

# LOCAL

## Statewide death toll tops 2,000

**Number includes non-residents; PBC adds six deaths overnight.**

**By Joe Capozzi**  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Coronavirus cases in Palm Beach County and Florida continued to climb Saturday, even as the county prepares to open beaches and ease more restrictions on restaurants, stores and gyms on Monday.

The county added six deaths and 49 cases overnight, raising the totals to 286 and

4,440, respectively, the latest state Department of Health records show.

The county's cases increased 17 percent over the past week while the statewide totals hit 44,811, up 12 percent over the week.

The statewide death toll surpassed the grim 2,000 milestone overnight with 50 deaths pushing the total Saturday to 2,040 — 1,964 residents and 76 visitors.

More than 40 percent of the statewide deaths are associated with nursing homes and long-term care facilities, where the respiratory

virus has killed 844 people as of Friday, including 10 staff members.

Although 221 of those deaths are at facilities in Miami-Dade County, Palm Beach County had the third-highest nursing home death toll at 96, one behind Broward.

There were 21 new deaths at Palm Beach County nursing homes and assisted-living facilities in the past week, including two more at Arbor Oaks at Greenacres, which has the most fatalities in the county with nine.

**See COVID-19, B6**



**Palm Beach County will reopen beaches on Monday and ease restrictions on restaurants, stores and gyms.** [GREG LOVETT/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

## Mizner Park expands dining-area capacity



**Customers dine outside at Kapow Noodle Bar in Mizner Park on Friday in Boca Raton.** [PHOTOS BY GREG LOVETT/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

**Venue adds outdoor seating as another Boca staple, Town Center, reopens to scant traffic**

**By Mike Diamond**  
Special to the Post

One of Boca Raton's biggest venues, Mizner Park, is adding more outdoor restaurant seating as the state and city loosens restrictions on the businesses.

At Mizner Park, the city has agreed to allow restaurants along Plaza Real to add tables along half of the north and southbound streets. The other half will stay open for emergency traffic.

"This will make it possible for us to stay in business," said Vaughan Dugan of Kapow Noodle Bar. Dugan expects to be able to add 10 tables. At 25% capacity, Dugan said he can only offer patrons three four-top tables.

"You cannot stay in business that way," he noted. "Most folks prefer to eat outside anyway."



**Paul Prince, left, and Bobby DeFriest Jr. of Events on the Loose set up hedges, tables and chairs Friday to add more outdoor restaurant seating at Kapow Noodle Bar in Mizner Park.**

Gov. Ron DeSantis said Friday that the state's restaurants could expand their occupancy to 50 percent capacity as of Monday, having been restricted to 25 percent since May 4.

Mizner Park General Manager Dana Romanelli said opening up Plaza Real will provide restaurant patrons

with safely distanced dining beyond what is permitted inside.

"We have been working diligently with the city of Boca Raton, our staff and our tenants to provide the safest and most comfortable experience for all," she said.

**See REOPEN, B6**

## Valedictorians not chosen by class rank alone

**Other students may have higher ranks, based on credits taken in middle school**

**By Andrew Marra**  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

The valedictorians of Palm Beach County's public high schools are selected because they finished their high school years as the top-achieving students in their graduating class.

But being named valedictorian doesn't always mean having the top class rank. It's not unusual for a school to name one student as valedictorian while a classmate is ranked No. 1 in the class.

"It happens quite a bit," said Jason Smith, a former school counselor who now serves as the District's manager of information-technology solutions.

"Every school year there are a few schools that have discrepancies between the two."

The difference can cause occasional confusion. But District officials say they calculate the two differently for an important reason: to account for potential inequities during students' middle school years.

Class ranks are determined by tallying up students' grades in every class they ever took for high school credit. This includes, naturally, all of the classes they took in high school.

And for many students, it also includes high school-level classes taken in middle school. (A common example is high-school level Spanish or French classes offered in eighth grade.)

