

BIG SKY RELIEF

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Big Sky Relief Launches Free Community-Wide COVID-19 Testing Partnership

BIG SKY, Mont. – Big Sky Relief, the collaborative COVID-19 relief effort, today announced the Big Sky Winter COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Partnership to keep the community healthy and businesses open entering the winter season. The free, self-administered tests will be provided community-wide starting on December 7, 2020, for the Big Sky School District, individual community members, small businesses, health care and public safety employees, and large employers. Financial resources for the testing and follow-up contact tracing for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be provided entirely by this collaborative, adding to the resources currently available.

Since April 2020, the unprecedented partnership forged through Big Sky Relief has invested more than \$2 million in COVID-19 relief grants and aid benefiting individuals, families, businesses, students, teachers, healthcare and public safety employees, and the community workforce. During response efforts this summer, partners worked diligently on solutions to keep people safe entering the winter season for a community that relies on tourism.

“For years, the community of Big Sky has been known for the ‘Biggest Skiing in America.’ When responding to the pandemic, it’s also evident that this community has big hearts,” **said Ciara Wolfe, Committee Chair of the Big Sky Relief and V.P. of Philanthropy for the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation.** “This program is made possible through the generous financial support of public, private, and philanthropic investments. The program will be adaptable to meet the ever-evolving impacts of the pandemic. Partners have been and will continue to be committed to provide the support this community needs for the duration of this pandemic and through unexpected challenges yet to come.”

“From the start of the pandemic, our community has come together to provide financial, behavioral, and health resources for those in need and we are honored to play a role,” **said Matt Kidd, Managing Director of CrossHarbor Capital, the largest financial backer of the community testing effort.** “We are committed to providing the resources our community needs to weather the pandemic, however long that takes. We are proud to be a part of a community that identifies needs and truly shows up for their neighbors.”

“We have been focused like a laser on providing a safe and healthy learning environment for our students, teachers, support and administrative staff,” **said Dr. Dustin Shipman, Superintendent of the Big Sky School District.** “This widespread testing effort will be an important tool in helping us continue to keep those in the school district healthy and safe. We are grateful for our community coming together yet again.”

All components of the testing program, which will start December 7, 2020, have been designed in close collaboration with Big Sky Relief, Bozeman Health, county and state officials, and other local partners, and will be administered by this consortium.

“In designing plans for surveillance testing, Big Sky Relief worked with Gallatin City-County Health Department to ensure that test results are reported to state and local health departments and to design the effort so that it does not impact testing capacity for people who are symptomatic or close contacts of a known case,” **said Gallatin County Health Officer Matt Kelley.** “It is critical that the Big Sky Relief surveillance is adding testing capacity in the county without straining existing testing capacity.”

Bozeman Health will oversee clinical elements of the testing program, as well as provide support for contact tracing. “Since the COVID-19 pandemic reached Southwest Montana, Bozeman Health has worked diligently to help keep our staff, employees, and community safe and healthy through multiple infection prevention measures. We’re proud to be a trusted partner in this project to help curb the spread of COVID-19 within Gallatin and Madison Counties,” **shared John Hill, President and CEO of Bozeman Health.**

LetsGetChecked, a private health insights company, will provide the lower nasal swab kits and serve as the on-site lab, processing the test results in 24 hours or less. This innovative mobile specimen processing and resulting lab will be located in Big Sky, ensuring that test results will be provided directly to state and county health officials in a timely manner.

“The power of partnership in Big Sky continues to produce results for our community,” **said Kevin Germain, Chair of Big Sky Resort Tax.** “Community partners from all sectors have offered resources and support to bring this widespread testing concept to fruition in order to keep people healthy and our businesses open. I am continually impressed by the Big Sky Community showing true Montana spirit. People see a need, and they pull together to get big things done.”

Financial support for the community-wide testing effort will come from:

- The Big Sky Philanthropic Community, including the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Spanish Peaks Community Foundation, and Moonlight Basin Community Foundation
- Community employers including the Yellowstone Club, Spanish Peaks Mountain Club, Moonlight Basin, Big Sky Resort, and Suffolk Construction
- Big Sky Resort Area District
- Visit Big Sky

Details for community members and employers wishing to pick up tests will be available in the coming week at bigskyrelief.org.

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