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CRMC Awaits Vaccine



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By VINCE CONTI

COURT HOUSE - The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Dec. 11, and its disbursement began.

The Moderna vaccine appears to be next in line. New Jersey-based Johnson & Johnson is reporting its vaccine nearing final testing.

It is known that vaccines, which studies show to be highly effective, are on the way, but in what numbers, when and with what priorities among the population?

Who Makes the Rules?

Federal agencies will determine the distribution of initial doses to the states. There is no publically available database on how many doses

will be sent to each state.

New Jersey officials said they expect 76,000 doses of Pfizer's vaccine in the initial rollout, with anywhere from 300,000 to 500,000 additional doses by the end of the year.

Once an allotment has been distributed to the states, state officials control its further distribution to points of dispensing (POD).

New Jersey made health care workers most at risk for exposure and long-term care facility residents and staff priorities for initial doses. State estimates are that there are 650,000 individuals in eligible populations at health care and long-term care facilities across the state, meaning initial shipments will not cover all individuals in the priority populations.

Cape Regional Medical Center (CRMC), in Court House, Dec. 11 said that they are prepared

to begin vaccinations as soon as doses arrive. The priority will go to frontline health care workers, according to a hospital spokesperson.

As of Dec. 11, CRMC reported 26 COVID-19 patients, six of whom were in intensive care.

Two doses of Pfizer's vaccine are required weeks apart. State plans say that the Department of Health expects POD locations to administer all doses they receive within 21 days of receipt of the vaccine from the distributor. Doses will not be held in reserve for the required second shot.

In a letter to all acute care hospitals, Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli said "Booster / second doses will be sent at appropriate intervals after prime / first doses are administered." The state will use an online system to track vaccinations.

(Page A8 Please)

Christmas Differently Businesses Get 'Creative' to Attract Patrons Amid Pandemic

By BILL BARLOW

This is the second in a series on celebrating Christmas differently in Cape May County due to COVID-19.

CAPE MAY - Lights twinkle from trees, shrubs, houses, and businesses while shoppers chat in groups or stroll the Washington Street Mall's decorated shops, almost like a normal year.

However, 2020 has been anything but normal, and the usual holiday celebrations are no different.

A few shoppers wear masks while walking the outdoor mall, while some do not or keep their masks around their necks until they see a store they want to enter.

Most towns nixed their regular holiday gatherings, or dramatically altered them. Upper Township planned to relocate its annual tree-lighting ceremony to a larger outdoor space, but as the numbers of COVID-19 infections continued to increase, officials opted instead for a virtual version of the event, with video messages posted online instead of the community gathering.

It was one of several accommodations made by local officials to avoid public gatherings and reduce the potential for the virus to spread.

Business owners coming to the close of a tough year face a dilemma. They want to keep customers safe, as well as make sure they are comfortable with their level of precautions, but many rely on holiday spending for a cash infusion.

"Everyone's just trying to be very creative," said Vicki Clark, president, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce.

Bars, restaurants, shops and other businesses had to find new options, both to accommodate the state-imposed limits on inside gatherings and to make sure customers feel comfortable.

"People are being very cautious with their in-person shopping," Clark said. Around the nation, many stuck with online giants, like Amazon, for their holiday shopping this year. This fall, Amazon reported that pandemic-driven sales helped triple the company's profits for 2020 compared to last year, with reported revenues of close to \$100 billion, above analysts' expectations. Shoppers are aware of how the dollars flowed

away from locally owned brick-and-mortar operations, Clark said, and want to do their part to help.

"There is a spirit that everyone wants to shop locally. There is a move for people to support their local community," she said.

That includes a trend toward gift cards from local businesses this year. The business sees an

(Page A10 Please)

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As it has for over 50 years, advertising supports most of our print newspaper circulation, but as our advertisers struggle in these COVID-challenged times, so does the Herald. This means less income to support the significant cost of reporting the news, printing and delivering papers each week. Meanwhile, demand for the Herald is stronger than ever. Less money to serve more

(Page A28 Please)

Keeping Inmates In and COVID-19 Out

14-day Quarantine for New Inmates Prevents Virus' Spread, Officials Say

By BILL BARLOW

CREST HAVEN - It's just under two years since the completion of the new Cape May County Correctional Facility, in January 2019, replacing the facility officials said was overcrowded and dangerously obsolete.

The world of criminal justice changed before the first inmate arrived at the facility, when New Jersey essentially eliminated cash bail, in 2017, after the work on the larger facility was under

way. That meant fewer people behind bars while awaiting trial.

A wider change arrived this year, in the form of a new-to-the-world coronavirus that swept around the globe, infecting millions and killing hundreds of thousands in the U.S. Prisons and jails worldwide saw some of COVID-19's most devastating impacts.

