

## 'We're all tired'

### Doctor, AdventHealth Rollins Brook official urge public to vaccinate against COVID-19 as Lampasas health facilities see surge of patients

BY MONIQUE BRAND  
DISPATCH RECORD

Last week, family medicine physician Dr. James Cain saw 61 patients in one day — the highest daily count he's had in his 23 years of practice.

Now, those high numbers are an everyday occurrence.

Cain practices out of AdventHealth Central Texas Family Medicine Clinic-Lampasas.

Both Cain and Ashley Underwood, AdventHealth Rollins Brook vice president/administrator, say they've seen a record number of patients at the clinic and at the hospital.

The culprit? Cain and Underwood say it's the rising COVID-19 cases.

Two months ago, the United States entered its third coronavirus surge, driven by the highly transmissible delta variant,

and that has affected mostly unvaccinated people, including dozens of Lampasans.

Cain and Underwood say in some ways, this phase has been the hardest yet.

The number of coronavirus patients has decreased slightly in the latest reports, but active cases remained above the 300 mark this week.

Lampasas County releases its coronavirus reports every four days.

As of Sept 19, the numbers showed 352 active cases, a decrease of 74 since Sept. 14. The death toll was at 50, and 7,670 residents reported to be fully vaccinated — an increase of 40 since Sept. 14.

AdventHealth Rollins Brook has seen a 39.7% positivity rate among residents who have been tested, the highest the county has experienced since the pandemic first hit

in March 2020.

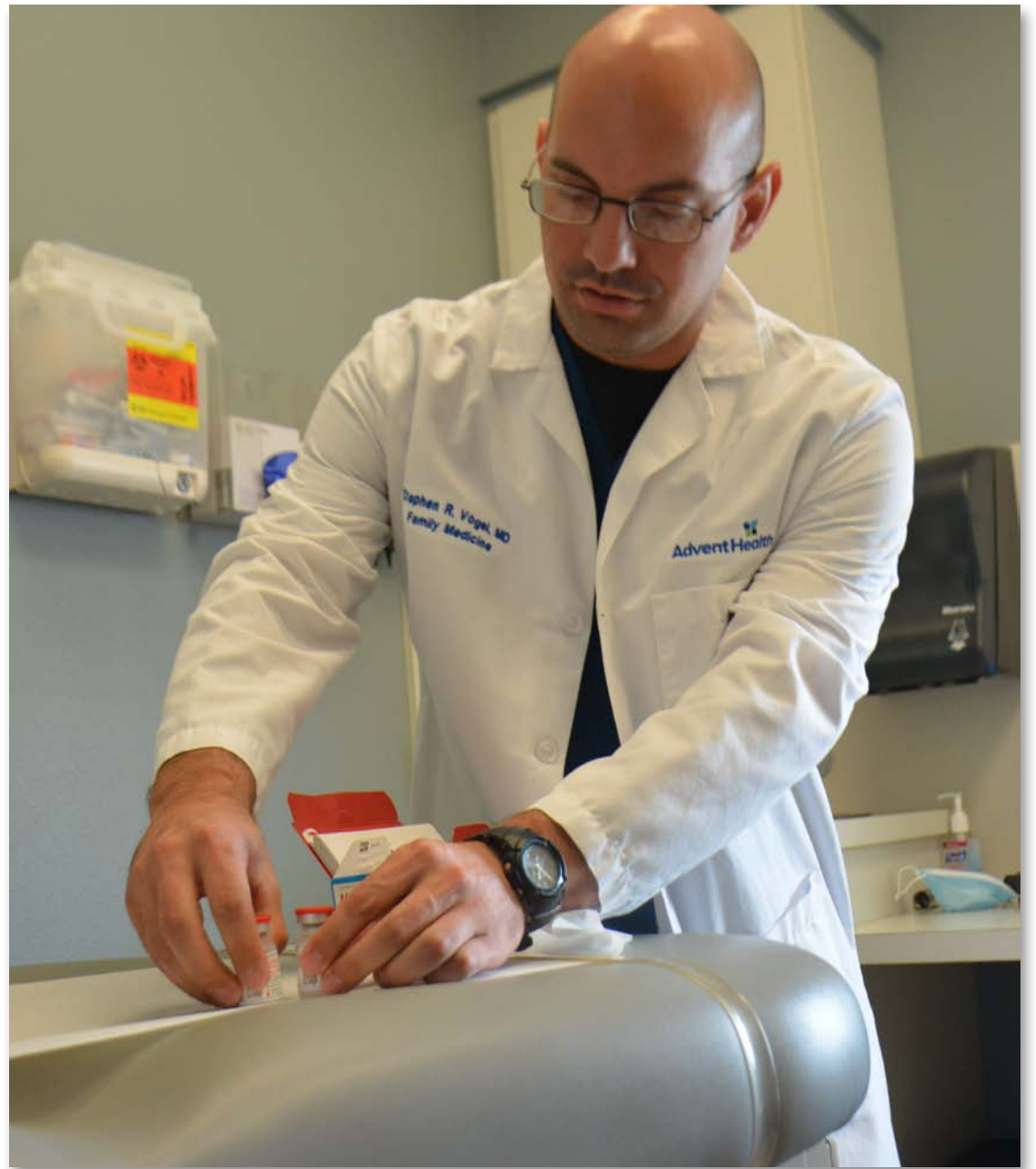
Hospital representatives also confirm a shortage of beds and say the number of occupied beds fluctuates daily. The Rollins Brook facility has 24 beds in total.

