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## **For Immediate Release**

### ***MCHD will provide 625 vaccines on Thursday during regional event***

**MORGANTOWN, WV (Jan. 12, 2020)** — Monongalia County Health Department continues to increase COVID-19 vaccines made available from the state, this week more than doubling the number of doses administered in a single day to 625 during a regional event on Thursday.

As instructed by Gov. Jim Justice’s “Operation Save Our Wisdom” campaign, MCHD will inoculate individuals 80 and older from North Central West Virginia.

Nearly half the vaccines will go to residents of Monongalia County, with remaining doses made up from rosters provided by Marion and Preston counties as well as Clay-Battelle Community Health Center in Blacksville. Appointments are being made using existing lists compiled by these facilities.

The vaccine clinic will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday at the West Virginia National Guard Readiness Center, 90 Army Band Way, off County Route 857. The turnoff is down the hill from the Pierpont Centre and will be marked with signs for traffic arriving from both directions. Assistance is being provided by Monongalia County Emergency Management.

“This event is really going to compel us to step up our game,” said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer. “We will have more registrars, more nurses administering vaccines, more wheelchairs and we will be using more space in the Readiness Center.”

MCHD has administered more than 1,500 vaccines since getting its first doses on Dec. 15, advancing from a weekly low of 162 to nearly 1,000 last week.

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Monongalia County Health Department is working with MECCA 911 and various county Homeland Security and Emergency Management agencies in planning and implementation of this and future events.

This ramp-up is something Dr. Smith anticipated, adding, “We’ve known that in order to get area residents vaccinated in a timely fashion, we would need to get more health care workers and more volunteers and provide more shots at these events.”

MCHD began inoculating individuals 80 years and older last week after Gov. Justice issued an order to do so on Dec. 30. These efforts began on Jan. 4, when 100 doses were provided, and was expanded on Thursday and Friday with 300 and 200 doses given, respectively.

“We’ve been very impressed with the amount of enthusiasm our seniors have as they step up to receive their inoculations,” Dr. Smith said. “This is an age group whose members can recall diseases such as polio, which was eliminated from the United States more than 40 years ago. They know how important vaccines are in the fight against this virus.”

He continued, “Vaccinations are a key public health function and MCHD will continue administering as many of these potentially life saving vaccinations that are designated for public health. We also provide information to those who have questions or doubts or may have not made up their minds, as well as focus on removing barriers so that all segments of our region are vaccinated. It is vital that no group or minority in our population be overlooked or passed over.”

Side effects to the vaccine are similar to those of a flu vaccine and can include pain at the site of injection, a fever and chills.

“These side effects are a result of your immune system mounting a response,” Dr. Smith said. “They have typically been mild, last only a short time and are certainly nothing compared to actually contracting COVID-19.

“Gauging by the enthusiasm of those expressing interest in the vaccine to the health department, we see that many of our community members are on board with the vaccine.”

Since receiving its first doses of Pfizer vaccine on Dec. 15, shortly after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration granted it emergency use authorization (EUA), MCHD has administered 1,509 doses. Initial doses went to first responders, law enforcement, health department employees and other front-line workers.

The breakdown is as follows: Week 1: 173 doses; Week 2: 162; Week 3: 180 and Week 4: 994 (600 for individuals 80 and older, 394 at MCHD).

Monongalia County Health Department expects regular shipments of vaccine and will administer it to residents following the schedule provided by West Virginia COVID-19 Vaccination Program and directives from Gov. Justice.

That schedule, as well as updated information on COVID-19 testing and vaccines, is available at [www.monchd.org/testing--vaccines.html](http://www.monchd.org/testing--vaccines.html). Up-to-date information also will be posted on MCHD's social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

There is no current estimate for when inoculation of other groups will begin. Interested individuals can call the health department at 304-598-5100 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays or 304-598-5196 after hours to be placed on a list for future vaccination.

Individuals will be prioritized by the schedule as well as age and other factors, such as whether someone's job duties and/or health issues would put them higher on the list.

"We know we have a road ahead of us, but MCHD is providing a robust effort in order to help get everyone in our community a COVID-19 vaccine who wants one," Dr. Smith said. "With a vigorous vaccination plan, we can create 'community immunity.'"

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