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Gila River Indian Community announces its first death of member due to COVID-19

(Sacaton, Arizona) A Community member passed away on Saturday afternoon, April 4, 2020, after battling COVID-19 for a number of weeks. She is the first Community member to succumb to the disease. Interim CEO and Chief Medical Officer, Dr. A. J. Santiago of Gila River Health Care (GRHC) confirmed that the patient was a 53 year old woman, who had underlying health conditions. She passed away on Saturday after a prolonged stay in an area hospital Intensive Care Unit.

Governor Stephen Roe Lewis stated, "We are deeply saddened by the death of a Community member and employee, and realize it is extremely difficult news for this family, her village and our entire Community. We are witnessing the reality of the COVID-19 outbreak." Lewis added, "Our hearts go out to the family and everyone who is impacted by this tragic loss for our Community."

The patient was a long-time Community employee and her passing has impacted many in the workforce and in her village.

Dr. Santiago emphasized, "The passing of even one patient is one too many. This virus is deadly, and even more so to those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and pulmonary conditions such as asthma. All of us can do our part to save lives by preventing the spread of the virus. At this critical time, please stay home and avoid contact with other people. If you need assistance, please call our COVID-19 Hotline at GRHC 520-550-6079, or reach out to Emergency Services."

The family asks for privacy during this difficult time.

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Gila River Indian Community located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and home to the indigenous O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) people. The Tribe is comprised of seven districts, the administrative offices and departments are located in Sacaton, and serve the people throughout these seven community districts. 100% of its profits from gaming and 17 other Enterprises are utilized by the community providing services and opportunities to achieve the highest quality of life.
