



**THE WEATHER**  
High 65° | Low 45°  
Partly sunny. C2

# The Villages® DAILY SUN



**THURSDAY**  
FEBRUARY 4,  
2021

THE NEWSPAPER OF FLORIDA'S FRIENDLIEST HOMETOWN

## NATIONAL NEWS



The Associated Press

## BIDEN URGES LAWMAKERS TO 'GO BIG' ON COVID-19 RELIEF

President Joe Biden said he's "not married" to an absolute number on his \$1.9 trillion COVID rescue plan, but added that Congress must act quickly on a relief package. Biden also said he doesn't want to budge from his proposed \$1,400 in direct payments to Americans, but he is willing to "target" the aid, which would lower the income threshold to qualify for the money. **A6**

## NATION & WORLD REPORT

**Nation:** Congressional leaders paid tribute to slain U.S. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick in the building he died defending Jan. 6, promising his family and fellow officers that they will never forget his sacrifice. **A7**

**World:** The Canadian government designated the Proud Boys group as a terrorist entity Wednesday, noting that they played a prominent role in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. **A2**

**INSIDE**

World News A2  
Florida News A5  
Lottery A4  
Local News A12



**Faces in  
The News**  
**Joe DiMeo**



The 22-year-old New Jersey man, a burn victim in 2018, received a new face and hands as transplant surgery was deemed a success.

**National News, A8**

## Top of the News

INSIDE THE ISSUES SHAPING OUR COMMUNITY

# Vaccine Rollouts Pick Up Speed As Variants Spread

## QUESTIONS

**Q** Where can I sign up to get a vaccine?  
**A** Preregistering at [myvaccine.fl.gov](http://myvaccine.fl.gov) means you will be notified when appointments are available in your area, including Sumter, Marion and Lake County health departments. To sign up with Global Medical Response, which has a vaccination site in The Villages, go to [sumterfl.saferestart.net](http://sumterfl.saferestart.net). Publix stores in 23 counties, including the Mulberry Grove Shopping Plaza location, are distributing vaccines. Go to [publix.com/covidvaccine](http://publix.com/covidvaccine) after 7 a.m. Friday to check for appointment availability.

**Q** I had an appointment with Global Medical Response before it suspended operations. What does the site reopening mean for me?  
**A** Global Medical Response will reach out to people on its on-hold appointment list with instructions on how to make a new appointment. First-dose appointments will begin today and second-dose appointments will take place as previously scheduled next week.

**Q** I signed up with GMR but never made an appointment. Am I still on the list?  
**A** Yes. You still have your place on the wait list and GMR will send a code for you to make an appointment at [sumterfl.saferestart.net](http://sumterfl.saferestart.net) when more vaccines become available. GMR encourages people to continue to sign up for a vaccine at [sumterfl.saferestart.net](http://sumterfl.saferestart.net).

State and federal governments work to smooth the process as more inoculations become available to Villages residents.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

Dottie Noble, of the Village of Bridgeport at Lake Miona, rolls up her sleeve as she prepares to receive a Moderna COVID-19 vaccination from Marcia Scott of Global Medical Response at a drive-thru site near Buffalo Ridge Shopping Center. Florida has administered more than 2 million doses of the vaccines as of Wednesday.

**L**

By MACKENZIE RAETZ | Daily Sun Specialty Editor

Limited COVID-19 vaccine supply and millions of seniors vying for a shot gave Florida's race to vaccinate vulnerable populations a bumpy start. Even though virus case counts are trending downward for the first time in months, the stakes are growing higher as three variants of the virus have been detected in the U.S. — known as the United Kingdom, Brazil and South Africa variants. As of Wednesday, one U.K. variant case has been detected in a Sumter County resident, according to the Sumter County Health Department, and Florida has more cases of that variant than any other state. These variants seem to spread more quickly and easily, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The state has already accumulated 1,744,619 COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic and recorded 6,979 more Tuesday, according to the Florida Department of Health. That large number of cases is what gives the virus the opportunity to mutate,

Please See **VACCINES, A11**

## STOP THE SPREAD

**Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

**Avoid close contact with people who are sick**, even inside your home. Stay at least 6 feet from other people outside home.

**Wear a cloth face cover** when you have to go out in public — for example, to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.

## RESOURCES & REOPENING



### FLORIDA COVID-19 CALL CENTER

Florida Department  
of Health **866-779-6121**  
(Available 24/7)

### STATEWIDE VACCINE PREREGISTRATION

Get alerts when  
nearby appointments  
are available  
[myvaccine.fl.gov](http://myvaccine.fl.gov)

### Health Departments

**Sumter:** 352-569-3102  
**Marion:** 352-629-0137  
**Lake:** 352-589-6424

## Coronavirus: What's Happening With Vaccination Efforts

Yankee Stadium will open as a COVID-19 vaccination site on Friday, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Wednesday. The site will be run jointly by the city and state and will serve only Bronx residents, they said. "Yankee Stadium has always been known for its World Series banners, but now it'll be recognized as a place where the people of the surrounding community in the Bronx can receive the vaccine doses that they need and deserve," de Blasio, an ardent Boston Red Sox fan, said in a statement. Plans to provide COVID-19 inoculations at Yankee Stadium and also Citi Field, the New York Mets' home, were delayed by a lack of sufficient vaccine supply. No opening day for vaccinations at Citi Field has been announced. **For more information on COVID-19, see page A10.**

