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LOCAL NEWS



Hazardous roads

DeKalb police urge residents to drive with care amid drifting / 5

LOCAL NEWS

Election season

Candidates seek open spots on school boards across DeKalb County / 6

SPORTS



Finding a groove

Sycamore girls pull away late to defeat Rock Falls in nonconference game / 17

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'A GREAT RELIEF'

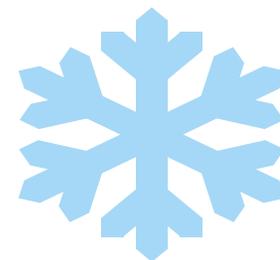
Residents receive COVID-19 vaccine, eye return to normalcy / 3

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TODAY'S WEATHER



HIGH
14
LOW
-6

Complete forecast on page 10

‘Cavalry is on the way’

Northwestern Medicine Kish Hospital hosts 1st COVID-19 vaccine clinic

By KATIE FINLON
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While James Moss of DeKalb was getting his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, he figured he could try to give people a laugh or a smile.

Moss said he remembered national infectious-disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci once talking about how with all of the progress and research being done worldwide to develop the vaccines, he was urging people to keep working together to try and help limit the spread of the virus, reassuring them “the cavalry is on the way.”

“I thought it was so cute, and it just kind of stuck in my mind,” Moss said with a chuckle.

In the past few months, Moss said, that phrase from Fauci was something he found himself saying to his neighbors several times over as everyone waited their turn to get the vaccine. When he and his wife, Dianne Moss, went to get their first vaccine doses Thursday, he decided to bring along a giant finger with a sign reading “The Cavalry” just to bring a little fun to the situation.

“When we’re working for a long period of time, just a little levity kind of helps and breaks up the monotony,” Moss said.

Moss received one of about 300 total doses administered Thursday during Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Hospital’s first COVID-19 vaccine clinic.

Moss said he and his wife getting the vaccine means seeing their four grown daughters more often and with less health risk. He said everyone in the family has been keeping their distance and, as a result, they haven’t been able to embrace each other, especially during the holiday season.

“We miss wrapping our arms around our kids,” Moss said, his voice breaking. “So for us, it’s a very personal thing, and it means a lot to us.”

Mike Gegner, west region program director for Northwestern Medicine, said he knows the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge effect on everyone in the area the health system serves, especially on older patients.

“It’s just really rewarding to provide the vaccine,” Gegner said. “It’s a lot of excitement, a lot of relief that you can see on the patients’ faces when they walk in.”

Gegner said he encourages people



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James Moss of DeKalb receives his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine Thursday at Northwestern Medicine Kishwaukee Hospital.

to continue to monitor not only their Northwestern Medicine invitations to register for the vaccine but also to keep an eye on other websites for posted vaccine sign-ups and schedules.

Gegner said Northwestern Medicine is only making certain time frames available for vaccine scheduling and registration. He said Kishwaukee Hospital, in particular, works very closely with the DeKalb County Health Department in planning vaccine administration and allocation, as the county gets a certain supply from the state each week.

Health officials have said this amounts to about 1,200 doses a week.

Because of that, Gegner said, health officials know what the week-to-week allocation is going to be, and they work alongside the county health department to distribute the vaccines accordingly.

“But it is totally dependent on what the health department receives from the state,” Gegner said.

Carol Tweedy of DeKalb, who was the first patient to receive the first dose of the Moderna vaccine Thursday, said she fell into the age-75-and-older crowd that is eligible for the vaccine. She said she thought the whole process went smoothly and that she was “feeling fine” hours after getting

the shot.

“I didn’t feel a thing,” Tweedy said. “No reaction whatsoever.”

Tweedy said she’s been fortunate enough to be able to see her great-grandchildren from a distance during the pandemic, but not being able to hold them has been hard. She said she’s hoping she can get more hugs once she’s fully vaccinated by mid-March.

“I miss the hugs I’ve gotten from family members and friends, and I’m just looking forward to doing that again,” Tweedy said.

David Mason of DeKalb said the first thing he noticed when walking into the clinic was how smoothly it was being run. Not only does he fall within the 75-and-older crowd, he said, but he previously has recovered from triple-bypass heart surgery, a blood clot in his arm and a stroke.

“I’m a ripe candidate – I was ready for it,” Mason said with a chuckle.

Mason said the last time he saw his daughter was around an outdoor fire for Christmas, and the last time he saw his son – also outdoors – was in September. He said it’s been tough being unable to see family like he did before the COVID-19 pandemic, although getting the vaccine will mean more freedom for him.

“Freedom to move, freedom to feel

better, less pressure you’re going to get something you can’t control – it’s very contagious, and I respect that,” Mason said. “Maybe life can get back to normal as we go along, and I’m hopeful for that. It’s a great relief.”

Moss said he joked that he hadn’t been as excited as he was on the day of his vaccine appointment since he was a child waking up on Christmas morning, and after he and his wife received the first dose, they hadn’t felt any side effects hours later. He said they both let out a “Wahoo!” and gave each other a high-five on their way back home after getting the vaccine.

Tweedy said she believes scientists and medical professionals are worth listening to when it comes to the efficacy and safety of the vaccines.

“I certainly don’t want to get [COVID-19], so I wanted the vaccine,” Tweedy said.

Mason, who didn’t experience any side effects from the first dose, said he personally doesn’t know why people would be hesitant to receive the vaccine, especially if it could mean saving their own life and possibly others’ as well.

“How many people do you have to see die or become impaired to realize this is what you gotta do?” Mason said.

Moss said he would encourage those who are hesitant about getting the vaccine to seriously consider getting it and checking with their doctors to advise them from a medical standpoint.

“If we all don’t work together as a country, as a continent, as a globe, it’s going to be difficult,” Moss said. “So if we all work together and think through and carry out our own best judgment and thoughts, I think we’re going to come out of the other side of this hole. There’s a light at the end of the tunnel, I think.”

Established patients who have a MyNM account will receive an email inviting them to schedule a vaccine appointment, Northwestern Medicine health officials have said. Those who do not have a MyNM account will be contacted by phone, text message or email.

Those who have registered to receive DeKalb County Health Department COVID-19 vaccine alerts will receive only an email when they are eligible to receive the vaccine, with a registration link for specific clinic dates.