TOY DRIVE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

"So many of the businesses were pushing the toy drive out on social media and in emails. I think more people were aware of the toy drive this year," Hill commented. "I think the longer this toy drive goes, the more residents and customers will become familiar with it and automatically know around this time of year that there's a toy drive."

One of the most successful collection points this year has been at Wright City Hardware. Staff at the store said they've made a special effort to ask customers to donate. Along with more toys than their barrel and an extra box can fill, the store has collected over $400 to buy more gifts.

"It takes all of us to make it work. We just love our little town, and we want to make sure everyone's happy," said Wright City Hardware employee Rainey Hoffman. "There's no child that should ever be without. There's too many of us who have lived in those places, and we're just trying to make the next generation better."

Businesses and groups participating in the toy collection include Honey's Market, St. Louisian, A+Q, Survivant Heating and Air Conditioning, and others.

TOY COLLECTION — Veronica Hampton, Sarah Thorp, and Jenny Hill at Shelter Insurance in Wright City were among a number of businesses collecting toys and winter clothing to donate to local families in need this Christmas. Adam Rollins photo.

Mercy program expands bed capacity

As COVID-19 continues to surge across the country, there is significant demand for hospital beds. To address this need, Mercy is tapping into its Mercy Virtual expertise to care for select COVID-19 patients at home.

Mercy COVID Care at Home will often partner for those with more serious disease symptoms.

If the status of any patient changes during monitoring or symptoms worsen, patients will be evaluated by the Mercy Virtual team and directed to the most appropriate level of care. An emergency medicine physician will help determine the best care option and make the appropriate referral.

"We are filling the gaps for people who are not well yet want to stay home," said Dr. John Truog, chief medical officer of the Mercy Virtual program.

"It's not just about the beds. It's about providing care in the community where people can feel safe and comfortable to care for themselves and their families."

Mercy continues to work diligently to expand the capacity of inpatient beds as they continue to support patients during this crisis.

CASING
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Free community testing

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the National Guard are offering free COVID-19 testing Dec. 1 in the Warren County Free Fairgrounds. You do not have to be a resident of Warren County to participate. You can call 8411 to preregister to be tested, or to health.mo.gov/unitytest.

TAX
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

ask the public to consider the and supporting the programs. Instead of raising taxes, I am working to balance the budget and provide essential services."

Smith pointed out that the reductions in tax rates for R-I have been a part of the district's overall effort to clarify and streamline its tax policies.

"We are always looking for ways to improve our services while maintaining quality and ensuring the best value for our taxpayers," Smith said. "Our goal is to continue providing a strong education for each student while working to ensure that our financials are stable and sustainable for the future."

Smith also thanked the community for its continued support of the district and encouraged them to reach out with any questions or concerns they may have. He assured them that the district is committed to providing the best possible education for all students in the R-I community.