**See RANK, B6**

## Equestrian competition set to restart in Wellington

**June 1 is target date, and new coronavirus precautions will be in place**

**By Kristina Webb**  
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WELLINGTON — Equestrian competition is poised to restart in Wellington as the industry adapts to new conditions because of the novel coronavirus.

June 1 marks the target date for horses to head back to the ring at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center, the major equestrian complex on Pierson Road that hosts the Winter Equestrian

Festival each year.

Michael Stone, president of Equestrian Sport Productions, which produces the Winter Equestrian Festival and operates competitions year-round at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center, recently asked Wellington for its support in making sure everything is set for horses and their riders to begin competing.

Wellington's Village Council sent a letter last week to Gov. Ron DeSantis supporting the restarting of equestrian competitions.

**See FESTIVAL, B6**

## There's a secondary outbreak ... of anti-vax disinformation



**Frank Cerabino**

The current coronavirus outbreak is fueling the dangerous and nutty anti-vaccination crowd.

Even before a vaccination has been developed to inoculate people against COVID-19, millions of Americans are being told not to get it.

They're being fed a cockamamie story that the coronavirus has been intentionally manipulated by elements of the U.S. government in order to dispense money-making vaccinations that will only increase your odds of being sick with the virus.

This is one of the central points in a viral video called "Plandemic," a 26-minute online movie starring a discredited American scientist who makes numerous provocative, unsubstantiated claims.

"The game is to prevent the therapies till everyone

is infected, and push the vaccines knowing that the flu vaccines increase the odds by 36% of getting COVID-19," virologist Judy Mikovits says in the video.

That's one of the many debunked claims made by Mikovits, who wildly blames Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, for being in the middle of an elaborate, unexplained plot to profit from harmful vaccinations.

Mikovits has been on a vindictive mission for nearly

a decade, since her published study on a mouse retrovirus was retracted by Science magazine.

Her discredited research led to her firing, and eventual criminal charges against her for stealing computer data, notebooks and other property from the lab where she worked.

She claimed the stolen notebooks found in her home were planted by Fauci and others to frame her. The charges against her were eventually dropped.

You don't learn this backstory if you watch

"Plandemic." Instead, you get Mikovits presented as an unimpeachable and heroic scientist advising you that the worst thing you can do about COVID-19 is to get vaccinated when a vaccine is developed.

The video has been removed from social media platforms

The video has been so widely debunked and deemed so dangerously misleading that Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media platforms decided to remove it from their platforms.

**See CERABINO, B3**

# COVID-19

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The recent attention on the growing number of deaths in nursing homes nationwide and in Florida may be why Vice President Mike Pence plans to visit an Orlando nursing home on Wednesday.

Pence will deliver personal protective equipment as part of a nationwide initiative to deliver PPE to more than 15,000 nursing homes. He'll also meet with Gov. Ron DeSantis to review Florida's reopening.

DeSantis, who has led the charge in lifting lockdown restrictions on businesses, has insisted the pace of the spread of the disease has slowed.

While promising additional efforts would be made to protect residents of nursing homes, which will remain off-limits to visitors, he attributed spikes in the number of overall cases in recent days to outbreaks at state prisons.

On Saturday, 1,064 inmates and 235 corrections officers had been diagnosed with the disease.

At South Bay Correctional Facility in western Palm Beach County, 66 prisoners and a state-high 50 staff members have tested positive for COVID-19.

The worst-hit prison in Florida is southwest

of Miami at Homestead Correctional Institution, where 231 inmates and 19 staff are infected.

DeSantis has said he has focused on what he claimed was a drop in recent weeks in the percentage of positive results among those being tested.

When the pandemic was at its peak in early April, as many as 15 percent of those tested were infected. Last weekend, that number dropped to less than 5 percent.

But it has been up over the past several days and on Friday, it reached 9.6 percent, DOH reported.

When the rate drops, it indicates fewer people have the disease in the general population so there is less likelihood they will spread it to others if allowed to leave their homes to shop, work out or grab a bite to eat.

