

# COVID Volunteers...from Page 1A

at a rate of 20 people every 15 minutes, and everyone there, from the community volunteers to those receiving the vaccine, was impressed with the seamless operation of the clinic.

Volunteers made the event possible, manning a series of stations designed to welcome people in straight-line fashion from the front door, to check-in, for vaccination, to booster appointment confirmation, and over to the monitoring area to watch for potential vaccine reactions.

Back to front, the event was a huge success, and Dr. Samuel Le Church of Synergy Health feels confident that, as soon as vaccine supplies pick up, his office and volunteers will be able to mobilize on demand to administer 1,000 or more vaccines in one go.

At the end of the clinic, Church gathered his volunteers — many of whom he and his wife Nancy recruited through their church family at McConnell Memorial Baptist — to thank them for a job well done in their collective endeavor to vaccinate and protect as many people as possible.

On top of thanking his volunteers, he commended Nancy's own volunteer work coordinating the event alongside Synergy Health Office Manager Abby Kitchens and Clinical Manager Savannah Kendall.

"The message we want to send to the community is that we are here to help," Dr. Church said, stressing that Wednesday's clinic and all those moving forward are to be considered community efforts that go beyond the abilities of a single person or health practice.

For the volunteers, one of the more rewarding aspects of the clinic was being able to help people feel more secure knowing they were on their way to being vaccinated against a potentially deadly virus.

"There's a lot of fear," volunteer Vicki Turner said. "My sense is these vaccinations are going to help alleviate that fear."

Turner recently retired as a paraprofessional at Towns County Middle School, and she's happy to spend her newfound spare time giving back to her community, with plans to continue volunteering as part of the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Team.

Volunteer Amy Markham



**Fire Chief Harold Copeland received his vaccination from Ana Mahmoudabadi in the Jan. 27 clinic. Mahmoudabadi is a third-year med student with the Medical College of Georgia/UGA Partnership, currently on her family medicine rotation at Synergy Health.**

Photo by Shawn Jarrard



**Mahmoudabadi also vaccinated resident Gina Jobson at the Rec Center last week. Jobson, who urges vaccination to protect others, reported no side effects and said she was impressed with the clinic's "kind, compassionate, efficient staff and volunteers."**

Photo/Submitted

worked the front door of the Rec Center Wednesday, checking people in and making sure they felt physically well prior to entering for vaccination. She's hopeful the vaccine will enable more normal interactions for residents down the line.

"When we were encouraged to stay home and all of that, I was fortunate; I have my husband and I have my kids, and I wasn't home by myself," Markham said. "But a lot of this older generation, they're home by themselves."

"So, when we were asked to stay home, it was hard for them to communicate with the outside world and not see people face to face. And I just thought about how hard that must have been for people like that."

"I'm just hoping that,

through efforts like this, that maybe we can start getting out a little bit more and feel safer being together."

Also assisting at the clinic was Karley Mathews, a recent University of North Georgia graduate who was a finalist for the Fulbright Student Program, which would have seen her teaching English in the Russian-speaking nation of Belarus.

Unfortunately, the opportunity was postponed, then canceled due to a combination of COVID-19 and the political situation over there. Rolling with the punches, Mathews has applied for an internship at the United Nations and is currently awaiting a determination there.

Not wanting to let her talents go to waste in the meantime, Dr. Church,

who knows her as a family friend, asked Mathews to work temporarily at Synergy Health as a patient liaison regarding COVID vaccinations.

"People have a lot of questions, because there's a lot of unanswered questions in general," Mathews said. "For the most part, people are really understanding. They just want to know when they can get their shot and what's happening with it."

"They're scared, because there's a lot of uncertainty, but they're excited by this hope of possibly getting back to normal a little bit (with the vaccine)."

Added Mathews, "I would like to thank the community for bearing with us and being patient as we try to figure out this system. It's been a pleasure, honestly, being a part of this ... and being able to serve people in this way."

