

Rural Matters

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Thoughts on COVID Vaccine Registration, Age, and the Digital Divide

In talking with my eighty seven year old father following the announcement that COVID vaccines were available to his age group, he expressed frustration that people in their eighties and nineties were expected to be able to complete the complex and lengthy on-line registration to sign up for a COVID vaccine. He gave the registration process a try and was not successful. He made the point that people in their sixties are generally technology savvy, but that many people, maybe most in his generation, are not. While he uses e-mail, a tablet and occasionally texts using his smart phone, navigating long and complex on-line applications can present a number of challenges. Now, consider the plight of those who do not utilize on-line technology at all. Clearly, an age group that is highly vulnerable to COVID is least able to navigate to a vaccine, at least at this time.



The fix in our case was for one of my retired brothers to assist with scheduling an appointment for both of my parents. I spoke with him about his experience and he shared that he accessed the registration web site, three times a day, beginning Monday, January 11 and everyday thereafter, until he had success on

Saturday, January 16 and was able to schedule appointments for early February. He had my father on the phone that Saturday so he was able to get the information needed as he worked through the registration.

My reason for sharing this story is not to be overly critical of New York State's effort to organize and make available limited COVID 19 vaccines through a centralized system, but rather to acknowledge the barrier an on-line registration presents to an age group highly vulnerable to the virus. I have been thinking about my parents' sense of urgency in accessing the vaccine and I have to think it is shared by many in their age group. The urgency is not just about protecting health but perhaps even more so about returning to in person connections with family and friends while there is still time to do so.

As long as the pathway to securing a vaccine is on-line registration, there are many older residents who will need help. I would think we need to mobilize a broad effort of family, friends, neighbors, organizations, and workers to help and assist those who need help with technology to ensure they have access to the vaccine. Hopefully, as more vaccine becomes available through healthcare providers, pharmacies, etc. there will be less need for the complex on-line registration process. For now, we need to be considering who needs this help and how to provide it.

Jack Salo
Executive Director

Getthere Call Center Vaccine Transportation Available

Don't let lack of transportation keep you or a loved one from getting to a doctor or clinic for COVID-19 vaccines. Getthere can provide rides to vaccinations for people in Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, and Tioga counties.

Contact the Getthere Call Center at 855-373-4040 to speak with a Mobility Transportation Advocate for help in scheduling a safe, secure ride. No referral needed.

Getthere's team provides transportation to the most vulnerable community members that are unable to afford the cost of a rideshare such as Uber or Lyft or a taxi.

The Getthere Call Center operates Monday - Friday from 7 AM to 7 PM.



1-855-373-4040

Northern Broome CARES

By Sandy Atwood, Program Coordinator

Northern Broome CARES is a NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Community) Program funded by a five-year grant through the NYS Office of Aging. We just completed our first year in 2020, and are focusing now on the

possibilities for 2021! We currently serve the townships of Triangle and Lisle and the Village of Whitney Point. We are anxiously anticipating approval to expand our services to the towns of Nanticoke and Barker. This will allow us to serve the entire Northern Broome area. Watch future issues of this newsletter and the Rural Health Network Facebook page for further information!

Northern Broome CARES Community Health Worker Mindy Alexander reported that she has been able to help clients schedule telehealth appointments and has taught them to use a tablet prior to their appointment. Using a tablet, Mindy has assisted clients with receiving their stimulus check and has also been able to set up COVID vaccine appointments with clients who were not able to use the vaccination registration website. Mindy shared *"I have been able to connect a couple to a birthday party celebration via ZOOM for their grandchild. The tablets have helped in many capacities, and even in the most typically insignificant ways- they have made the most significantly meaningful connections for some folks. We have been blessed to offer this technology."* The tablets and mobile hotspot internet access were funded through a Care Compass Network grant.

Plans for 2021 include continued use of our loan program for tablet and internet usage. The tablets allow clients access to health education classes, telehealth appointments with medical providers, and a variety of other health related activities. The Broome County Office for Aging is offering a number of ZOOM classes for individuals to participate in as well. If you know of a senior who lives in the Northern Broome CARES service area who could benefit from having the use of a loaned tablet, please contact our office at 607-352-4681. We would be happy to assist!



Community Health Services

By Pamela Guth, Director of Community Health Services

We currently have two Community Health Workers (CHW) working with partners to address patient needs.

