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Friday, January 15, 2021

# QCC's Practical Nursing students help administer first round of COVID-19 vaccines

SOUTHBRIDGE — Quinsigamond Community College practical nursing students are now part of history. On Dec. 18, eight practical nursing students along with their instructors Margaret “Meg” Yoder, professor of Nurse Education, and faculty member Christian Ilustre helped

## Selectmen amend employee leave policy

BY GUS STEEVES  
CORRESPONDENT

STURBRIDGE – Selectmen unanimously approved amending the town's leave policy to give employees up to two days off if they experience symptoms beyond the fairly common mild injection-site pain within two days of getting one of the COVID vaccines.

Chair Mary Blanchard noted that so far there have been few reports of such effects, but they wanted to encourage people to get the shots without penalizing them. Prior to the change, they would have had to use sick time. In the same vein, they will allow up to two hours paid during staff's shift to actually get the shot itself.

Town Administrator Jeff Bridges noted the change will help in light of the fact the CARES Act sick time coverage expired at the end of December. Beyond vaccination, though, staff who do get Covid or have to quarantine due to potential exposure will still have to either take sick time or work from home.

Covid also played a role in the board's approval of a change order to the ongoing public safety complex project. There, the new rooftop unit doesn't include a carbon dioxide sensor, and the board decided to add one to “increase efficiency” and “meet fresh air guidelines.” That adds \$2166 to the project, but Blanchard noted \$18,000 remains in its budget.

In other business, they approved creating a new food service coordinator's job at the Senior Center, with pay coming from the town's annual Council on Aging formula grant.

According to Leslie Wong, the plan is to hire someone to oversee an outside vendor's provision of daily lunches, a function now performed by Tri-Valley Elder Services. She said Hearthstone has agreed to send them hot at about 11 a.m. for service at 11:30 a.m. Right now, they arrive about two hours earlier, and she's had numerous complaints.

The change will not affect Tri-Valley's



Courtesy

On Dec. 18, eight practical nursing students along with their instructors Margaret “Meg” Yoder, professor of Nurse Education, and faculty member Christian Ilustre helped administer approximately 100 COVID-19 vaccines to Harrington Hospital employees at the Southbridge Armory.

administer approximately 100 COVID-19 vaccines to Harrington Hospital employees at the Southbridge Armory. They worked with over a dozen Harrington nurses who also included a couple of QCC graduates, according to Professor Yoder.

Healthcare workers are the first to be vaccinated in the U.S. and Harrington employees who were vaccinated included doctors, nurses and other frontline workers at Harrington Healthcare and Harrington Physician Services.

“Our entire college community feels tremendous pride knowing our nursing students are playing such a vital role in our nation's history,” said QCC President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D. “So many of our students are frontline workers who are essential to the safety and well-being of our community. They emulate what it means to be a Wyvern - QCC's mascot that is a symbol for community guardianship.”

“This is our community and having the opportunity to engage the practical nursing students in this historic moment, serving our community is immeasurable,” said Professor Yoder. “The practical nursing students of the Class of 2021 are experiencing many firsts that will provide them with a resiliency unlike any other.”

The QCC students not only administered the vaccine, they performed intake assessments, gave educational information, and observed vaccine recipients post vaccination. This type of hands-

on training enables students to stay current with workforce needs and makes them valuable employees when they enter the workforce because they require less training.

“Clinical experiences and opportunities are so important for all of our healthcare students. Harrington Hospital has been one of our most valuable partners during these past several months and we are honored to have been asked to assist at their COVID vaccine clinics,” said Dean of the School of Healthcare, Pat Schmohl. “Our practical nursing students are learning firsthand the importance of community-based public health initiatives. We have procedures in place to keep our students safe while they are participating in these critical in-person clinical opportunities.”

“At a time when clinical placements are difficult to find, Harrington Hospital has remained committed to providing QCC students with face-to-face opportunities. We could not be more grateful,” Professor Yoder added.

QCC students will continue to assist with the vaccination process throughout the remainder of the year and through April.

“Encouraging service to our community is an integral piece of living QCC's mission, one of our core values. Today was just the beginning. All of our students will be provided with this opportunity. In the future, we will be administering the

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# VACCINE

*continued from page A1*

vaccine to front line workers, EMTs, police and fire, and high risk vulnerable populations,” Professor Yoder said, adding that the students were excited to be part of this historical moment.

“When the practical nursing students were presented with the opportunity, they echoed resoundingly... ‘Thank you!’”

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or [jmartin@qcc.mass.edu](mailto:jmartin@qcc.mass.edu).