Under new rules that start Monday, restaurateurs, retailers and gym owners can fill their establishments to 50 percent capacity.

That is double the amount restaurants and stores in Palm Beach County were permitted to serve when they — along with hair and nail salons and barber shops — were allowed to reopen last week.

"It allows us to put more people back to work, so we're very thrilled about that," said Julien Gremaud, chef/owner of Avocado Grill restaurant, which has locations in downtown West Palm Beach and Palm Beach Gardens.

The new 50 percent capacity rate allows him to seat 37 customers and open three more tables in the dining room at the original West Palm location.

At many gyms, customers will have to undergo temperature checks and weights will be vigorously disinfected after each use.

"I'm looking forward to seeing our people come back," said Chad Bonta, owner of Hard Exercise Works in Lake Worth, which has been reconfigured to comply with social distancing. "It is a lot better than being shut down," he said.

Museums and libraries also can reopen under the governor's order but will have to follow local regulations. Palm Beach County is following the governor's lead on museums but hasn't announced a position on whether the county library system will reopen.

Beaches across Palm Beach County, closed since March 20, will be allowed to open Monday with restrictions.

Lifeguards will be asked to make sure beachgoers follow limits set by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — no more than 10 people per group, and groups must remain at least six feet apart from one another.

Staff writers Liz Balmaseda and Mike Diamond contributed to this story. [jcapozzi@pbpost.com](mailto:jcapozzi@pbpost.com)

# FESTIVAL

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The horses and the people who care for them — trainers, grooms, riders and farm managers — have been in Wellington throughout the pandemic and are complying with state and local orders, the council's letter said.

"A limited reopening of competition will put people back to work, and do so in a safe and manageable way," the council wrote. "The requested reopening will be an enormous benefit to our equestrians and our Village."

Wellington officials also are checking with the county to make sure all levels are on board for competition to begin.

The final two weeks of the Winter Equestrian Festival were canceled this year because of the coronavirus.

There are at least 200 to 300 world-class competition horses in Wellington right now that typically would have left to compete elsewhere by this time of year, Stone said.

But because of travel restrictions related to COVID-19, those horses have remained in



The final two weeks of Winter Equestrian Festival at Palm Beach International Equestrian Center were canceled due to the threat of the coronavirus. [ALLEN EYESTONE/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

Wellington, he said.

Many of the horses also would have been destined for New York, Connecticut or New Jersey, with two of those states — New York and New Jersey — seeing high rates of COVID-19 infections.

"Nobody wants to go up there," Stone said.

Equestrian Sport Productions has revamped its competition system to increase sanitation and social distancing procedures, he said.

That includes checking each person who enters the showgrounds for a fever, requiring face masks for everyone who isn't on a horse and providing hand sanitizer, Stone said.

It also includes banning

spectators — seating has been removed, Stone said — and vendors from the grounds.

Equestrian Sport Productions also is working to "comply with or exceed" the guidelines for reopening equestrian competition issued by the two major governing bodies in the sport, the U.S. Equestrian Federation and the Fédération Equestre Internationale, Stone said.

The venue also has worked with Wellington to make some adjustments to its plan already, Schofield said.

"They have a really well thought-out plan," he said.

[kwebb@pbpost.com](mailto:kwebb@pbpost.com)  
[@kristinawebb](https://twitter.com/kristinawebb)

# REOPEN

From Page B1

At Max's Grille, Burt Rapoport said the agreement between the city and Mizner Park will help. He expects to add a dozen tables.

City Councilman Andy Thomson said the city wanted to help restaurants, a business sector that has been hit hard by the coronavirus.

"We needed to think out of the box to give them some assistance," he noted. "They asked to do it and we realized it made a lot of sense."

The agreement to allow restaurant seating on the streets will expire at the end of May, but Dugan is hopeful it will be extended. Other restaurants expected to add outside tables include Blue Fish, Loch Bar, Villagio, Tanzy and Yard House.