— Compiled from wire reports

### VACCINATION DISTRIBUTION IN MICHIGAN

Every person who wants a coronavirus vaccine who lives in a skilled nursing facility in Michigan has had the chance to get at least a first dose, said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, the state's chief medical executive, in written testimony Tuesday submitted to a House subcommittee. As of Jan. 28, 104,209 doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered to residents and staff, she said. By the end of February, she expects all staff and residents at the state's 4,400 long-term care facilities will have had a chance to get a first dose.

### WHAT ARE THE LATEST FLORIDA VIRUS NUMBERS?

The Florida Department of Health reported 6,979 new cases of COVID-19 in Florida as of Tuesday, increasing the total number infected in the state to 1,744,619. The daily test positivity rate was 7.8%. Sumter County reported 66 new cases, Lake County reported 118 and Marion County reported 117. The state confirms 5,824 hospitalizations as of Wednesday and 27,472 deaths, including 187 deaths in Sumter County, 443 in Lake County and 607 in Marion County.

**LOVIN' THE  
LIFESTYLE**

Sparta 70 Dragon  
Boat Team paddles  
powerfully. **D1**





## VACCINES

Continued from A1

the government's top infectious-disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said during a White House COVID-19 Response Team briefing Wednesday.

"If you give (viruses) a large playing field, they will mutate," he said. "The best way to prevent that is the implementation of the public health measures as well as the implementation of the administration of vaccines."

Public health measures include wearing masks, frequent hand-washing, physical distancing, and avoiding crowds, travel and poorly ventilated spaces.

The country's downward trajectory of both cases and hospitalizations could be threatened if people don't follow the guidelines to stop the spread of COVID-19 and the variants, CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said during the briefing.

Data suggests the U.K. variant may be more deadly, though more studies are needed to know for sure, the CDC said. Studies so far show the currently authorized vaccines will be effective against the variants, but more research is underway.

To ramp up vaccine distribution, the Biden administration pledged to increase states' supplies and give them three weeks of visibility on their vaccine shipments so they could better plan for distribution.

Florida benefited from this promise with 41,000 more doses delivered to the state this week than in previous weeks.

This allowed Global Medical Response's mass vaccination site in an open field at Buffalo Ridge Shopping Plaza in The Villages to resume operations after it temporarily shut down due to lack of vaccines. Gov. Ron DeSantis said during a visit to The Villages on Monday the site will get 4,000 doses a week so it could stay open permanently, as long as vaccine shipments from the federal government remain consistent.

The federal government decides how many doses each state can order. Florida orders



Monique Gilmore, LPN, prepares a syringe with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine during the Sumter County Health Department's first-dose vaccination event at the Wildwood Community Center.

George Horsford | Daily Sun

its vaccines on a weekly basis, and as they become available they get shipped out to vaccine providers.

Florida has administered 2,048,143 doses of the 3,657,775 it's distributed as of Wednesday, according to the CDC.

While the CDC makes recommendations on who should get the vaccine, the decision is left up to the states.

DeSantis repeatedly has reinforced the message of "seniors first" when it comes to giving out the vaccine. That means people 65 and older and residents and staff at long-term care facilities are able to get the vaccine, as well as front-line health care workers and people hospital providers deem to be extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.

The governor said the latter must be done in a hospital setting — and not places like the health department — so pharmacies and drive-thru sites don't have to, "referee someone's comorbidities" and medical professionals can identify who is most susceptible.

UF Health Central Florida does not have the doses to provide them to the public. The closest hospitals to get doses for this purpose are Advent Health Orlando, Orlando Health-Orlando Regional

Medical Center, and UF Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville, according to the Sumter County Health Department.

To ensure vaccines don't go to people flying in from out of state just to get a dose, Florida's



If you give (viruses) a large playing field, they will mutate. The best way to prevent that is the implementation of the public health measures as well as the implementation of the administration of vaccines."

DR. ANTHONY FAUCI



surgeon general Scott Rivkees released an advisory Jan. 21 reinforcing that Florida residents are the priority when it comes to doses. The advisory said vaccine providers should make sure someone is either a permanent or seasonal Florida resident before getting their first dose, meaning they should provide a valid Florida's drivers license or ID card, or provide two of the following: a deed, mortgage, monthly mortgage statement, mortgage payment booklet or residential rental or lease agreement; a utility hookup or work order that is not more than two months old; a utility bill that is not more than two months old; mail from a bank or other financial institution not more than two months old; mail from a government agency that is not more than two months old.

Florida launched a statewide preregistration system last week to cut down on exhaustive appointment-hunting. The system allows people who qualify for the vaccines to register their contact information and location at myvaccine.fl.gov so they can be contacted when vaccine appointments are available nearby. Those without internet can preregister by calling Sumter County: 866-201-7196, Lake: 866-201-6909, Marion: 866-201-6768.

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