

Governor Phil Murphy

# Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy Visits Matheny Medical and Educational Center Vaccination Clinic

02/9/2021

**PRINT**

PEAPACK-GLADSTONE – Pearl Chiang, a registered nurse at the Matheny Medical and Educational Center, knows firsthand how serious COVID-19 is because she had the virus in November.

“It was like a very, very severe headache and body aches. It’s taken me a month to recover,” she said. “In order to be worry-free, I really want to get the vaccine so I can be healthy and be with my family. I encourage my family to get the vaccine.”

 (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>)

 (<https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy>)

 (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernoroffice>)

She also wants to remain in good health so she can take care of her patients at the facility that serves children, teens and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities from throughout the state, with medical and dental care and therapy.

 (<https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/>)

 (<https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy>)

Gov. Phil Murphy and New Jersey Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli watched Tuesday morning as Chiang, a nurse at the facility for 14 years, received her second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine before Chiang and Murphy posed together for a photo.

“Congrats Pearl. Keep up the good work,” said Murphy, who was joined during his visit by Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-Ringoes) and borough Mayor Greg J. Skinner.

The vaccines administered to staff members at Matheny Medical and Educational Center came a day after Murphy announced one million vaccinations had been administered statewide.

Of the 1,037,657 statewide vaccinations, 813,216 are first doses and 224,237 are second doses, according to Murphy’s tweet.

The one million vaccination milestone comes less than two months after New Jersey’s first vaccines were administered on Dec. 15.

Dr. Vincent Barba, Matheny Medical and Educational Center’s vice president of patient care and safety and chief medical officer, said staff members were given their first dose of the Moderna vaccine last month and were receiving their second dose on Tuesday.

The facility has about 600 staff members, most at the Peapack-Gladstone location, but also at five group homes, community residences and at a day program in Hillsborough. About half have been vaccinated.

Barba said the specialized hospital has 101 inpatients with medically complex developmental disabilities.

“The patients are getting their second dose today as well,” Barba said.

“This means I think it’s our way out of the pandemic. It’s a way for us to protect our patients, not just get the vaccine for our patients because the developmentally disabled are at very high risk of dying from COVID-19. But we’re not only getting them vaccinated but then wrapping them with vaccinated staff so we can’t transmit it among us,” he said.

Dr. Kendell Sprott, Matheny’s president, said it’s critical to have the staff and patients vaccinated.

“We have a vulnerable patient population and for about two-thirds of our patients, the staff is their family,” he said. “It’s important for us to follow all the protocols of social distancing, hand washing and wearing masks in order to prevent our staff from getting infected and from exposing our patients. The fact that this will prevent people from getting very, very sick from it is important.”

Sprott praised Murphy for stressing the seriousness of the virus, but there still is some confusion about the importance of taking precautions are critical to keeping the entire country safe.

He said the populations that have been most affected by the virus, African Americans, Latinos and Asians, are where COVID was a leading cause of death in the state last year.

“There is a lot of vaccine hesitancy among the minority community and to emphasize how important it is for us to get it, our caregivers are pretty diverse, it’s important for them to understand we as the leadership are getting the vaccine and it’s important for them and their families, as well as our patients, to get it,” Sprott said. “It sends a message.”

Tinashe Maphosa, a patient safety assistant at Matheny, said he wanted to get vaccinated for his family, especially his three children.

“With the rate of people of color dying in the community I think the vaccine is something we have been waiting for,” said Maphosa, who received his second vaccine Tuesday.

Christine Cook, a 25-year registered nurse at Matheny, was applauded after receiving her second vaccine Tuesday and was given a sticker saying, “I’m a big shot” and told to wait for about 15 minutes in the observation area.

In a tweet, Murphy has said New Jersey was going to keep going to help meet President Biden’s nationwide goal of 100 million vaccinations in his first 100 days in office.



(//nj.gov/opra/)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023  
Office of Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000


(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)


(https://tech.nj.gov/)

 (https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

 (https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)

 (https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

 (https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

 (https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)