

IN BRIEF

Vaccines against the virus available to seniors next week

Coronavirus vaccines will be available for seniors age 80 and older in Clatsop County beginning next week.

The county's vaccine task force said Friday that 200 vaccine doses will be available to seniors by appointment only.

Another 200 doses are earmarked for those remaining in the highest priority group, as well as 100 doses for teachers.

Seniors who filled out the county's vaccine planning survey will be contacted with instructions about how to register for a vaccination event.

The vaccine planning survey is available on the county's website and will help the task force notify people when they are eligible for a vaccine.

More vaccination events will be scheduled as vaccines become available.

As of Friday, the county has administered 3,939 doses, including 3,019 first doses and 920 second doses.

Steadfast returns after 45-day counternarcotics patrol

The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Steadfast returned to Astoria on Saturday following a 45-day counternarcotics patrol in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

The crew interdicted four vessels suspected of smuggling illicit narcotics. Seven suspected narcotics traffickers were detained and 1,675 pounds of cocaine, worth more than \$28 million, was seized, according to the Coast Guard.

The crew celebrated Christmas and New Year's Day on patrol. Videos from the crew members families, along with gifts, were arranged.

Prior to deployment, the crew was tested for the coronavirus, followed by a two-week monitoring period.

"Throughout their patrol, Steadfast's crew maintained strict health precautions during all interactions with the public, including wearing face coverings at all times and undergoing intensive health screenings prior to each boarding," the Coast Guard said in a statement.

State seeks candidates for hatchery research board

The state is looking for three new members to represent a range of issues, including the Columbia River gill net fishery, on the Oregon Hatchery Research Center Board.

Successful candidates will each serve four-year terms. The volunteer board includes 12 members who represent a variety of groups.

The Oregon Hatchery Research Center is a cooperative project between the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon State University.

The project's mission involves looking at the mechanisms that may create differences between wild and hatchery fish and devising ways to reduce and manage those differences.

For more information, visit www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OHRC/board.asp

— The Astorian

DEATHS

Feb. 1, 2021

GASSNER, Arlen, 92, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

RISLOW, Kenneth Homer, 77, of Astoria, died in Seaside. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Jan. 29, 2021

KOCHINSKI, Vera, 89, of Arch Cape, died in

Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Jan. 26, 2021

WIITALA, Donald, 90, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

Jan. 20, 2021

EDWARDS, Cora, 92, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

MONDAY

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., (electronic meeting).

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Planning Commission, 10 a.m., (electronic meeting).

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Board of Directors, 5:15 p.m., workshop, (electronic meeting).

Clatsop Community College Board of Education, 5:30 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Cannon Beach City Council, 6 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Lewis & Clark Fire Department Board, 6 p.m., main fire station, 34571 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

Warrenton City Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

ADVERTISING OWNERSHIP

All advertising copy and illustrations prepared by The Astorian become the property of The Astorian and may not be reproduced for any use without explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT ©

Entire contents © Copyright, 2021 by The Astorian.



Printed on recycled paper

Subscription rates
Effective January 12, 2021

MAIL

EZpay (per month).....\$10.75
13 weeks in advance.....\$37.00
26 weeks in advance.....\$71.00
52 weeks in advance.....\$135.00

DIGITAL

EZpay (per month).....\$8.25



DINING OUT

TOP: Mark Hemmer, left, and Linh DePledge of Cannery Pier Hotel & Spa eat lunch Friday on the deck of the Bridgewater Bistro. LEFT: Amos Clapp puts together The Kose on the back deck of the Portland-made outdoor dining enclosure to encourage customers to dine outside.

Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Providence offered insiders early access to vaccine

By JEFF MANNING
The Oregonian

Providence Health & Services gave early access to coveted COVID-19 vaccines to some members of its Oregon governing and foundation boards in December and January.

Lisa Vance, the CEO of Providence Oregon, said the practice amounted to preferential treatment for insiders, some of whom are also donors.

The Oregon Health Authority said Providence's actions didn't meet the state's guidelines for initial vaccine distribution.

"Vaccinating hospital administrators, managers, executives, board members and other staff who don't have the greatest potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials is not in alignment with Phase 1a guidance," said Jonathan Modie, a spokesman for the Oregon Health Authority.

Providence's questionable vaccine allocations were small in number and took place largely at facilities outside Portland. Some cases involved doses that were nearing expiration and needed to be injected that day, according to Providence. Still, they have prompted the organization to launch a review of its policies and procedures.

Providence operates eight hospitals in Oregon, making it the largest health system in the state. It was founded by Catholic nuns and Providence often refers to its individual hospitals and other businesses as "ministries."

