



March 15, 2021

For immediate release

For more information, contact: Kim Engel, Director, 308-760-2415, kengel@pphd.org

Oshkosh art educator and community catalyst cares for her community by getting COVID vaccinated

“It’s the easiest way to care about someone,” Oshkosh art educator and community catalyst Lauren Olson said when talking about her recent first dose COVID vaccine experience.

Olson cares deeply about her community. If you travel through Oshkosh, you will see a legacy of this commitment to her students, school, and community with various artwork and murals throughout the town.

“This pandemic forces us to think about others. I’ve missed hanging out with my elderly neighbor but soon we will both have both doses, and we are looking forward to a vaccine card party,” Olson added.

Olson’s mom has a compromised immune system, so they have taken extra precautions during the pandemic by not going out with friends and ordering takeout from restaurants so they could still support local business. Eating in restaurants again is something she’s looking forward to.

Olson’s students have been at the forefront of her mind, too. She’s a former Garden County Eagle herself and has been an art educator at the school since graduating from UNL nearly a decade ago.

“There was a lot of uncertainty as the start of school was nearing last fall. I had an extended family member not fare well with a COVID infection, so I was concerned with what school reopening was going to look like. Thankfully, the school took precautions very seriously and the kids are resilient, they have done well wearing masks and not complaining,” she stated.

Olson encourages others to get their COVID vaccine. Her sister is a doctor and they both firmly believe in science with the significant amount of research put into it.

Despite many tattoos, Olson has a fear of needles, but said she wasn’t able to feel the small, brief stick in the arm.

“Regional West Garden County was well-organized with their COVID shot process and both my mom and I were in and out in less than twenty minutes,” Olson said. Her students were anxious to hear her experience and she relayed it was just a bit of a sore arm but nothing else.

COVID vaccines are currently available for Panhandle residents 50 or older and phase 1b employees to include educators, childcare providers, grocery and convenience store workers, railroad employees, truckers, public transit, postal service, cooperatives, and meat and food processing facility employees.

Residents are encouraged to register now for their COVID vaccine at vaccinate.ne.gov or www.pphd.org or by calling 833-998-2275 or 531-249-1873. There’s no need to wait, if you are in any of the currently eligible populations, register now so local vaccine providers can determine when to move to the next critical phases who are anxiously awaiting getting theirs. Please help your family, friends, and neighbors sign up now.

Studies are showing the COVID vaccines provide 100% protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. Vaccines are one of the single greatest achievements in public health, be sure to get your COVID shot when it’s your turn. People who are fully COVID vaccinated will not be required to quarantine due to close contact.

If you have had COVID, you are still encouraged to get the vaccine once you no longer have symptoms and after you have been released from isolation. If you received the monoclonal antibody treatment, it is recommended to get the vaccine no sooner than 90 days after treatment.

If you have received your first dose and have not heard when you will receive your second dose, don’t fret, you will be contacted by the vaccine provider that administered your first dose.

The Panhandle COVID dashboard is updated weekdays at 4:30 pm MT and available at www.pphd.org. For the most up to date information from the CDC, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Panhandle Public Health District, Region 21, 22, and 23 Emergency Management, and Scotts Bluff County Health Department are working as a unified command on this evolving situation. Essential updates will be regularly communicated to the public and community partners.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.org.