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SEC basketball tournament canceled moments before tip off over coronavirus concerns

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Virus threat cancels city events, limits city school sports

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

All events scheduled on city-owned property, including those permitted by City Hall, have been canceled through at least March 31.

These cancellations directly affect the Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports Half Marathon and 5K, planned for March 28, and also apply to the Druid City Arts Festival, which was set to take place April 4-5. It, too, has been canceled.

The cancellations, which could be extended into April and beyond, are being taken to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19, the infectious disease caused by this most recently discovered coronavirus.

Although, as of Thursday, there still remained no confirmed cases in Alabama, Maddox and others expect it to arrive at any time.

"We know that the coronavirus is coming in some form or fashion," said Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox during a press conference to announce the cancellations. "We know that one of the best things we can do to mitigate that is to reduce the amount of large, public gatherings."

"I think logic just applies that, at some point, it's going to take place - instead of us reacting to what may happen, I'd rather us be proactive."

The Tuscaloosa City Schools are following a similar approach to events, canceling certain after-school activities and

limiting attendance at others.

Superintendent Mike Daria said crowds at sporting events would be limited to family and the media, and other events would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Daria said parents can keep up with city school developments through the city Board of Education's social media accounts or its website, tuscaloosacityschoos.com.

Tuscaloosa County schools spokeswoman Terri Brewer said Thursday that no plans were currently in place to take a similar approach to county school sporting or other events, but any changes to that policy would be posted to the county school's website at tcss.net/

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Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox held a press conference on Thursday, alongside Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue Chief Randy Smith and Mike Daria, superintendent of Tuscaloosa City Schools, to announce event cancellations and limitations because of the looming coronavirus threat. [STAFF PHOTO/JASON MORTON]

Dizzying reaction to virus spread

By Stan Choe, Lori Hinnant and Tim Sullivan
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Sweeping travel bans cascaded around the globe Thursday, walling off countries and even entire continents, keeping people inside their homes, and slowing the engines of commerce to stem the coronavirus pandemic. Markets collapsed worldwide with the growing realization that there would be no fast end to the uncertainty.

The escalating crisis sent U.S. stocks to their worst losses since the Black Monday crash of 1987, extending a sell-off that wiped out most of Wall Street's big run-up since President Donald Trump's inauguration.

After weeks downplaying the virus, Trump's announcement of strict rules barring most Europeans from entry came as a shock across the Atlantic. Within hours, even the European Union's passport-free travel came into question, with guards in places that had been without borders for more than a decade and



A cyclist pedals in a deserted street, Thursday, in downtown Milan, Italy. [LUCA BRUNO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

airports shut down.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the pandemic "the worst public health crisis for a generation," adding that "many more families are going to lose loved ones before their

time."

The head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Redfield, meanwhile, noted that the vast majority of new cases of the COVID-19 illness are linked to

Europe, which he called "the new China." Deaths in Italy topped 1,000, with more than 15,000 testing positive.

But Dr. Anthony Fauci,

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UA System to conduct all classes online

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

The University of Alabama System said Thursday its three campuses will make the transition to online instruction in the wake of the coronavirus.

UA System students will not return to campus after spring break and will continue all coursework through distance learning. The system's Tuscaloosa and Birmingham campuses both begin spring break on Monday.

The University of Alabama in Huntsville will transition to online classes beginning Monday and will have spring break March 30 through April 3.

Classes at UA will be canceled until March 30 to allow additional time for UA to make the transition to remote learning.

"COVID-19 presents serious public health concerns," UA President Stuart Bell said in an email announcing the policy change. "The University of Alabama is committed to slowing the spread of the coronavirus, while maintaining our mission of teaching, research, and service."

"Social distancing is a key barrier to the spread of the virus. To assist with this national task of social distancing, and in keeping with UA system policies, the following actions are in effect until further notice," Bell said.

"As you consider these measures, I call upon each

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Most coronavirus patients recover, still anxiety, fear loom

By Carla K. Johnson and Victoria Milko
The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Amid all the fears, quarantines and stockpiling of food, it has been easy to ignore the fact that more than 60,000 people have recovered from the coronavirus spreading around the globe.

The disease can cause varying degrees of illness and is especially troublesome for older adults and people with existing health problems, who are at risk of severe effects,

including pneumonia. But for most of those affected, coronavirus creates only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, with the vast majority recovering from the virus.

According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe ailments may take three to six weeks to rebound. In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have

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This Feb. 24 photo provided by Greg and Rose Yerex shows them in a hospital in Nagoya, Japan. Former passengers of the cruise ship Diamond Princess, they both tested positive for the coronavirus. [GREG YEREX VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

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