



THE WEATHER
High 65° | Low 52°
Mostly cloudy. C2

The Villages® DAILY SUN



SATURDAY
MARCH 20,
2021

THE NEWSPAPER OF FLORIDA'S FRIENDLIEST HOMETOWN

NATIONAL



BIDEN, HARRIS OFFER SOLACE TO ASIAN AMERICANS

**President voices
his support
for COVID-19
Hate Crimes Act.**

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris visited Atlanta on Friday, days after a gunman killed eight people — most of them Asian American women. Biden met with Asian American legislators and other community leaders and said he favors a bill that would strengthen the government's reporting and response to hate crimes. He also visited the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for an update on the pandemic. **A8**

NATION & WORLD REPORT

Nation: Former Florida Sen. Bill Nelson, whose background includes a flight on the space shuttle, has been selected to lead NASA. **A8**

World: Top U.S. and Chinese officials wrapped up two days of contentious talks in their first face-to-face meeting since President Joe Biden took office. **A2**



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Top of the News

INSIDE THE ISSUES SHAPING OUR COMMUNITY

DeSantis: Vaccination Age Dropping to 50



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

Bill Noble, of the Village of Bridgeport at Lake Miona, rolls up his sleeve as he prepares to get the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at a drive-thru vaccine site in The Villages.

As the COVID-19 inoculation push expands, The Villages Health begins offering online appointments to residents.

By **BILL ZIMMERMAN** | Daily Sun Associate Managing Editor

Tri-county residents have two new paths to the COVID-19 vaccine. Gov. Ron DeSantis says people ages 50 and up can be inoculated beginning Monday, while The Villages Health is accepting online-only appointments to administer doses for established patients ages 60 and up. DeSantis on Friday said that vaccine supply is adequate to handle expected demand, based on what the state has seen since lowering the age from 65 to 60 a week ago. "We think that even on current vaccine allotments that opening it up will be good," DeSantis said, announcing an executive order. "I think the demand has been relatively modest, certainly much more modest than it was at the end of December

Please See **VACCINE, A6**

LOCAL NEWS

Tax Increase Threatens New UF Hospital in Sumter County

**Officials reiterate that extra
costs would impact location;
Lake County standing by.**

By **DAVID R. CORDER**
Daily Sun Specialty Editor

A tax increase proposed by new members of the Sumter County Commission does indeed jeopardize plans for a new UF Hospital here, UF Health officials confirmed Friday.

Ed Jimenez, chief executive officer for UF Health Shands, asked the Daily Sun to confirm to residents that its reporting of UF Health's position has been accurate after tax increase proponents have begun mischaracterizing his comments in their misinformation campaign.

"UF Health is committed to bringing quality health care to The Villages," Jimenez told the newspaper. "But any additional costs, including higher impact fees, absolutely affect our ability to do so. Higher impact fees mean less money for health care and would definitely be a factor as to if and where a new hospital is built."

UF Health and The Villages announced in 2019 an intent to create a 400-acre medical city in the expanding southern region, anchored by a new acute care hospital.

But after new commissioners Craig Estep, Oren Miller and Gary Search in January announced plans for higher road impact fees on new businesses and homes countywide, UF Health

Please See **TAX INCREASE, A7**

THAT'S AMAZING!

ARCHAEOLOGIST FINDS ANCIENT BRONZE BULL FIGURINE IN GREECE

Heavy rainfall in southern Greece has led to the discovery of a bronze bull figurine believed to have been a votive offering made to the god Zeus in Ancient Olympia as early as 3,000 years ago.

Greece's Culture Ministry said Friday that the small, intact figurine was found after an archaeologist spotted one horn poking out of the ground following recent rainfall in the area.

The excellently preserved figurine was transported to a lab and initial examination indicates it dates from the Geometric period of ancient Greek art, roughly 1050 B.C. to 700 B.C. It is believed to have been a votive offering to Zeus made as part of a sacrifice, the Culture Ministry said.

— The Associated Press

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

Health Departments

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

Coronavirus: How America Is Moving To Keep Us Safe

The U.S. on Friday cleared President Joe Biden's goal of injecting 100 million coronavirus shots, more than a month before his target date of his 100th day in office, as the president prepared to set his sights higher in the nationwide vaccination effort. With the nation now administering about 2.5 million shots per day, Biden, who promised to set a new goal for vaccinations next week, teased the possibility of setting a 200 million-dose goal by his 100th day in office. "We may be able to double it," he told reporters before leaving the White House for Atlanta. The U.S. is on pace to have enough of the three currently authorized vaccines to cover the entire adult population just 10 weeks from now. As the pace of U.S. vaccinations and supply improves, the White House said the nation is now in position to help supply neighbors Canada and Mexico with millions of lifesaving shots.

