



NEWS

Making the call: Kimberly Leadbeater and her team inform people they have COVID

The local health unit's COVID case and management team have been working seven days a week to contact those who test positive for the virus

By **Catherine Whitnall** Kawartha Lakes This Week

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For some people, getting a phone call confirming they have COVID-19 is a mixed blessing; no one wants the virus but it's good to know for sure.

For Kimberly Leadbeater and her Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit COVID case and contact management team, making those calls likewise comes with highs and lows. Some people feel guilty, sad or angry. Most are simply relieved.

As cases rose, fell and then rose again, so have calls. Between July 1 to Sept. 30 alone, 1,955 contacts were made regarding 677 cases.

“It can be mentally exhausting,” said Leadbeater. “Our team is working long days and even weekends – many of us have been working seven days a week since March. But the team knows that the workload is going to be high and just how important it is to get the information out there.”

As soon as a positive lab result is received, the team works to contact people within 24 hours. Often, the conversation is not a shock because the person went to get tested. Some already know because they checked the provincial website.

However, with many people leaving cell numbers for contact, “when you call someone you really don’t know where they are”, said Leadbeater. In a few instances, they are already hospitalized. Some were notified they had been in contact with someone who tested positive. Some are in the middle of grocery shopping, dinner out, working or visiting with others when they get the call.

“Definitely some people are frustrated by the news. . . and people may feel guilty that they may have unknowingly put someone else at risk,” said Leadbeater, adding the call also includes tracking all points of contact over the previous 14 days.

“That could be a long conversation. It was shorter back in April and May when people were isolating more.”

But as much as people are disappointed and frustrated, Leadbeater said they do appreciate knowing.

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Sadly, notes Leadbeater, there doesn’t seem to be “any end in sight.”

“Being able to provide people with reassurance and answer their questions, it makes

you feel good at the end of the day,” she continued. “We all recognize that this is what we need to be doing right now. . . I feel privileged to be part of the team. There will be a lot of relationships that are strengthened because of this. This has brought us all closer together.”

Catherine Whitnall is a reporter with MyKawartha. She can be reached at cwhitnall@mykawartha.com. Follow her on [Twitter](#) and MyKawartha on [Facebook](#)

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