

A special present at Rose Villa

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By Raymond Rendleman



Rose Villa in Oak Grove was among Oregon's first long-term care facilities to receive the Pfizer vaccine on Monday, Dec. 21, when approximately 180 staff and residents

got the first of two COVID-19 vaccines; the second dose will be administered on Jan. 11.

All of Rose Villa's 35 long-term care residents chose to be inoculated, according to Vassar Byrd, CEO of the senior-living facility. Rose Villa has about 300 residents, most of whom are independent, and about 180 employees, of whom 145 chose to receive the vaccine.

According to state officials, long-term care facilities are receiving the vaccine first with frontline Health workers followed by assisted living, then people living independently in retirement communities. No exact timeline has been set, but the Oregon Health Authority expects the general population will have access to the vaccine by "spring 2021."

Byrd called the mass inoculation "momentous" not just for Rose Villa, but for every long-term care community across Oregon and the U.S. "This is a positive and substantial step - the first of many - in the road to living life post-pandemic," Byrd said. "It makes our community even safer for all the residents and staff and feels like a natural culmination of these long months of vigilance and care."

" We are full of hope that this vaccination program will reduce the suffering and hardship experienced by long-term care residents, staff and their families."

- *Fariborz Pakseresht, OHDS director*

Rose Villa officials said they weren't sure why their facility was picked to be the first to receive the vaccine. Rose Villa had an outbreak of eight cases of COVID-19 in the late September, but that outbreak didn't result in any deaths. Statewide data through

mid-December shows there have been 8,276 cases and 656 deaths associated with congregate care settings and COVID-19 in Oregon.

Data shows older adults and people with underlying health conditions are more likely to suffer life-threatening health consequences if they contract the virus. Given that COVID-19 is so contagious, the risks are particularly high for those who live in large group settings. Because of this, state officials plan to distribute an estimated 22,425 vaccine doses to nursing facilities, and as the roll-out continues additional doses will be allocated to assisted-living and residential care facilities.

In March state officials mandated strict infection control and visitation protocols to protect vulnerable Oregonians living in long-term care facilities.

“With those measures have come great sacrifices, and too many long-term care residents have gone far too long without being able to truly connect with their closest family members and loved ones” said Gov. Kate Brown. “It is one of the great tragedies of this pandemic that COVID-19 has been most deadly for our seniors living in long-term care. Even our most stringent policies have not been able to change that fact. Now, with the shipments of COVID-19 vaccines on their way to Oregon every week, we are eager to inoculate every person in our long-term care facilities as swiftly as we can, to prevent more heartbreaking loss, and work towards the day that the residents who have sacrificed so much can reunite with their families once again.”



Rose Villa staff member Kristina Delisle receives her proof of vaccination card on Monday, Dec. 21.

Oregon's Department of Human Services (ODHS) is working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to implement the COVID-19 vaccine plan calling for the pharmacy partners involved - Consonus, CVS and Walgreens - to set up on-site vaccination clinics at the states long-term care facilities as well as smaller congregate care settings. Smaller congregate care settings include adult foster homes and group care homes.

“We are full of hope that this vaccination program will reduce the suffering and hardship experienced by long-term care residence, staff and their families,” said ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht. “While we are pleased with the speed at which the vaccination program is rolling out, it will take some time to reach all facilities. In the meantime, we must remain vigilant and continue strict infection control policies and practices.”

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