

On Thursday evening, the State of Georgia announced McDuffie County has its first confirmed case of COVID-19.

Let's talk now about what we know about our first case:

- 1) The person involved was tested at a clinic in Grovetown.
- 2) The person has been in voluntary quarantine since taking the test.

First and foremost, please don't take this announcement as a reason for panic or rash behavior. It is a reason to be more vigilant as we participate in social distancing and other precautions. We have to be more careful as we conduct our daily routines. This temporary "new normal" requires us to keep a distance of at least six feet between individuals. It requires our elderly residents and those with underlying health issue to be even more conscientious in their efforts to self-quarantine. It requires us to be better neighbors: Ask those who do have a higher risk of serious health issues how you can help or if you can pick up items at the store.

From a business community perspective, the case confirmation will also mean some changes. Most of our local businesses are being very cooperative in trying to implement Governor Kemp's executive orders regarding distance between customers. For those that may be lax in enforcing these guidelines, please allow this to serve as our notice: We will be increasing efforts to ensure that the Governor's orders are being followed. Please do your best to follow these orders as the alternative is closing the doors and keeping customers out altogether. That's certainly not the option any of us want to pursue.

In addition, we have received multiple reports of children gathering in large groups at local parks, which goes against the Governor's guidelines. We have asked our law enforcement agencies to begin patrolling our parks and issuing citations to those that refuse to follow the Governor's orders. This action is not being

taken to punish young people, but to further protect the most vulnerable residents in our community from COVID-19. While the symptoms have shown to be mild in young people, they can take the virus home and not know it. This puts their family members and other in the community at risk. Should these gatherings continue, we may be forced to close the parks.

Thank you for your time and attention today. We truly want you and your families to be able to continue with your lives as normally as possible. We know that striking a balance between and normal life and protecting yourselves from COVID-19 is difficult. However, McDuffie County's strength has always been its community spirit. We will make it out on the other side stronger.

Be careful. Be safe. Be well.