

Vaccinations event serves Celilo Village

On Jan. 27, after a ceremonial prayer, 103 Tribal members from throughout the Columbia River Gorge gathered at the longhouse and received first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

"Our Longhouse is a place of worship, and we haven't been able to use it during COVID," said Tribal Elder Karen Whitford, who lives 12 miles east of the Dalles in Celilo Village and was among those vaccinated.

It was a vaccination event that required collaboration between two states, four counties, the Intertribal Fish Commission, social service agencies and transportation partners. Leading the effort was one of the Oregon Health Authority's partners, One Community Health (OCH), based in Hood River and The Dalles.

"We advance health and social justice to all in our community regardless of the ability to pay," said OCH CEO Max Janasik. They offer medical, behavioral health and dental services, as well as education and outreach to seasonal farm workers, tribal members and others.

Gladys Rivera, preventative health manager, led the effort to vaccinate tribal members who would have struggled to access vaccines. Many live at fishing sites along the Columbia River, often hours away from the nearest Indian



A collage of photographs explore the vaccination event at Celilo Jan. 27. Photo courtesy Oregon Health Authority

"It was happy heartbreak, seeing who was alive and who wasn't."

Karen Whitford
Tribal Elder, Celilo Village

Health Services clinic and have limited or no access to running water, electricity, cell phones or other basic services.

OCH sent three community health workers and a nurse who lives in one of the villages to 16 sites along the Columbia River to register tribal members for the vaccination clinic. This involved going door-to-door, gathering

people's information, scheduling an appointment and arranging transportation. Over four days they registered 104 Tribal members.

"That is what equitable access should look like," Rivera said. "We can't expect people to come to us. We need to go to them. My favorite part has been establishing that rapport and trust. To be invited to their home and provide

that service, that hasn't happened before."

"We like to make the Longhouse useful," noted Whitford. She and many other Tribal members have now had second doses. She lost her nephew to COVID-19 and her husband is still suffering its aftereffects. Watching people arrive in their cars to be vaccinated, she said, "It was happy heartbreak, seeing who was alive and who wasn't."

She is still being very cautious but now, she said, "I feel safe."

COVID Vaccine demand outstrips supply

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in the region by the Oregon Health Authority and those tests are showing fewer positive cases as well. She noted that as things begin to reopen, residents need to continue following recommendations to wear a mask, maintain social distance and wash hands frequently.

"People's behavior is going to make a difference," McDonell explained. "People know what they are supposed to do. People need to be responsible."

"But it's reasonable to expect we can keep this (low case count) where it is. There could be another bump in cases, but if people follow the rules, we can stay here. I think we can all be really excited by how much better control we have of this virus than we did in December and January."

Vaccine availability

Vaccine availability continues to grow in the county, but demand continues to outstrip supply, McDonell reported.

"At this point in time we have way more people who want the vaccine than we have vaccine available," McDonell said. "At this moment, demand way outstrips supply."

She added that all three vaccine types were very effective in preventing severe illness and noted "the right vaccine for you is the one you can get."

"We are still trying to honor the order (older first), and adding in others who are eligible as we get doses. We only open up slots when we know we are getting the vaccine, so first doses are only booked out two weeks ahead," McDonell said. "We are trying to be as equitable as we can. I know it's super frustrating," she added. "It's not perfect, that's for sure."

"There will be slots added on every week. The OHA seems to believe that by the

end of March, when the new groups open up, the vast majority of seniors who want the vaccine will have gotten them," McDonell said.

She noted that with the reduction in virus spread, if people continue to follow the guidelines "we will be okay during this time" as we await the vaccine.

Pharmacies, including Safeway and BiMart locally, have their own scheduling system and residents should check online for availability.

Upcoming vaccination plans Wasco County

Clinics continue at The Dalles Readiness Center Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Some weekend "second dose" clinics also continue. Visiting health teams will start at home vaccinations in two weeks.

