



# ROTARY EXPRESS

Rotary Club of Harrisonville, Missouri | September 29, 2021 | Service above self. One profits most who serves best.

## Today's program



Jon Taber's guest today is **Leslie Culpepper**, owner of LC's Farm School, a preschool at Red Barn Ranch.

## Future programs

- OCTOBER 6** - Monthly business meeting and program by Missouri Enterprise's **Curtis Mullen**, a guest of Bing Schimmelpfenning.
- OCTOBER 13** - Sam Cardenas
- OCTOBER 20** - Doug Meyer
- OCTOBER 27** - Jill Filer
- NOVEMBER 3** - Monthly business meeting and classification talk
- NOVEMBER 10** - Cindy Greenwell

## Birthdays

**SEPTEMBER 30**.....Carol Looney

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## Cass Regional CEO Chris Lang calls COVID biggest challenge in his career

**W**ith 18 years in his current role as CEO of Cass Regional Medical Center and 25 years in hospital administration, Chris Lang told Rotarians last week that the current pandemic has been the biggest challenge in his career. And, as he put it, "I've seen a lot of challenges."

Chris was the guest of the hospital's CFO, Brent Probasco. His presentation was a repeat of one he gave the previous Saturday at Mayor Judy Bowman's Town Hall meeting. He used a series of graphs to lay out the statistics for Cass County, where COVID cases spiked dramatically in 2020, then receded as vaccines became available, but in recent months case have trended up fairly dramatically again as the Delta variant became the dominant strain. "We are starting to see a little flattening of the curve in the last few weeks," he noted.

Yet the vaccination rates in Cass County and across Missouri remain low, straining the local and regional health care systems and hospital staff. "We used to be to transfer COVID-positive patients to Kansas City hospitals," Chris said, "but it is now hard to find available beds. Recently, 45% of total Cass Regional admissions have been COVID patients. "We've had 60 admissions in the last 75 days, and only four of those were vaccinated." The hospital also had its first experience putting a patient on a ventilator.

Across the county, the death toll from the pandemic stands at 111, while the total number of cases is about 10,500, although that number is probably higher due to reporting anomalies. What is very concerning, Chris said, is that one of every four new cases is a child. The positivity rate has now risen for 10 weeks in a row. The

**(Continued on back page)**



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## Covid has had dramatic impact at Cass Regional

### (Continued from front page)

largest age group for positive cases used to be the elderly, but now it is those from 40-49.

The per-capita positivity rate is highest in smaller communities, with Freeman ranking first, followed by Garden City, Cleveland and Archie. As a direct result of the pandemic, the life expectancy in Missouri has dropped by two years

The toll on hospital administration and staff has been heavy. Chris himself spends 2-4 hours a day dealing with the impact. But the biggest strain is borne by the hospital's infectious diseases coordinator and members of the Incident Command Center.

Operationally, Cass Regional has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on testing equipment, a negative-pressure room, specialized treatments, protective equipment, and the many protocols required to keep staff and patients safe. Much of the costs was covered by federal CARES Act money.

Staffing is another major concern, often dictating how many beds are available. "We are using agency staffing, a service that he said is costing the hospital about \$200,000 a month.

It's time for our state and county to rethink its commitment to public health, Chris said. Missouri rankings in the bottom five states for support of public health, and Cass County ranks in the bottom five among the state's 114 counties.

He concluded by urging everyone to get vaccinated. "If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your family and your friends."

In Q&Q, Chris responded to a question about why the hospital does not require staff to be vaccinated. He said the rate is about 75%, but the biggest reason is that the hospital can't afford to lose people. "My guess is that the federal government will require vaccinations, which will help level the playing field."

### Announcements from last week's meeting

- Sarah Turgeon won the Secret Greeter dollar coin.
- President Lori contributed to the PolioPlus bank in celebration of closing on her new home.
- Carol Looney announced that we have enough volunteers for our final flag day of the year on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. She said five flag holders need repairs. President Lori thanked Carol and Judy Franklin for their great work co-chairing this year's program.

**WORLD  
POLIO DAY  
IS 24 OCTOBER**

[endpolio.org](https://endpolio.org) | [#endpolio](https://twitter.com/endpolio)

Rotary  

### Next week's speaker: Curtis Mullen from Missouri Enterprise



Curtis Mullen has an extensive business career and has always been active in his community. Over the last 25 years he has served in outside sales and leadership roles in business ranging from non-profit organizations to small businesses and Fortune 500 companies including Office Max, Republic Waste and Grainger. He is currently in his fourth year with the not-for-profit manufacturing consulting organization, Missouri Enterprise, where he is the Area Business Manager for the Kansas City area. Curtis emigrated to the United States in 2001 and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2008. He lives in Olathe with his daughter and wife Tacey.