As more was learned about the disease in spring, Cape May County Sheriff Robert Nolan received a dire warning from Kevin Thomas, county health coordinator: Do not let COVID-19 into the jail.

It was a warning Nolan took to heart, he said, in a recent interview. Working with local health officials and staff, he instituted stringent guide-

lines for the guards, the contractors who keep the inmates fed, and anyone else entering the county jail. Masks are mandatory, and everyone gets their temperature taken before entry.

Those incarcerated face tougher limitations. "Everybody who's committed to the jail is either isolated or quarantined for 14 days. The difference is whether you have symptoms or you don't have symptoms of COVID," said Warden Donald Lombardo. "It has nothing to do with charges. It has nothing to do with anything but COVID."

"Everybody that comes in the door," Nolan added. Lombardo, Nolan, and Antwan McClellan sat down in a conference room at the jail to talk about

(Page A42 Please)

Analysis

COVID-19 Update: NJ Administers 1st Vaccine as Cases Grow

By VINCE CONTI

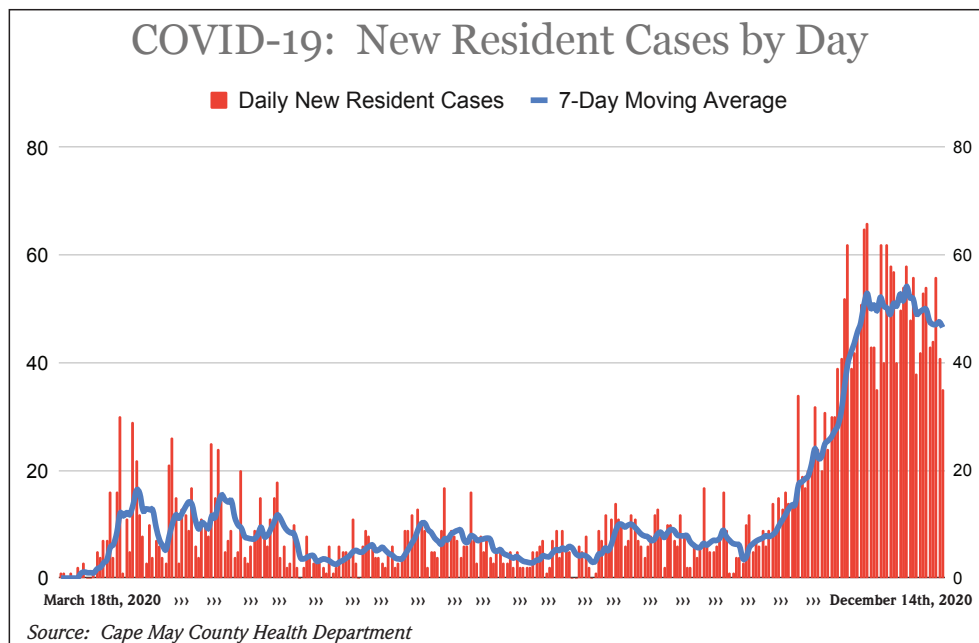
COURT HOUSE - Pfizer's vaccine gained U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emergency use authorization Dec. 11, and frontline health care workers Dec. 14 began receiving the first of two required shots. The Moderna vaccine is likely to be up for review before the FDA's panel of experts in several days.

New Jersey will receive about 76,000 initial doses of the Pfizer vaccine, and health care workers, in Newark, were the first, in New Jersey, to get initial shots Dec. 15. Gov. Phil Murphy said the state would be receiving an increased weekly allotment until the amount plateaus, in January.

In Cape May County, Cape Regional Medical Center (CRMC) is equipped with the required ultra-cold freezer to safely store the vaccine. The hospital plans to begin vaccinating health care staff as soon as the doses are available.

As vaccine allotments increase, long-term care facilities will also be priority recipients. The logistics of vaccinations at these facilities may require several days of lead time since consent forms will be needed. For some, that process can involve family. The federal

(Page A44 Please)



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS Page A19
Holiday shopping and happenings.

DO THE SHORE Plan your dining and entertainment fun with family and friends. Page A19

CHRISTMAS SERVICES & special programs Page A15-17

HOME & GARDEN
Get ready for winter with tips from local pros! Page A30-36

WEEKLY FEATURES

Business	A14	Opinion	A46
Celebrations/Births	A12	Real Estate	A43
Christmas Services	A15-17	Religion	A15
Classifieds	A37	Sports	A10
DoTheShore	A19	Spout Off	A12
Home & Garden	A30	Tides/Fishing	A28
Obituaries	A45	What's Cooking	A11

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