One Community Health offers vaccinations Fridays, plus one additional day each week. OCH also is working with native people, with Celilo Village clinics.

Local pharmacies giving

vaccinations include Safeway and BiMart.

Information online

covidvaccine.oregon.gov
ncphd.org/covid-vaccines
ncphd.org/
covid-vaccines
cdc.gov/faccines/covid-19

Wasco, Sherman and Gilliam vaccine update

North Central Public Health District is providing a weekly update of COVID-19 vaccines distributed in its three county service area of Wasco, Sherman and Gilliam counties.

Entities currently providing vaccines include North Central Public Health District, Mid-Columbia Medical Center, One Community Health, Sherman County Medical Clinic in Moro, Arlington Health Center in Condon and Deschutes Rim Clinic in Maupin. Local long term care facility residents and staff were vaccinated by national pharmacy chains. There is increasing availability through local pharmacies. Check their websites for more information.

Through Feb. 27, the entities listed below have administered 7,471 vaccines, including first and second doses.

The breakdown of vaccines by agency or group is: North Central Public Health District (NCPHD): 3,225 cumulative doses: 890 the week ending Feb. 27.

Sherman County Medical Center: 357 cumulative, 43 the week ending Feb. 27. Mid-Columbia Medical Center: 1,481 cumulative. (MCMC staffs a vaccine clinic on Wednesdays but the vaccine count is now tabulated through NCPHD.)

One Community Health: 545 cumulative; 214 the week ending Feb. 27.

Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue: 332 cumulative doses (MCFR has completed its vaccine work, which included first responders).

Arlington Health Center: 40 cumulative; 20 the week ending Feb. 27.

South Gilliam Health Center: 44 cumulative, 11 the week ending Feb. 27.

Local long term care facilities: 1,406 cumulative doses. (Long term care facilities have completed their doses.)

Vaccines are being given to healthcare providers, emergency responders, educators and childcare providers, and now, those 65 and older. Wasco County has vaccinated 16 percent of its population, Sherman County 18.4 percent and Gilliam County 14 percent.

Wasco County has vaccinated 54.5 percent of those 80 and older; 37 percent of those 75-79; 23.9 percent of those 70-74; and 17 percent of those 65-69. Sherman County has vaccinated 58 percent of those 80 and older; 21.6 percent of those 75-79; 25.5 percent of those 70-74; and 22.8 percent of those 65-69. Gilliam County has vaccinated 48 percent of those 80 and older; 34.8 percent of those 75-79; 24.8 percent of those 70-74; and 12.9 percent of those 65-69.

The ability to vaccinate is determined by how much vaccine is received from the state each week, as well as state guidelines about who is currently eligible to get them.

Lower risk guidelines

Wasco county is at the "lower risk" state category, which means:

- Indoor dining is allowed, not to exceed 50 percent capacity with a midnight closing time.

- Indoor recreation and fitness capacity not to exceed 50 percent, indoor full-contact sports prohibited.

- Outdoor recreation is allowed, with a maximum 300 people. Full-contact sports are allowed.

- Faith institutions are to operate at 75 percent maximum capacity, with outdoor gatherings limited to 300.

- Museums, theaters and other indoor entertainment venues can open, limited to 50 percent capacity.

- General indoor social gatherings are limited to a maximum of 10.

- Offices are allowed limited opening.

MAYOR Many stepped up to help in 2020

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"The police department and the firefighters, they get a fair amount of credit, it's pretty well-known. I continue to be amazed at our particular police department here in The Dalles and what

they've had to put up with over the year," he said. "But the grocery store is a good example of people who you don't really think about as much as we should and how they've really stepped up and tried to make our lives as easy as possible."

Mays said the city had distributed \$200,000 in relief funds, broken up into two rounds of awards. The first round split \$100,000 between

around 65 businesses while the second offered the same amount of money specifically to restaurants and fitness centers. Funds also went to non-profits including Salvation Army, Point Man Ministries and Windy River Gleaners.

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