


## Vaccinations for Holocaust survivors, other seniors offer hope for a 'new normal'

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### Vaccinations for Holocaust survivors, other seniors offer hope for a 'new normal'

Jewish Family Service and the Oakland County Health Division collaborated Friday to vaccinate 250 people, more than half of them Holocaust survivors

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*West Bloomfield* — With a quick jab from a nurse, Zoltan Rubin, 102, got what he came for.

"Perfect," Rubin described feeling after nurse Debra Collins with the Oakland County Health Division gave him his first vaccine shot against COVID-19. "Couldn't be better. No problems."

He is one of nearly 170 survivors of the Holocaust who received their first round of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine Friday, the result of a collaboration between Jewish Family Service and the Oakland County Health Division.





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Holocaust survivor Zoltan Rubin, 102, of Farmington Hills receives the Moderna vaccine given by Debra Collins, Oakland County Health Division, at the Jewish Family Service in West Bloomfield on Friday, Jan. 29, 2021. (Photo: Max Ortiz, The Detroit News)

Rubin, who will turn 103 on June 2, urged people to appreciate the time they have on this planet.

"God is trying to show people that they have to believe in something," Rubin said. "People should realize they are living on borrowed time — they're not going to be here forever."

Rubin said he grew up in a large family in the the former Czechoslovakia, one of 11 children.

He and two brothers were the only ones to survive the Holocaust. One moved to Israel, the other to Iran. Rubin moved to America.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored persecution and mass murder by the German Nazi regime of millions of European Jews and others, including gays, dissidents, the Romani people or "gypsies," and the intellectually disabled from 1933 to 1945.

About 250 people were to be vaccinated at the Jewish Family Service building on West Maple, west of Drake, by the end of the day. Rubin and the others will return in about a month for the second round.

After a quick explainer that she was administering the Moderna shot, Collins asked whether Rubin had any allergies or anaphylaxis. He did not.

After his shot, Rubin was shuttled off to the post-shot waiting area, where people sit for 15 minutes to see if they feel ill effects or are OK to leave.

As of the end of last week, Oakland County had given 13,751 people their first dose of the vaccine, according to the county's dashboard.

People are generally relieved to get the vaccine, Collins said.

"They're finally getting some peace of mind that they're being protected from something we've been dealing with for almost a year," Collins said.

There will be no leftover dosages, said Dr. Russell Faust, medical director of the county health division.

"If we ever have a partial vial at the end of a clinic, we have a call list, and we start at the top and call those folks in," Faust said. "The people we have on that call list are the ones who were the highest priority when we started this, the 1A folks, the EMS. We never get far down the list. One-hundred percent goes into an arm."

While Rubin got a ride from his daughter, a group of 13 people is making round-trip runs to offer door-to-door service to the elderly clientele, said Perry Ohren, CEO of Jewish Family Service. They'll pick up about 50 people.

The hope, Ohren said, is that once this population is vaccinated, they can resume the social life they knew before.

Getting old can bring social isolation, he said. The pandemic made things worse.

"This gives us hope that we will all move forward, and we'll all get vaccinated a second time and then we'll have the new normal at some point and we'll be able to dance in the street," Ohren said.

Ohren estimated there are "700 or 800" Holocaust survivors in Metro Detroit.

Holding vaccinations at Jewish Family Service, where people being vaccinated can expect to see familiar faces, is meant to make people feel comfortable getting the shot, Ohren said.

"A Holocaust survivor might have all kinds of feelings that they don't know about: about the needle, about a person in a white coat, about standing in line, about a smell, about dealing with someone who they can't see behind a mask," Ohren said.

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