

# Jerrod Citizen

*"Where cotton is king"*

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## The Pandemic Has Come

"The Pandemic has come to Holden County. There's no two ways about it," Judge Jimmy Akers told the *Citizen* last week. "We're going to do all we can to make our community safe and hope we can lessen the impact of this terrible plague," he continued, "but it's not going to be easy."

Dr. Randal Chin, medical director of Holman Memorial Hospital, agreed. "Like any illness spread by the exchange of bodily fluids—especially coughing or sneezing—those most at risk are the elderly, those with weakened immune systems and the morbidly obese."

Chin said "Holman County citizens should be prepared to isolate themselves in their homes until the Corona Virus is brought under control."

What kind of controls? "You can be sure the Center for Disease Control is on top of this. I hope we can expect a vaccine very soon, but it's too early to tell."

"If you must leave your home to work, keep your distance—at least six feet—from everyone. I know this sounds strange," Chin said, "but we've got to take every precaution. That includes wearing masks that cover your mouth and nose, avoid physical contact with strangers. This includes, and I can't emphasize it enough, no hand-shaking," Chin added.

The doctor emphasized that everyone should pay close attention to all the media advisories and visit the CDC website

as often as possible to get the latest information on the progression of the virus and possible treatments.

The CDC website is <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health>

### Hospital operations curtailed

What about the schools and the hospital? Chin said he couldn't speak for the school system, but he noted that the hospital is under a virtual lockdown. Only immediate relatives will be allowed to visit a person in isolation; one at a time. He emphasized that the hospital will still offer trauma services, but there will be no elective surgeries. The restriction will probably include ob-gyn services for women in labor.

### School Superintendent close-mouthed

School Superintendent Rocky Brasfield didn't return phone calls. Several messages were left concerning the impact of the Corona Virus on JISD. As of March 16, the district's website showed that classes would be held as usual. This despite a notice from the Texas Department of Education that all public schools should change their classrooms to computer-based schedules.

### TDH warns school systems

A spokesman for the Texas Department of Health said the agency would take "appropriate measures" for school districts not observing the mandate, but was not specific about the nature of those "measures."

## Pandemic Restrictions

"The best advice I have about being around groups of people during this virus is don't," Sheriff Freddie Espinoza told the *Citizen* during a visit Monday. He said he had been getting conflicting information for several different government agencies over the last week. Here's his best understanding of the restrictions issued by the Governor's office:

- **Religious gatherings**—It's pretty clear that churches should avoid any gatherings where more than ten are present indoors and at burials.
- **Schools**—At-home computer participation will be required for all grades, K-12.
- **Public gatherings**—No athletic events. This means no games, no spectators. Those are suspended indefinitely.
- **Public dining**—Restaurants and cafes may continue to prepare food but it must be carried away from the premises.
- **Essential services**—More questions than answers. Is a grocery store a essential service? What about a pharmacy? A tire repair shop?

Who is responsible for enforcing these rules? "I'd guess it's the Holman County Sheriff's office," Espinoza said. "But I'm waiting for someone to tell me exactly what we're supposed to do if we get a call about a backyard birthday party with twenty people," he said. "Not sure I'd know how to handle that. I'm looking forward to some guidance on that kind of situation."

It may take some time before all state and Federal regulatory agencies are singing from the same hymnal. In Texas, at least three agencies—Texas Health Department, Texas Attorney General's Office, and the Department of Public Safety—have conflicting messages. All three, plus others, have contacted the *Citizen* over the past week claiming to be the absolute authority on the subject. They've all contacted the paper subsequently with the message we should "be patient while the various agencies reach agreement."

## First Virus Victim

Abigail "Abby" Farmer, 98, was pronounced dead at Jerrod Memorial Hospital Friday night, March 12. She had been a resident of the hospital's Golden Age Convalescent Center for three years. After consulting with hospital staff, County Judge Jimmy Akers, acting as coroner, said she had succumbed to the Corona Virus. She was the first Holman County resident to die from the disease. She is survived by three sons, two daughters, twenty grandchildren and numerous great grandchildren.

Abby Farmer was the first Jerrod birth listed in the *Citizen*. Prior to the building of Memorial, women had to travel over rough roads and cow trails to the Breckenridge hospital. She was born exactly ninety-eight years before her death last week.



Abigail "Abby" Farmer



MONDAY MORNING, I SAW ALMOST NO ONE on courthouse square. . . KATIE SHERMAN checking her mail after pulling an all-nighter at Jerrod Memorial . . . FRANK MERCER gassing his company truck at the Zipln . . . FR. WAYMON COSTLEY pantomiming his golf swing for DAN BAKER . . . District Court Bailiff CHUCK WIEGER talking steam locomotives with TOM HIGLEY on the steps of the City Café . . . retired English teacher DAVE BOWSER throwing a worn out tennis ball to his fifteen-year old mutt . . . FR JABULANI bending down to talk to a parishioner's tiny daughter . . . JOHN EBLING beginning the morning rounds in his plumbing truck.