

CHETS: COVID testing will soon be available at pharmacy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

exceptional service to their customers.

Chets provided vaccinations in store, at several area assisted living facilities, follow-ups at nursing homes, multiple school districts and a number of area industries.

The very first vaccination was given to owner, Matt Johnson.

When speaking about vaccinations, Johnson said, "Giving the shot is the easiest part of the whole thing. All of the administration in the background was the tough part."

One of the first parts to iron out was scheduling. The pharmacy had never scheduled appointments for services in the past. They had to build a platform to offer vaccination scheduling. Afterwards, came the managing of the scheduling as it was common for people to need to change appointments. "I bet in that Inbox there were 3,500 emails going back and forth about scheduling," said Johnson.

Owner Julie Hanlon-Johnson said, "It almost took a whole full-time dedicated person just to answer phone and email inquiries about the vaccine."

Pre-COVID, the pharmacy didn't typically have a person who needed to handle just phone and email. They also needed to add staff for vaccination check-ins and managed with their current pharmacists to dispense the vaccines.

Hanlon-Johnson said, "It was like inventing our own wheel between the scheduling software, figuring where to vaccinate people in the store and how to keep them six-feet apart. It was no small thing."

Johnson and Hanlon-Johnson credit Sarah Flanum for handling inquiries, scheduling and staffing like a champ.

Eventually the store would switch to a walk-in format for vaccinations instead of appointments, which kept them busy with customers who appreciated the flexibility. "We are the only store I know of that now does a walk-in format. Even the chain stores do not offer it," said Pharmacist Nicole Sheldon.

Pharmacist Matt Wlodyga said, "The past year was crazy. In the beginning we started with the State on getting the vaccine, which happened to be Moderna. We were able to transition to Pfizer through our Federal pharmacy partner. Our ample supply allowed us to give many more vaccines than others in the area."

Wlodyga said originally, they thought about setting a goal of doing 2000 COVID shots. When they thought about the fact that they service not just Amery, but a large surrounding area they decided to raise the goal. "We decided to go big and aim for 5,000. If we reached it, I knew I would be shocked, and it would be a great accomplishment. Then we went and doubled it and then some," said Wlodyga.

Wlodyga said at the start, there were many restrictions such as age and health conditions tied to getting the vaccine, so they had to do some screening.

"We started with Moderna and we were fairly busy, but when Pfizer hit it got crazy. We were doing 100 shots a day, five days a week," Johnson said.



CONTRIBUTED

Pharmacists Matt Johnson, Matt Wlodyga and Nicole Sheldon are pictured with 16 full sharps containers and seven full boxes of empty vials after administering over 7,000 COVID-19 immunizations at Chet Johnson Drug. They would go on to administer over 10,700.

Wlodyga said, "The most we did in our little pharmacy consult room in one day was 250 vaccines, including flu-shot, shingles and pneumonia vaccines. The biggest day we had total in COVID vaccines including in store and off-site places ended up being 336."

Johnson was driving across the state of Wisconsin multiple times to Neenah, leaving before dawn, to pick up the Pfizer vaccine to provide to customers, driving straight back to preserve the integrity of the temperature-controlled vaccine.

New patients needed to be added into the store's computer system. For those who carry health insurance, billing needed to be submitted to insurance companies. For those who didn't have health insurance, forms needed to be submitted to the government.

After giving the vaccination, all recipients need to be added into the Wisconsin Immunization Registry within 24 hours. "All of those extra forms need to be added into our computer, which is like doing an extra 100 prescriptions a day. There is a lot of 'pre' work and 'post' work that goes along with each vaccine," said Hanlon-Johnson.

The extra COVID procedures was on top of the fast-paced pharmacy work that Chet Johnson Drug keeps up with on an average day.

"We were a busy pharmacy before COVID, so to add that in was difficult, but it has also been rewarding to offer that service and to see how our whole staff can come together to make it happen," said Sheldon.

Wlodyga said that as a team over the past year they have just continued to adapt to situations to most effectively service customers. "It has been a lot of additional work on our end, but we concentrated on our strengths to make it efficient," said Wlodyga.