"While our ministries were acting in good faith and with the best intentions, we believe we need to ensure our decisions are fully aligned with our values, especially our value of justice," Vance said. "We hold ourselves accountable to ensuring equity for all we serve. We are taking actions to do that going forward, including working with our partners in all of our community clinics."



Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian

A year ago, hospitals were gearing up virus testing centers. Now, they're administering the vaccine, but only under strict rules of priority.

Providence's senior executives in Oregon and all 17 members of the nonprofit's governing body — the Oregon Community Ministry board — were vaccinated weeks ago. Providence insists that those vaccines for executives and its governing members were consistent with state rules because they qualify as administrative or volunteer personnel under Oregon's broad definition of health care workers.

The rollout of the much-anticipated vaccines has been difficult in Oregon and most of the rest of the country. The ongoing vaccine shortage has fueled an intense debate about how to prioritize access to the life-saving shots.

Oregon put health care workers at the front of the line under the state's vaccine sequencing plan, classifying them as 1a in the priority roster.

Providence in December offered the vaccine to all 27,000 of its Oregon employees and medical staff members. Just 70% accepted the offer. The others declined the vaccine outright or said they preferred to wait until more was known about its safety, Providence spokesman Gary Walker said.

Among those who accepted the vaccine were Vance, Chief Operating Officer William Olson and most of the rest of Providence Oregon's senior executives.

Providence argues that it did nothing wrong in offer-

ing early vaccinations to its executives and to members of the board. It points to the state's broad definition of qualifying health care worker, which includes "administrative" and "volunteers" personnel in addition to the nurses and doctors actually working the COVID wards.

Providence is interpreting "administrative" to include all of its executives, regardless of how much time, if any, they spend actually caring for patients.

The Oregon Health Authority said Providence's interpretation is incorrect.

"With both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines remaining in short supply, they must make sure these scarce resources are only administered to individuals who are eligible to receive them — and that means only staff who have the greatest potential for direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials," said Modie, the health authority spokesman.

However, Modie said the state does not anticipate sanctioning Providence. He said the health authority expects providers to take responsibility and allocate vaccines appropriately.

"We're asking people who work or volunteer in health care, or serve on health care boards, to do the right thing: If your work doesn't put you at risk of direct or indirect exposure to patients or infectious materials, you probably aren't part of Phase 1a, you aren't eligible, and you should wait your turn to get vaccinated," Modie said.

The issues around Providence's vaccine prioritization are far from unique — similar episodes have sparked controversy around the country. The Seattle Times has reported that three medical systems in that region, including Providence's medical center in Everett, gave special vaccine access to big donors or foundation members.

Earlier this week, Washington state warned that it may cut vaccine allocations to organizations that provide

VIP access.

In southern Oregon, Providence Medford Medical Center is distributing the vaccine. Members of the local Providence foundation board were quietly offered the opportunity to be put on a vaccine waiting list. They would be called in to receive the vaccine should the hospital finish the day with an excess of doses.

Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines must be stored at cold temperatures and must be used promptly once they are warmed for injection.

The hospital thaws a certain number of doses each day based on the number of appointments they have. If the patient doesn't show up, it needs to find a replacement right away or discard the dose when it expires at the end of the day.

Providence officials said they're not sure how many insiders in Medford accepted the offer and got the shot.

Out on the coast, Providence Seaside Hospital offered vaccines to both its community board and foundation board. Six of those board members accepted the offer and got early shots.

Providence's Vance did not know about the arrangements in Medford or Seaside and would have objected if she did, according to Providence spokesman Gary Walker.

Providence has 10 foundations in Oregon, including the organizations in Medford and Seaside. Between them, they raised nearly \$54 million in 2019.

Almost by definition, board members of foundations are also major donors.

"Certainly there is a longstanding tradition of asking board members to donate a lot of money," said Jeri Alcock, partner and senior consultant at Rose City Philanthropy in Portland.

All philanthropic boards should also have conflict-of-interest rules on its books, Alcock added.

"The whole point of being on the board is that you're a disinterested third party," the consultant said. "You don't profit from being part of it."

Providence officials initially maintained that it had complied with all of Oregon's rules for vaccine administration.

"Providence Oregon did not give any preferential treatment to donors in the COVID vaccination process," the health system said in email on Monday. "We act in good faith, aligning our actions with the guidance of the Oregon Health Authority."

Two days later, Providence backed off that stance and admitted that indeed some insiders did get preferential access.

Volunteer Pick of the Week

Ollie

Young male Red Tabby

Though very shy, Ollie responds to love and quiet patience & will come to be an enduring friend.

Read more on Petfinder.com

Sponsored By CLATSOP COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER
1315 SE 19th Street, Warrenton • 861-PETS
www.dogsncats.org Noon to 4pm, Tues-Sat