Participants in the Jan. 27 clinic will need to return on Feb. 26 to receive their second dose for full vaccination, and aside from gratitude and being impressed with the efficiency of the operation, patients last week expressed relief to have finally gotten access to the vaccine.

Rick and Catherine Caaue moved to Towns County in May 2020 from the much flatter Glynn County in South Georgia, and they're loving it up here. The couple attended the clinic last week and were excited for the opportunity to get vaccinated.

"Everything you hear on the news about how messed up the whole (vaccine rollout) is, I'm really surprised we got it as early as we did," Rick said. "We were figuring that if we were going to get it, it would probably be sometime around June."

Added Catherine, "It just means now that we are on the road. We've looked it up, and by the time we get our second dose, we've really got another four weeks before we've gotten the maximum amount of protection."

"But that doesn't mean we get to go out and party like hooligans. We've still got to wear our mask, still socially distance, but it might give us an opportunity to meet new people."

Towns County EMS workers were on site in case anyone suffered adverse reactions to the vaccine, which no one did, and Towns County Firefighters helped coordinate

parking for the clinic.

"I really think everybody should get the vaccine," said Fire Chief Harold Copeland, who received his second dose as a first responder that day. "I think it's the only way to get the numbers down across the nation, with all of us working together, especially for the elderly."

Dr. Church wants people to know that, for individuals who sign up for waitlisting at [ngvax.com](http://ngvax.com), his office will certainly be reaching out when it comes time to schedule their appointment.

In addition to Synergy Health's vaccination clinics, Church hopes to partner with the local Health Department moving forward.

District 2 Public Health announced two weeks ago that it had temporarily stopped taking new appointments due to limited supplies, which still held true by press time. For updates on vaccine availability through the Health Department, visit [phdistrict2.org](http://phdistrict2.org).

"The vaccine supply for now is limited," District 2 Public Information Officer Dave Palmer said. "All our doses on hand are committed to appointments for first and second doses. We have vaccine on order, and as vaccine is received, we will open appointments."

Added Palmer, "The latest word is that Georgia will

continue to receive the current level of vaccine allotment from the federal government. That is about 120,000 doses per week for the entire state of Georgia."

In the meantime, local Health Departments continue to vaccinate people who managed to sign up for appointments previously.

Union County Government and Emergency Management Agency teamed up with the Health Department for a mass vaccine clinic earlier this month, and stakeholders there aim to hold additional vaccination clinics as more supply comes online.

Be sure to check in regularly with [unioncountygavax.com](http://unioncountygavax.com) to see when new appointments for locally coordinated vaccine clinics will be available in Union County.

For a regularly updated list of locations receiving vaccine shipments in each county, visit [dph.georgia.gov](http://dph.georgia.gov) and click on the link for the "Vaccine Orders List." People can also find vaccine providers at <https://dph.georgia.gov/locations/covid-vaccination-site>.

Appointments for free Public Health COVID-19 testing can be made at <https://mako.exchange/splash/GAMakotesting/>. Testing will take place in Hall County at 2500 Allen Creek Drive in Gainesville.

## Georgia HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

### House Majority Caucus unanimously supports COVID-19 Testing Protocol

State Representative Matt Hatchett (R-Dublin), Chairman of the House Majority Caucus, announces that the House Majority Caucus today unanimously adopted a caucus position supporting the COVID-19 testing protocols enacted by Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge).

"As a Republican caucus, we joined together to lend our support to Speaker Ralston and the policies he has enacted to keep everyone — legislators, staff, media and the public — safe when they have to come to our State Capitol," said Chairman Hatchett. "I thank every member of our caucus who attended our meeting for their confidence

in our testing protocol."

Today's formal caucus position is the first adopted since the Republican members achieved a majority in the Georgia House of Representatives in 2005. The caucus position was sponsored by State Rep. Trey Kelley (R-Cedartown) who serves as the House Majority Whip.

"We felt it was important in light of recent events to make clear that we respect the rules of our House and those we have elected to enforce them," said Whip Kelley. "I appreciate Speaker Ralston's steadfast leadership and also thank our entire caucus for joining us in expressing their support." NTF06327CA