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GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY EXPANDS COVID-19 TESTING CAPACITY

Sacaton, AZ - The Gila River Indian Community and Mayo Clinic in Arizona, entered into an agreement that will expand COVID-19 testing capabilities on the Reservation. The testing began in earnest this week, with an agreement to perform testing for the next year as necessary.

Through the terms of the agreement, Mayo Clinic will perform tests on samples collected by Gila River Health Care and the Gila River Tribal Health Department on vulnerable populations in the Community such as residents of The Caring House, the Community's elder home and tribal members who have underlying conditions such as diabetes, who are on dialysis and elders.

Gila River Governor, Stephen Roe Lewis, has made increasing the Community's testing capacity a priority during the pandemic as a way to determine how COVID-19 is impacting the Community and where tribal resources are needed. The agreement allows for processing of approximately 500 tests per week with results provided within 48 hours.

The opportunity to work closely with Mayo Clinic came about after the Senate delegation of Senators Kyrsten Sinema and Martha McSally initiated a dialogue between the Community and Mayo Clinic when they learned the Community was facing long delays between tests and results – sometimes up to ten days.

Mayo Clinic offered their labs for testing and were able to locate a generous benefactor who was able to provide the first 400 lab results to the Community free of charge as part of an effort to ensure tribal communities are not left behind in addressing this pandemic.

In response to the partnership, Governor Lewis stated, "I am encouraged by the level of commitment Dr. Gray and his staff have brought to this agreement. This testing capacity will be especially important to ensure our elders and those with underlying conditions are able to be tested. I look forward to exploring ways to continue and expand this testing opportunity in a way that improves the health and safety of our Community members."

Richard Gray, M.D., CEO of Mayo Clinic, said, "We are pleased to support the great work Governor Lewis is doing to keep the Gila River Community safe. In times like this it is critical that we remain connected as a broader community, and do what we can to support the health and well-being of all people in Arizona."

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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.