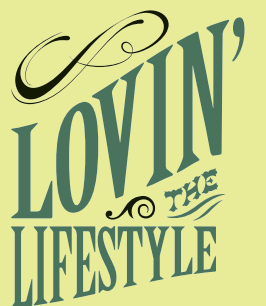
— Compiled from wire reports

CDC ALLOWS SCHOOL DESKS TO BE CLOSER

Students can safely sit 3 feet apart in the classroom as long as they wear masks but should be kept 6 feet apart at sporting events, assemblies, lunch or chorus practice, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday in relaxing its COVID-19 guidelines. The revised recommendations are a turn away from the 6-foot standard that has limited how many students some schools can accommodate. Some places have had to remove desks, stagger schedules and take other steps to keep children apart.

WHAT ARE THE LATEST FLORIDA VIRUS NUMBERS?

The Florida Department of Health reported 5,140 new cases of COVID-19 in Florida as of Thursday, increasing the total number infected in Florida to 1,999,257. The daily test positivity rate was 5%. In the tri-county area, Sumter County reported 29 new cases, Lake County reported 61 and Marion County reported 51. The state confirms 2,917 hospitalizations as of Friday and 33,273 deaths, including 242 deaths in Sumter County, 593 in Lake County and 904 in Marion County.



View feathered
friends with
birding club. **D1**



from the front page

VACCINE

Continued from A1

when we were doing the 65 and plus, so we think that this makes sense.”

Desantis said more than 67% of seniors in Florida — more than 3 million — have received the vaccine.

“When they’re getting the shots there, it’s a big relief for them, because this is something they’ve had to worry about,” DeSantis said.

In Sumter, 61.1 percent of residents ages 65 and up had received at least one dose of the vaccine as of Wednesday, according to health department records and census figures — accounting for 91% of doses administered in the county. In Marion, 56.2% of seniors have received at least one dose.

Lake stood at 74% of seniors vaccinated, DeSantis said.

“What happens is once you get over that two-thirds of seniors, it really starts to slow down in terms of the demand. And so there’s just a certain critical mass of seniors who really want it, but there’s definitely a segment who are opting not to get it. And I think it’s going to depend on each county, but I think you’re looking at between 15% to 30% of seniors, depending on the county, who will probably not opt (in).”

Appointments can be made online at myvaccine.fl.gov. Residents without internet access can call Sumter County at 866-201-7196; Lake County at 866-201-6909; and Marion County at 866-201-6768.

The Villages Health

At The Villages Health, the Moderna vaccine is available to its patients ages 60 and up, who must visit tvhvaccine.com to register for an appointment.

Regardless of where people get vaccinated or which vaccine they receive, “I’d love to see as many people get vaccinated as possible,” Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jeffrey Lowenkron said. “We have to overcome the concerns that people have. The fastest way to get out of the pandemic is for people to get vaccinated.”

The provider’s first doses



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks earlier this year at a drive-thru vaccine site in The Villages. DeSantis said Friday that starting Monday, residents 50 and up will be eligible for vaccines.

are being administered today at two of The Villages Health’s care centers, expanding Wednesday to six locations. Walk-ins and phone appointments are not available. When all available appointment times are filled, the website will stop taking registrations.

As more doses become available, the offering could expand to remain compliant with the governor’s order.

“We will look to ensure we have adequate doses as we expand the age of availability,” Lowenkron said.

Other Sites in Sumter

The Department of Health in Sumter on Friday began two days of administering vaccines, with another coming Monday. Appointments are assigned on a first-come-first-serve basis at sumterchdvax.eventbrite.com.

Global Medical Response offers vaccinations Monday at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 5323 E. County Road 462, Wildwood. Saturday

appointments are changed to the Friday prior; GMR will contact those with appointments. For information, go to sumterfl.saferestart.net.

The entity that runs the outpatient VA clinic in The Villages, North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, has been administering about 300 vaccine doses a day to enrolled patients at American Legion Post 347 in Lady Lake. Monday, it will increase the number of available COVID-19 vaccine appointments, with capacity for about 800, a spokeswoman said. All veterans, regardless

of age, who receive care from NFSGVHS can schedule an appointment by calling 352-548-6000, ext. 103755. Dr. Brian Pinkston, chief medical officer of the VA’s clinic, said earlier this week that his team can handle “as many veterans as quickly as possible.”

Other providers continue to include the following pharmacies, who offer registration via their websites: CVS, Publix, Sam’s Club, Walgreens, Walmart and Winn-Dixie.

DeSantis said long-term care facilities are benefiting from vaccination efforts, which continue as new residents



Cindy Skop | Daily Sun

Health care workers fill syringes with the Moderna vaccine at a Global Medical Response COVID-19 vaccination site.

arrive and staff are hired. With “all 4,000 facilities” in the state being offered doses, LTCs have seen “a huge, huge decline” in cases, DeSantis said. The facilities had accounted for “anywhere from 30% to 40% of all the COVID-related mortalities,” he said. More than 80 percent of COVID-19-related deaths were individuals 65 and older, his office said in a statement.

“To date, the state of Florida

has administered 111,000 doses in long-term care facilities,” said Jared Moskowitz, head of Florida Emergency Management, ranging from assisted living to nursing homes to adult day cares and more.

Staff Writer Bill Thompson contributed. Associate Managing Editor Bill Zimmerman can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5284, or bill.zimmerman@thevillagesmedia.com.

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