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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Friends and neighbors of San Juan County**

FRIDAY HARBOR, Wash., March 23, 2020—

Dear friends and neighbors of San Juan County,

The COVID-19 pandemic has rapidly changed the world around us. It's disrupted our way of life and created new realities for each of us. It's understandable to find it all unsettling and concerning.

On behalf of PeaceHealth, I want to assure you that we are working purposefully to promote the health and safety of our patients, caregivers and community members during this difficult time.

First and foremost, I'd like to acknowledge our caregivers—both at the bedside and behind the scenes—for their unfaltering dedication to providing safe, compassionate care, 24/7, even in times of great hardship. They are the true healthcare heroes dedicated to serving our community.

Here are some of the steps we've taken to ensure we are prepared to meet the current and anticipated surge in COVID-19 patients:

- Restricted visitors and non-essential individuals who enter the medical center to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Implemented temperature screens for anyone entering our buildings. Those with a temperature or other COVID-19-related symptoms are turned away, including employees.

- Cancelled or postponed all elective procedures to conserve hospital resources for critically ill patients and curb the spread of the virus by limiting the number of otherwise healthy people in our facility.
- Worked in collaboration with San Juan County, EMS, PeaceHealth and other community partners to initiate a communitywide response to the anticipated surge in the number of COVID-19 patients needing hospitalization, including combining resources to meet the growing need for supplies.
- Readied internal areas to triage larger numbers of COVID-19 patients because ED and hospital volumes have declined. Presently, caregivers can safely triage the low number of patients in our Emergency Department using appropriate PPE and precautions.
- Proactively prepared for an external triage site for patients with respiratory symptoms. Applications have been submitted, the testing unit is in place and infection prevention standards will be employed to open the unit when patient volumes exceed our internal capacity.
- Implemented a Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) conservation plan, consistent with CDC PPE conservation strategies utilized in hospitals across the nation to ensure that we are adequately stocked with the resources our caregivers need to remain safe. It isn't business as usual with regard to PPE practices and caregivers are adapting to these changes. We are not in short supply of PPE at this time.
- Prepared for inpatient telemedicine visits for our Emergency Department providers. Links to the platform have been provided to ED physicians and we are ready to implement this step when needed. Outpatient telemedicine for the clinics is coming.

Home assessments were discussed with the county, but we made a decision not to pursue this given our internal focus. While important, at this time, PeaceHealth must keep staff available as part of our surge plan.

We continue to be limited in our ability to test people for the virus and receive timely test results. There are inadequate numbers of test kits and test analyzing capabilities nationwide, and we are

actively identifying new sources. Quest laboratories is prioritizing processing COVID-19 tests for PeaceHealth inpatients and results are expected within 24 to 48 hours. Testing opportunities through UW will be implemented soon and should be another option for testing and timelier turnaround. Both options will likely result in an increase in the number of confirmed cases in our facility.

The COVID-19 situation changes quickly, often by the hour, and we will continue to swiftly make changes and adapt as it develops. I want to stress that implementation of a preparedness plan is a staged and coordinated process. We will be ready to meet the need when patient volumes demand it.

We know that many of you are sending us your support, and we can feel it. We've been moved by the outpouring of generous offers to help us with maintaining our PPE supply—whether by sewing surgical masks, donating unopened boxes of N95 masks or simply asking how to be of service. Please email Dana Van Every at [Dvanevery@peacehealth.org](mailto:Dvanevery@peacehealth.org) if you wish to donate. And thank you. Every community donation is valuable and so greatly appreciated.

We are all in this together. We value the trust you place in us to navigate these challenging times, and we are honored to care for this community.

--Merry-Ann Keane, Chief Administrative Officer, PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center

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**About PeaceHealth:** Based in Vancouver, Wash., PeaceHealth is a not-for-profit Catholic health system offering care to communities in Washington, Oregon and Alaska. In 1890, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace founded what has become PeaceHealth. **PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center**, a 10-bed Critical Access Hospital in Friday Harbor, serves communities in the San Juan Islands. Key services include general and orthopedic surgery, oncology, behavioral health and primary care. Visit us online at [peacehealth.org](http://peacehealth.org).