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For immediate release

Rice County Public Health: 114 clinics, 16,257 COVID-19 vaccines in 2021

Rice County Public Health last week marked a year of COVID-19 vaccinations clinics by holding its 114th clinic. That's an average of nearly 2.2 clinics per week.

Some weeks, had far more than that, says Tracy Ackman-Shaw, Rice County Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. One week it hosted six clinics. Only once -- in February -- did it go a week without a clinic, but that was due to a shortage of vaccines.

In all, Public Health staff administered 16,257 vaccinations between Dec. 30, 2020 and Dec. 30, 2021. The highest number of doses was at its April 28 clinic, where 695 vaccinations were given. That's followed closely by the March 31 clinic, with 693 doses.



Faribault Police Chief Andy Bohlen receives his booster shot during a Dec. 30, 2021 COVID-19 vaccination clinic staffed by Rice County Public Health. Giving Bohlen his vaccination is Public Health nurse Marie McCarthy. (Rice County photo)

While many clinic are held at the Rice County Government Services Building in Faribault, clinics continue to be held across the county. Many are evening events, meaning staff works after normal hours to ensure residents have access to the immunizations. In addition, Public Health staff have vaccinated residents of long-term care facilities and group homes, and even those who are homebound.

Ackman-Shaw has nothing but praise for her colleagues who've worked and helped prepare for the clinics, and likens them to a well-oiled machine. Putting together an offsite clinic takes hours of planning and preparation to ensure patients are served quickly and efficiently. There has to be sufficient staffing (anywhere from five to 15 staff members), adequate supplies, a facility that can accommodate large



When the weather cooperated, clinics could be held outdoors. (Rice County photo)

numbers, and signage – sometimes in multiple languages -- to direct and inform patients. Interpreters were also utilized at some sites, she said.

“Our staff are very skilled now at running a mass vaccination clinic,” she said. “We’ve learned a lot as a department and have improved operations due to those experiences. We have heard lots of positive feedback from the attendees that our clinics are easily accessible and have very little wait time”

Continuing to work hard to keep the community safer through vaccinations is definitely a priority for the Public Health department.

Public Health Director Deb Purfeerst, too, acknowledges those extra efforts.

“I am particularly grateful to our staff, who have gone above and beyond to help with our pandemic response and have worked hard to assist in vaccination efforts for the residents of Rice County. In addition, we are grateful to all of the other healthcare providers and partners in Rice County who continue to work together on pandemic response efforts.”

One of those providers is Northfield Hospital + Clinics, which has shared some of its Pfizer vaccine with Public Health. And in Faribault, HyVee Pharmacy staff have partnered with Public Health to vaccinate residents at long-term care facilities.

As of Dec. 27, 66.7% of Rice County residents 5 years and older have received at least one COVID-19 vaccination, according to the Minnesota Department of Health. Nearly 63% of county residents have completed the series. More than 12,700 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Rice County. A total of 149 county residents’ deaths have been attributed to the disease.



Public Health officials made a concerted effort to ensure all Rice County residents were aware that vaccinations were available at no charge. (Rice County photo)

REMINDERS:

- Minnesotans 5 years and older are eligible for vaccination. Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones.
- Get a booster dose when you are eligible. Visit bit.ly/3mYr5EY for the latest on eligibility. Being fully vaccinated and boosted significantly increases protection against several illness or death from infection.
- The Rice County Public Health website has information about upcoming COVID-19 vaccination clinics. To register, visit co.rice.mn.us/528/GET-VACCINATED-COVID-19. Walk-ins are accepted. Anyone with prior COVID-19 vaccinations should bring their vaccination card to the clinic.

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