Thomson said the city is looking at other areas to determine whether it is possible to allow more

**"We have been working diligently with the city of Boca Raton, our staff and our tenants to provide the safest and most comfortable experience for all."**

Dana Romanelli, Mizner Park General Manager

outside seating.

"Maybe we could look at parking lots but there are not all that many venues where you could allow seating onto streets," he noted.

Meanwhile, it was slow going Wednesday at the reopening of the Town Center at Boca Raton, an indoor shopping mall that features national chain stores, independent retailers and restaurants.

The vast majority of the stores are still shuttered. None of the anchor stores are open. And only a handful of restaurants were back in business.

Vincent Teodosio, general manager of Cohen's Fashion Optical, said he was pleased with the amount of business he was doing in light of how few stores were actually operating.

"We have been here since it opened in 1980 so we have quite

a following," he said. "Many of our customers were asking when we were going to reopen. It should only get better as more and more businesses at the mall open up."

Of the more than 150 stores at the mall, The Post could find fewer than 10 that were open Wednesday, and some of them were only available for pickup and delivery.

The mall said it added enhanced safety protocols to make sure every store is taking proper measures to stay safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

The new protocols include enhanced sanitization procedures, making protective masks available to shoppers and ensuring that employees do not come to work within 72 hours of exhibiting COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms.

# RANK

From Page B1

But not all middle schools offer the same number of high school-level classes.

Even when they do, the classes sometimes have different designations in different schools — regular vs honors, for instance — that affect the points students receive under the District's system of "weighted" grade-point averages.

As a result, a middle school student's ability to rack up top marks on their high school transcript can depend on which middle school they attend.

To avoid penalizing students for these differences, District-operated high schools select valedictorians and salutatorians based only on grades they earn once they enter ninth grade.

"It's just a way of equalizing everyone on the same playing field," Smith said. "We want to control for any kind of

## Choosing Vals and Sals

The four main guidelines used to determine valedictorians and salutatorians:

1. The awards are based on grades earned "after entry into ninth grade through the first semester of 12th grade."
2. The valedictorian is the student with the highest weighted grade-point average (or honors-point average), measured to the ten-thousandth place (the fourth decimal place).
3. The salutatorian is the student with the second-highest weighted grade-point average.
4. In the case of a tie for first, co-valedictorians are named, and the student with the third-highest weighted grade-point average is named salutatorian.

Source: Palm Beach County School District

inequity that happened outside of our school."

The policy has been in place for decades, and administrators say it has helped to keep the process of choosing a valedictorian more fair.

But it also means that one student can end up ranked at the top of their class while another is selected as valedictorian.

After all, as Smith pointed out, in most high schools the differences between the top students' accumulative grades are "in the

thousandths point — they are razor-thin differences."

Excluding middle school grades is not the only rule the District uses to account for potential inequities beyond the school gates.

To be a valedictorian, a student is also required to have been enrolled in the school for at least three years, including both their junior and senior years. The only exception is for students forced to transfer because of a boundary change.

## FLORIDA NEWS AT A GLANCE

### MIAMI BEACH Panhandling banned near businesses

Citing concerns about the coronavirus, the City of Miami Beach will make it illegal for anyone experiencing homelessness or food anywhere near the entrance of a business.

Starting today, panhandling on public property will be

"temporarily unlawful" within 50 feet "from the entrance or service window of any essential retail or commercial business or restaurant or food service establishment."

The new restrictions, which city officials acknowledge may draw legal challenges, are part of the "Phase 1 Reopening Order" signed by City Manager Jimmy Morales on Saturday.

The panhandling ban will be in effect for five days and end on Friday, the order states. The emergency powers Morales was granted to run the city's pandemic efforts expire Friday, unless extended by the City Commission. The elected board has repeatedly voted to extend the orders, which include a citywide curfew.

- Gannett wire reports

The Palm Beach Post

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