

Safeway receives COVID-19 vaccine through federal program

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Wallowa County residents have another outlet where they will be able to get COVID-19 vaccinations as they are distributed.

Safeway in Enterprise, as well as many other retail pharmacies, have begun receiving doses of the COVID-19 vaccine through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program.

According to the Oregon Health Authority website, "The partnership is a collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), states and territories, and 21 national pharmacy partners and independent pharmacy networks. Shipments arrived on Feb. 10 at 127 retail pharmacies in Oregon."

Enterprise's Safeway store received 100 doses two weeks ago, and was slated to receive another 100 last week before nationwide inclement weather issues delayed the shipment. More doses are expected to arrive this week.

"All of our Safeway/Alb-



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

On Monday, Feb. 22, 2021, a Safeway pharmacist administers the first shot of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to a person referred to Safeway by Wallowa Memorial Hospital.

erton's pharmacies except for a couple are part of the federal partnership that started (two weeks ago) with the shipment from the federal government to the pharmacies," said Jill McGinnis, director of communication and public affairs for Safeway.

McGinnis said the Safe-

way pharmacy staff worked with Wallowa Memorial Hospital to coordinate distribution of the vaccine to those individuals on the local waitlist. Currently, senior citizens are on the list to get a shot in Wallowa County.

"We talked to the hospi-

tal — both Brooke Pace and

Ruthie Mann — and are cooperating with them to get as many people covered as possible," said Nancy Stangel, pharmacy manager at Enterprise's Safeway. "They have a long list. We're trying to work together to get people covered as quickly as possible."

Stangel said the Safeway

pharmacy having the availability to vaccinate gives residents another option of where they can get inoculated.

"In talking with the hospital they have been doing an awesome job to help vaccinate our community and county, but there are always a few people who can't make it," on the hospital vaccination clinic days, Stangel said. Those vaccination clinics have been on Tuesdays and Fridays when the vaccine is available.

"We were able to call 50 people at the top of our waitlist and instruct them to call Safeway," Brooke Pace, communications director at WMH, said of how the collaboration worked from the hospital's end.

Having an additional location that can immunize will help speed up the process of getting shots to those who want them, Pace said.

"This is a great way for us to work through the list at a faster pace, especially if we get to a situation where both Safeway and the hospital are receiving shipments," she said. "We're hoping that we will continue to work in part-

nership with Safeway to work (through) the waitlist that we have."

Stangel praised the efforts put forth by the hospital staff, and said the staff has played a key role in helping coordinate people for immunization at Safeway.

"They've been doing a great job. They have a great team set up," she said. "I appreciate all they have been doing, and appreciate them working with us to try and help out."

As of Monday afternoon, Feb. 22, there have been 1,183 first doses administered in the county, and 670 individuals have received both doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. There are 594 people on the county waitlist.

Overall, there have been 142 cases of COVID-19 in the county since the start of the pandemic last year, including 40 this month.

To sign up online for a vaccine through Safeway (when it's available) visit www.safeway.com/covid-19, or call WMH at 541-426-5437, if you're 65 or older, to be added to the waitlist.

When the letters fall off of the page

Catherine Matthias helps people conquer the visual chaos of Irlen Syndrome

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP
For the Wallowa County Chieftain



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Catherine Matthias is a children's writer who has Irlen Syndrome and also is an Irlen screener. Her book about the condition, *Word Gobblers*, is due out in mid-March 2021.

JOSEPH — In 2018, Joseph children's writer Catherine Matthias suffered a fall. She hit her head, hard, and had a brain concussion.

"After that," she said, "I couldn't stand, and I couldn't handle glare or bright lights."

But Matthias, whose grandson suffers from Irlen Syndrome, recognized these effects as symptoms of the same little-known brain disorder.

"Irlen Syndrome is not a vision problem, it's a brain processing problem," Matthias said. "It's a perceptual disorder caused by the brain's inability to process specific wavelengths of light."

"People who have this syndrome get headaches. They get nauseous, or dizzy," she said. "They may look at a page and what looks like an orderly column of numbers or letters to you, may appear to them as random figures spread all across the page."

Irlen Syndrome sufferers often have trouble reading conventional text — black type on white paper. Instead of nice, orderly text, they see swirls of sentences, or letters that move, appear in columns, vibrate or literally fall off the page.

Matthias is now a certified Irlen Syndrome screener. But her personal experience made her acutely aware of the devastating effects that this rarely recognized condition, found in an estimated 16% of people across the globe, can have.

Her book, *Word Gobblers*, about recognizing and helping children (and adults) with Irlen Syndrome will be published in mid-March. It is illustrated by local artist Joan Gilbert.

"It's different for everybody, and it can be very subtle," Matthias said. "For about 50% of people who have it, it's genetic. For the other 50% it's usually brain injuries. It can also be triggered by high fevers or certain viruses."

The cause of Irlen Syndrome, Matthias noted, is that the brain is not processing certain light waves. And those lightwaves (colors) are different for different people. As the brain starts building a picture of a written page or other subject, it's not making any sense because some of the wavelengths (colors) are missing. Consequently, people with Irlen Syndrome have brains that are sort of hyperactive, trying to make sense of incomplete pictures.

The solutions for Matthias and others with Irlen Syndrome include placing colored filters on top of pages of text or printing text out on colored paper. But the best thing, Matthias said, is wearing a pair of glasses or contact lenses with multiple color filters that are specifically designed for the individual's needs.

Matthias now wears a pair of specially prescribed glasses with five different color filters. The glasses also are designed to cut down on glare from the sides and top. She wouldn't go anywhere without them.

"The glasses are not a cure, Matthias said. "You

cannot cure this. All you can do is ameliorate it. The glasses aren't really colored to the observer, and they don't change colors you are seeing. But they do they make what you see more true to life because your brain is not trying to make sense of chaos."

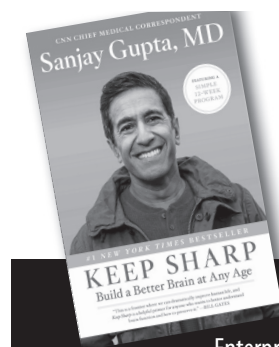
As a certified Irlen Syndrome screener, Matthias uses 10 different colored filters to determine which colored filters work. There are several hundred combinations. Diagnosticians who can actually prescribe the color combinations for glasses have more than 100,000 options to meet the needs of each individual.

"I had a friend from Portland, who's a successful photographer, painter and writer, coming to visit and I explained that I needed someone without Irlen Syndrome to test," Matthias said. "We went through the test and I don't remember which color it was, but we were going through colors and I put a color over her page, and she burst into sobs. And I'm thinking 'What have I done to my friend?' And she finally looked at me and said, 'My entire childhood makes sense now.'"

For more information about Irlen Syndrome and the Irlen Institute, visit <https://irlen.com>.

To contact Catherine Matthias for questions about a screening or diagnosis, visit her website: CatherineMatthias.com.

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