Earlier this summer, it appeared the widespread availability of vaccines might mean the coronavirus pandemic was behind them. But Cain and Underwood say their medical staffers share a hardening view toward the delta variant's biggest target: the willingly unprotected.

Underwood said 95% of the county's hospitalizations are the unvaccinated.

Underwood said staff work more than 15-hour shifts every day, with some aiding in the transport of patients to nearby hospitals due to a shortage of beds. Doctors

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Dr. Stephen Vogel, a physician at AdventHealth Central Texas Family Medicine Clinic-Lampasas holds a Moderna vaccine in his office in this July 2021 photo.



MONIQUE BRAND | DISPATCH RECORD

### School, church collaborate in Red Cross blood drive

Lampasas High School senior Lydia Breuer waits inside Grace Fellowship Church's gymnasium as she donates blood during an American Red Cross blood drive Wednesday. The blood drive supported an LHS scholarship fund, according to an event announcement from the city of Lampasas.

### City intends to adopt updated building codes

BY MONIQUE BRAND  
DISPATCH RECORD

Lampasas officials have proposed updating the city's building codes in early 2022.

The purpose of building codes, according to the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, is to protect buildings and the people and property inside them from fire, earthquakes, windstorms and other extreme events.

"They also ensure structural integrity; electrical, plumbing and mechanical system safety; as well as accessibility and practical and achievable levels of energy efficiency," an EESI report said.

Model building codes have been developed by the International Code Council, and these are updated periodically.

Lampasas operates under the ICC Code

Series, 2012 Edition. Officials have proposed the city update and adopt the ICC 2018 Code Series.

On Sept. 16, more than 30 residents attended a town hall that gave an overview of the proposed updates. Among those in the audience were tradesmen, contractors and real estate representatives.

Revised code ordinances would include new requirements for exterior emergency disconnects of single-family and multi-family homes "for improved electrical safety for first responders," clarification on which alternate energy systems are covered and requirements for communication cables that also provide power.

Updated building codes will affect both commercial and residential structures.

One concern expressed at the town hall was the economic effect of new codes, as the cost to build a home has increased substantially in the last two years.

According to the Texas Home Builders Association, the average cost to build a new home is around \$114 per square foot. This estimate tracks with national norms, as well.

On the materials side, lumber prices reached record highs this year, spiking 67% in 2021, up 340% from pre-pandemic levels.

Nationally, lumber costs alone have added \$35,872 to the price of a typical new-construction, single-family home.

Lampasas Building Official Frank Ellett told the audience at Thursday's town hall that his department's goal is to not bring unnecessary costs to builders or buyers.

Holding a town hall is one of six steps in the process before a formal adoption of new building codes can take place.

City Secretary Becky Sims, who also serves as the city's zoning administrator, said the department will compile feedback before any additional consideration is brought to the City Council.



MONIQUE BRAND | DISPATCH RECORD

Lampasas Building Official Frank Ellett speaks Sept. 16 during a town hall about building codes.

### Funding awarded for rural home repairs

BY MONIQUE BRAND  
DISPATCH RECORD

The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development has funding available for rural low-income families throughout the nation in need of home repairs.

Locally, USDA awarded more than \$300,000, which will be distributed by the

Fort Hood Habitat for Humanity.

The program is available in rural communities of generally 35,000 people or fewer.

Kenneth Cates, Fort Hood Habitat for Humanity chief executive officer, said these grants are for homeowner-occupied houses in the organization's three-county service area, which

includes Lampasas County.

Qualified repairs can include roof repair/replacement, HVAC repair/replacement, plumbing, electrical, American with Disabilities Act accessibility modifications (ramps, grab bars, wheelchair access cabinets, walk-in showers,

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### WEATHER

Date	High	Low	Rain
Sept. 19	94	73	0
Sept. 20	98	74	0
Sept. 21	86	73	0
Sept. 22	81	60	0

Total rainfall for 2021: 20.49 in.

Data from the Lower Colorado River Authority (site 11 miles west-northwest of Lampasas, near Nix).

### BRIEFLY

#### VETERANS' MEET & GREET

VFW Auxiliary Post #8539 will host a weekly Veterans' Meet & Greet each Friday from 8-10 a.m. at Alamo Coffee.

The business will offer free coffee for veterans during this time.

#### VIETNAM WAR EXHIBIT

The Lampasas County Museum's exhibit honoring Vietnam War veterans is on display from 10 a.m.

to 4 p.m. every Friday and Saturday through Veterans Day. There is no charge for admission, but donations are appreciated.

Additional details, along with photos of selected items in the exhibit, will appear in an upcoming edition.

#### RANGE TOUR

A Lampasas & Mills Range Tour is set Wednesday at the Haney Ranch, 760 U.S. Highway 183 South in Goldth-

waite. The range tour will address soil health, plant identification, and management of grazing, brush and weeds.

Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m., and the program will start at 9 a.m. The registration fee is \$10.

Pre-registration is requested by Tuesday. To register, contact the AgriLife office in Lampasas at 512-556-8271 or lampasas-tx@tamu.edu. Or, contact the Mills County office at 325-648-2650 or at mills-tx@tamu.edu.

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