Terri Tweedie is located at UHS Delaware Valley Hospital in Walton and continues to follow discharged patients during a 30- day care transition period starting bedside. She meets weekly with a comprehensive case conferencing team to ensure a safe and smooth discharge plan. Recently she advocated for meds to beds delivery from pharmacy to hospital. Pharmacy teams, nurse care managers and CHW work collaboratively in real time to get patients all medications before leaving the hospital. Medication list review by CHW using the "teach back method" with simple plain language, is critical to promote patient adherence and decrease risk of hospital readmission.

Nicole Rogers transitioned from onsite at Lourdes 303 Main Street Family Health Clinic to a hybrid CHW model. She will be in our office Mondays and Tuesdays and working remotely from home or in the community the remainder of the week. She is accessible via e-mail, phone or virtual telehealth visits with Lourdes patients at their Robinson Street location on the eastside of Binghamton. In

addition to linking patients with community resources, Nicole will support patients in completing age, gender or condition specific health screenings.

Recently, both Terri and Nicole took a moment to reflect on 2020 and what they are looking forward to in 2021.



Terri Tweedie

Terri: *"I am proud that I improved rural people's accessibility to community resources with a person first approach. For decades, chronically ill residents encountered many eligibility or access barriers. Now they get immediate support and solutions from me and our organization. During this pandemic, it is important that even though our organization, and sometimes I, am not always visible to the patients, they know and the Delaware Valley Hospital care transition team knows I exist and can support them."* Terri looks forward to building trust and increasing opportunities to visit more patients bedside, in their homes, her office or the community.

Nicole: *"I am happy I was able to reach a large number of clients in the community during COVID-19. So many people were unsure of whether or not they should go to or stay out of their doctor's office. I was glad I could help them overcome some of their barriers to health and reconnect them safely with their health care team. I am excited to network in a new Lourdes environment with nurses, social workers, primary care providers and medical residents along with their patients, my clients."*



Nicole Rogers

FREE TAXI SERVICE for Ages 60+

*Rides to the grocery store, doctor, pharmacy, bank,
post office, and more!*

Windsor, NY (855) 373-4040

- Wednesdays after 12 PM
- Taxi rides in and around the Village of Windsor

Whitney Point, NY (607) 352-4681

- Fridays after 12 PM
- Taxi rides in and around the Village of Whitney Point



FREE MENTAL HEALTH CLASS

“Whole Health Action Management” (WHAM) **Stress management class**

- One-on-one or small group class delivered by telephone
- Six weeks of one-hour sessions with flexible scheduling
- Open to all adults in the Southern Tier

Contact Mary Maruscak, (607) 692-7669 x 209, mmaruscak@rhnscny.org

These are just a few highlights of our available programs and resources. Please feel free to share this with co-workers, friends, family, or clients who may be interested.

Self-Care Tips - Gratitude Journaling

Our Community Health Services Team started their year with reflections on 2020 and their hopes for 2021 and are encouraging everyone to begin a gratitude journal and enjoy the journey.

Are you remembering to glance in your rear view mirror and yet keep your eyes looking forward through your windshield? In addition to discussing memories and hopes with family, friends or coworkers, another way to support your well-being during times of transition, uncertainty and unprecedented pandemic, is through gratitude journaling.

If you need some ideas on what to journal about, visit [this great list](#) from Rhythms of Play.

Our social media team shared some self-care tips on Facebook last week. Do you make resolutions, enjoy a challenge, or like ideas on how to be kind to yourself? We spotted some great suggestions from Good Housekeeping and added a few of our own for this Healthy Habits Bingo game.

Healthy New Year Habits Bingo

Volunteer in the community	Go offline frequently and be present	Book all my doctor's visits for the year	Cook one new thing each week	Spend more time in nature
Do one new exercise move	Set healthy boundaries	Be current about current events	Decorate with family history	Forgive myself when I mess up
Read one book each month	Learn when to say no	F R E E	Sanitize my phone weekly	Become a plant owner
Have courageous conversations with people	Build a better budget	Get more sleep	Know when I need help	Learn a new skill
Meditate and learn to calm the mind	Intentionally celebrate growth and milestones	Write to myself to shut down negative self-talk	Take the stairs when possible	Drink more water

RURAL HEALTH NETWORK
Serving South Central New York

News You Can Use

Rural Communities Equity Action Guide

A partner recently shared the [Region Five Development Corporation's](#) new [Rural Communities Equity Action Guide](#) with us. While the focus of the guide is on communities in Minnesota, the publication outlines key steps for equity analysis and excellent case studies illustrating the process. Recommendations and many of the resources are applicable to rural communities throughout the country.

Advancing the health and well-being of rural people and communities.

Stay Connected

www.rhnsncy.org



Rural Health Network of South Central New York,
455 Court Street, Binghamton, NY 13904

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