

Vaccine Availability...from Page 1A

olds wanting vaccination. For Pfizer specifically, schedule an appointment at one of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency mass vaccination sites or call the Hall/Forsyth Health Departments.

“Adding Georgians over the age of 55 and those at high risk to COVID-19 will make vaccines available to categories that account for 92% of deaths due to COVID-19 in Georgia,” per the press release. “Provided supply allows, vaccine eligibility is expected to open to all adults in April.

“Over the past 30 days, the state has administered over one million vaccines, and on March 17, a total of nine state mass vaccination sites will be operational. To register for a vaccine at one of these sites, visit MyVaccineGeorgia.com.”

New CDC Guidance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offered public health recommendations last week for fully vaccinated people. A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving either their second dose of Pfizer/Moderna or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson.

Fully vaccinated people in non-health care settings may:

- Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing
- Visit with unvaccinated

people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing

- Refrain from quarantine and testing following a known exposure if asymptomatic

The CDC is advising fully vaccinated people to continue the following for the time being:

- Wear masks, practice physical distancing, and adhere to other prevention measures when in public; visiting with unvaccinated people at increased risk for severe COVID-19 disease; or visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple households
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations

“This guidance will be updated and expanded based on the level of community spread of SARS-CoV-2, the proportion of the population that is fully vaccinated, and the rapidly evolving science on COVID-19 vaccines,” per the CDC.

For related CDC information in health care settings, search the internet for “Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination.”

People are also being

advised to seek COVID vaccination even if they have already had the disease.

“That’s because experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19,” the CDC said. “Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible – although rare – that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again.”

Continuing, “Experts are still learning more about how long vaccines protect against COVID-19 in real-world conditions. CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.”

Vaccine Signups

Following more than a month of scheduling difficulties due to limited vaccine supplies, District 2 Public Health and the Health Departments of Union and Towns counties now have appointments available for the COVID-19 vaccine.

“Recent shipments have given us enough vaccine to open up more appointments for residents,” District 2 Clinical Coordinator Alan Satterfield said. “We hope that residents who are eligible to be vaccinated will take this opportunity to make an appointment.”

Eligible residents can make appointments by calling 1-888-426-5073, going online at www.phdistrict2.org, or by calling their local health

department.

Other vaccine avenues include Walgreens Pharmacy, Walmart Pharmacy, and Ingles Pharmacy. Check each pharmacy’s respective website for availability and instructions on how to sign up.

People may also register for local vaccination via Synergy Health of Hiwassee at the ngvax.com portal, which is accepting sign-ups by people who are not yet eligible in anticipation of expanded eligibility.

Dr. Samuel “Le” Church of Synergy Health asks people who have already been vaccinated to remove themselves from other wait lists if they signed up at multiple locations.

COVID-19 numbers continue to decline in the area, state and nation, including local hospitalizations, deaths and testing rates. Union General Hospital, for instance, had just two COVID inpatients at the end of last week, down from a high of nearly 50 mid-January.

As increasingly more vulnerable people receive vaccination, health officials believe numbers will decline even further amid the current natural decline occurring with COVID-19.

Matheson...from Page 1A



Catherine Brown of Catalyst Church said the volunteers who contributed to the fundraiser for Matheson were the most upbeat and hardworking she’d ever worked with.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

is currently on medical leave as she strives to regain her strength and stamina after being shot eight times while on shift Jan. 26.

Miraculously, she has fared surprisingly well considering the number of times she was shot with a 9 mm handgun, with all eight bullets missing bones, tendons, and major organs aside from a patched-up colon.

Matheson still has two bullets lodged in her body, one in her hip area and another in her back muscle, plus some leftover bullet fragments, through the doctors don’t believe it will cause long-term harm.

She spent about a month in the hospital and had to use a walker for a while but said she has recovered about 75 percent and is readying herself to head back to work soon.

“I consider it a miracle, but I don’t have anything to do with it,” Matheson said of her situation. “That was God, angels – whatever you want to call it.”

Added Matheson, “I feel great. I can do stuff now. That was the big issue to begin with, I couldn’t do anything that required too much effort because I couldn’t breathe good – I had 29 stitches (down my stomach), so I would get tired.

“Now, I can get up and around. I kind of ache here and there, but nothing is really painful so much, just achy.”

Known for her beautiful singing voice, Matheson recently returned to performing at her church on Sundays, offering a powerful rendition of “Ain’t No Grave (Gonna Hold This Body Down),” which can be seen on the @CatalystHayesville Facebook page dated March 7.

Making the March 12 fundraiser possible, Clayton Reeves with Full Throttle Ministries brought the famous mobile smoker he uses in his food ministry to the church Friday.

Reeves has known Matheson for years, and he jumped at the chance to help after receiving a message from

Derek Moss two days after Matheson was hospitalized.

Moss is an active member of Catalyst Church, running the sound booth on Sundays and taking part in all the church’s outreach efforts, like the annual Christmas shopping spree benefiting local children.

Both being from Shooting Creek, Moss and Matheson have known each other all their lives. When the shooting happened, he knew he wanted to do something for his longtime friend, who was by all accounts incredibly blessed to have survived her ordeal.

He saw a Facebook post of Reeves speaking on Matheson’s plight, and putting two and two together, Moss asked Reeves if he would team up with Catalyst to host a barbecue fundraiser to offset some of Matheson’s costs, including time out of work, medical bills and other expenses.

Next, Moss got with Catalyst Pastor Brandon Matheson and recruited Catherine Brown, who runs the church’s new food ministry, to help in organizing the fundraiser, and the rest is history.

Later on March 12, the church raised even more money selling additional plates in an evening singing benefit.

Others have also pitched in to assist Matheson financially as she works hard to recover, including Laura Hutt holding an online auction of items donated by the community, and a GoFundMe set up by her friend Luke Goodman and supported by more than 150 people.

“It’s been really overwhelming,” Matheson said. “The level of support has been insane. I’ve got a great church, I’ve got a great family, so I expected that.

“But I’ve had a lot of random people that message me, buy stuff, donate stuff, send a check – it’s overwhelming and humbling, especially when you don’t know the people.”

Another of Matheson’s major helpers has been Reach of Clay County, a “private, nonprofit organization that

provides emergency services to any person who has experienced domestic violence, sexual assault or elder abuse.”

Reach is acting as a court liaison and has provided a counselor for Matheson, who has kept a remarkably positive attitude despite all that has transpired not just in the last month and a half, but for over a year with her now estranged husband, Jason Matheson.

In addition to being arrested for shooting her Jan. 26, Jason Matheson was arrested twice last year for domestic violence-related crimes in Clay County, including on July 13 for assault by strangulation of Crystal, and again on Oct. 9 for violation of a Domestic Violence Order.

She is comforted by the fact that her husband is behind bars without bond at Towns County Jail, currently awaiting indictment in Towns County; Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said Friday the case was expected to be presented to a grand jury this week.

Still, Crystal finds herself on edge from time to time, and while she is taking everything in stride and trying to get back to her life, she understands that what has happened to her will sink in fully one day.

“Even though I know he’s not out there driving around, on the way (to the church today), I noticed the trucks that looked like his,” Matheson said. “It’s kind of like you’re automatically alerted to different things or noises, or stuff like that.”

Crystal urges anyone experiencing domestic violence in a relationship to “get out” any way they can, seeking legal help if necessary, even though she knows it can be a tedious process.

She is hoping that her story, which has reached the desk of the North Carolina governor, can inspire change to better hold perpetrators of domestic violence accountable and protect their would-be victims.