords Park to illustrate the number of Montana's pandemic deaths with trail markers spaced 6 feet apart. If that Rims trail were marked again today, it would be nearly a quarter mile longer. Over the summer, Montana has lost more than 200 people to COVID-19 illness, including 30 Yellowstone County residents."

"The vast majority of people who died were not vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccination is the most effective protection we have against COVID-19 illness and death. The COVID-19 vaccines are widely available, very effective and safe, but no vaccine is 100% effective," Felton said. "Being fully vaccinated greatly reduces the risk of serious illness or spreading the virus to others. That's why it is so important for everyone who is age 12 and older to get vaccinated."

If you haven't yet been vaccinated, please talk to your healthcare provider today for advice on vaccination.

The Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines have been given to millions of Americans and have been proven safe and highly effective in preventing serious COVID-19 illness. COVID-19 vaccines are available at Billings pharmacies, clinics and hospitals.

RiverStone Health is offering free first and second doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to everyone age 12 and older. The two-dose Moderna vaccine is available to people age 18 and older as is the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine. RiverStone Health has scheduled these free, walk-in clinics:

- **Saturday, Sept. 11, noon-4 p.m.,** North Park, 406 Pride Festival. Clinic will continue till 6 p.m. if demand for vaccines continues.
- **Sept. 23, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.,** RiverStone Health, 123 S. 27th St., in the four-story building.

Individuals may also make appointments for COVID-19 vaccination with the RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic. Call **247-3382**.

Third doses for immune-compromised people are given *only* at the walk-in clinics hosted by RiverStone Health, not by appointment through the RiverStone Health Immunization Clinic. Immune-compromised people may also contact their primary care provider about getting a third COVID-19 vaccination.

More vaccination information is posted at covid.riverstonehealth.org.

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