

How Addison officials teamed up to stage mass vaccination



Jewel-Osco pharmacist Toni Palmisano inoculates an Addison resident with the woman's first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine during a Wednesday afternoon clinic at Addison Trail High School organized by DuPage High School District 88, the village of Addison and the pharmacy chain. (*Courtesy of the Village of Addison*)



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Updated

2/17/2021 7:48 PM

While many Illinois residents eligible to receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine struggle to find an appointment, officials in Addison have alleviated that frustration for thousands of the town's older residents.

Partnering with DuPage High School District 88, village officials created a makeshift call center at village hall Saturday after sending a mass phone notice to residents that several thousand doses of the vaccine would be available to anyone eligible beginning Wednesday.

"This went from a plan to a reality in less than 36 hours, and it's only because of our great employees who allowed it to happen," said Addison Village Manager Joe Maranowicz. "We had 20 employees who spoke a variety of languages ready at the call center we made at the village when it went live at 10 a.m. Saturday."



Addison Mayor Rich Veenstra, left, and DuPage High School District 88 interim Superintendent Jean Barbanente discuss logistics of a two-day vaccination clinic that began Wednesday at Addison Trail High School. - Courtesy of the village of Addison

For weeks, District 88 interim Superintendent Jean Barbanente and other district officials had been trying to find a vaccine provider to partner with to provide inoculations to the district's teachers and staff members. She also invited the high school district's three elementary school feeder districts to participate.

Barbanente knew the district would have better luck if it partnered with the village because of requirements many providers have to vaccinate communities that were disproportionately affected during the pandemic. Addison has one of the highest per-capita COVID-19 infection rates in DuPage County.

Still, as good as the district's and village's chances looked on paper, Barbanente knew the scarcity of doses would likely limit their chances of securing vaccines.

"We definitely advocated on every level," Barbanente said. "But I also prayed a lot."

Late last week, those prayers were answered when Jewel-Osco officials notified the school district it had been selected for a two-day vaccination clinic that started Wednesday. But then Genoa Healthcare also contacted the school district to let Barbanente and her team know they'd been selected to host another vaccination program slated for this Saturday and Sunday.

Combined, the two clinics will provide 4,700 doses of the vaccine. Half will go to educators, and the other half to residents 65 and older over the

four days. Barbanente said that because some teachers had already secured vaccination appointments elsewhere, more of the doses will be available to residents in Addison, as well as those in neighboring towns.

"The villages were all in charge of getting appointments for their residents, and we're handling all the other logistics," she said.

That meant turning the gymnasium at Addison Trail High School into a vaccination center capable of doling out as many as 1,750 doses a day. While medical workers are supplied by Jewel-Osco and Genoa, the district is responsible for staffing the school with people to direct traffic, check in patients and handle additional administrative tasks.

When Maranowicz was finally able to see the operation in action Wednesday, he was floored by how well everything worked.

"I knew this was something possible when we put our collective minds together, but it's something else to actually see it happen," he said.

About 1,300 of the village's estimated 5,100 residents who are 65 and older are expected to receive vaccines during the clinics. Maranowicz also praised Addison Mayor Rich Veenstra for coordinating with officials in neighboring Lombard, Oakbrook Terrace and Villa Park to make sure residents in those suburbs were also offered a chance to be vaccinated.

"It sounds cliché, but this really was a team effort," he said.

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