Sheldon said she watched Johnson not only drive across the state to pick up vaccinations but come in early and stay late on many occasions. She agreed with earlier sentiments that Flanum was a rock star over the past year. Sheldon said Flanum did an outstanding job of keeping the store's website and phone system updated with the constantly changing information concerning the eligibility for vaccines and booster shots. "There is so much that goes on behind the scenes that people do not under-

stand. It is not like you just pull vials out of the fridge, line people up, and then you are done," said Sheldon.

The personal care people receive at Chet Johnson Drug is what has kept them a small-town staple for decades. They accommodated as some wanted photos of being vaccinated, they listened as people shared happy stories with the pharmacists during the process, saying the vaccine was the key to seeing loved ones from which they had been separated. They also heard from people who had loved ones pass away from the virus.

"It was really special to have these experiences with people," Hanlon-Johnson said.

People drove from miles away to Chet Johnson Drug to be vaccinated. An online vaccination finder brought people from as far as Shakopee, MN. Even though road construction had the downtown area looking a little strange, people who visited Chets for a vaccine mentioned they found the City to be quite charming. They visited other stores and restaurants while they were here, and some returned for their boosters and to revisit gems they had found within 54001.

In upcoming weeks, Chet Johnson Drug will be offering COVID testing. There are two types of testing; rapid antigen testing, that can be done at home and PCR testing. Chets will be working with the Department of Health for the State of Wisconsin to offer PCR testing. "We will administer it, collect the sample and it will get picked up and couriered off. I think the results will be ready in 24 hours," Johnson said. Rapid antigen testing will be available in the near future as well. Both types of testing will be done in a drive-thru behind the store.

Wlodyga said, "In the very beginning for flu shots, typically we saw a breakdown of 2/3 of shots being given in a medical setting and 1/3 given at pharmacies, for COVID vaccines, there is a study that has seen that number flip-flop, with 2/3 of vaccines being given at pharmacies, which is a very eye-opening transition concerning how accessible we can be."

Johnson said, "It has been a lot of work, but it has been nice to prove that an independent pharmacy can handle this. We can do this, give us the challenge and we will take it on and take care of things."

DEATH NOTICE

Donna Mae Hunt (Abel), age 61 of Amery, WI who passed away on Sunday, December 19, 2021 will be having a Celebration of Her Life at 1 pm on Saturday, January 15, 2022 at Our Saviors Lutheran Church in Amery, WI. Friends may gather before the service at the church at 12:45 and a lunch will be served after the service. Scheuermann-Hammer Funeral Home in Clear Lake, WI handled the cremation services.

FAIR MAPS: Voters drew their own maps

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

many dubious, unnecessary changes to Assembly District 30 right here in River Falls and Hudson.

Learn more about WIMAP's work at <https://piercescountygro.org/WIMAP/>.

The Concerned Voters offer something unique to the Court: a redistricting analysis done not by politicians or lawyers, but rather by informed citizen voters, from the voters' perspective. The Concerned Voters come from cities, suburbs, small towns, and family farms. Among them are mathematicians, a community planner, a software engineer, scientists, teachers, small business owners, a veteran and coach, an accountant, lawyers, an IT professional, a newspaper editor, a member of a Native America Tribe, a doctor, and more.

The Concerned Voters seek the same benefit they ask for everyone living in Wisconsin: a just and representative government. As true "friends of the Court," they offer a unique perspective the Court can consider while it wrestles with redistricting, a challenging exercise the Concerned Voters believe is critical to the survival of our republic.

Wisconsin voters raised their voices then they drew their own maps but were ignored by the WI Legislature. They raised their voices when they went to Madison to testify but were ignored by the Legislature. Today, Concerned Voters of Wisconsin raise their voices in court. They demand to be heard.

Submitted by David Fodroczi Western Wisconsin Nonpartisan Voting Districts (WVN-VD), Wisconsin Map Assessment Project (WIMAP) and Concerned Voters of Wisconsin.

We love to hear from our subscribers, advertisers and readers. Here are the many ways you can contact us:

Mail:
Amery Free Press
P.O. Box 424
Amery, WI 54001

Phone: 715-268-8101
FAX: 715-268-5300

Email:
Tom Stangl, Publisher
tstangl@theameryfreepress.com