

Vaccinations...from Page 1A

individuals vaccinated in Georgia and are unrelated to the reactions reported last week at the Cumming Fairgrounds site."

As referenced in the DPH statement, in a separate incident from April 7, eight people experienced dizziness or fainting at a vaccination site administering the J&J vaccine in Forsyth County.

"There is no reason to believe there is anything wrong with the vaccine itself, and other individuals who have received the J&J vaccine should not be concerned," Public Health Commissioner Dr. Kathleen Toomey said April 9.

Continuing, "We are looking into what happened and what may have caused the reactions, including the conditions at the fairgrounds such as heat and the ability to keep the site cool."

DPH paused J&J vaccine administration at that

site specifically following the incidents, after total of 425 shots had been administered there that day.

For the federally recommended pause that is currently in effect statewide, Public Health is working to provide Pfizer or Moderna mRNA vaccines for individuals previously scheduled to receive the J&J vaccine.

"Right now, these adverse events appear to be extremely rare, but out of an abundance of caution DPH will temporarily stop the administration of the J&J vaccine while scientists review the data around these cases," DPH said April 13.

More than 124,000 doses of J&J vaccine "have been safely administered in Georgia," with the local Health Departments having administered 221 doses in Union County and 50 doses in Towns County, including teacher and staff vaccination clinics at the school systems.

"Individuals who have received the J&J vaccine and develop severe headache, abdominal pain, leg pain or shortness of breath within three weeks after vaccination should contact their health care providers," DPH said.

Public health is urging all health care providers to be aware of the potential for these adverse events "and plan for appropriate treatment required with these types of blood clots."

"Vaccination remains one of our best tools for stopping the spread of COVID-19, along with basic prevention measures

- wearing a mask, distancing from others, avoiding large gatherings, and frequent hand washing," DPH said, noting that it would continue to monitor the situation with J&J vaccines and provide additional information as it becomes available.

The Union County Health Department hosted a Pfizer vaccine clinic on Saturday, April 17, which featured just 85 recipients out of 600 open appointments at the Sports Center. Low turnout at Union's first ever Saturday clinic may be a sign that demand for vaccination is slowing.

As of Sunday, Union still led nearly every county in the state in vaccination rates, with 31% of the community having received at least one dose and 27% being fully vaccinated. And with everyone aged 16 and up now eligible, only time will tell if interest is truly waning locally.

The Health Department continues to urge people to get vaccinated, saying there is now plenty of supply for everyone who wants one.

This will be the last week that the Health Department utilizes the Union County Sports Center for vaccinations, which will continue in-office starting April 26.

People may sign up for vaccinations at the Union County Health Department by visiting <http://phdistrict2.org> or calling 1-888-426-5073.

Beginning May 4, vaccination hours will be Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 5:45 p.m., Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., and Thursday from 8

a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Walk-ins will be welcome.

And starting this week, the Towns County Health Department is scheduling appointment-only COVID vaccinations for Wednesdays and only at the Health Department.

"We are no longer operating out of the Foster Park Recreation Center," Towns County Office Manager Laura Ide said. "We have made these changes to accommodate our regularly offered services to our public on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays."

People may call the Towns County Health Department at 706-896-2265 to make an appointment. Additionally, there are open spots still available in the special Saturday clinic running from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on April 24, and walk-ins will be welcome for this event.

Towns County was still leading the state in vaccination rates as of Sunday, with 35% of residents having already received at least one dose and 31% being fully vaccinated.

In addition to the Health Departments, many local pharmacies are administering the vaccine, and people need only call around to check availability.

Synergy Health of Hiawassee is still accepting new signups at ngvax.com, but due to improved vaccine availability in the community, last Friday was the office's last mass clinic at Foster Park. Moving forward, Synergy's vaccination efforts will take place on a smaller scale.

Saddle Club...from Page 1A



L-R: Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris, District 8 State Rep. Stan Gunter, and Gerald Patterson and Art Miller of the Saddle Club each spoke in the April 16 arena anniversary event.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

the role that the Saddle Club plays in the community and its members' level of dedication and involvement in promoting Union County.

"The events that we put on here basically go on year-round, but for the most part, they go from April to November," Miller said. "These include horse shows, barrel races, team roping, ranch sorting, team penning and special invitational shows for the special needs."

Added Miller, "In October, we make a donation to the American Cancer Society every year for Breast Cancer Awareness. In November, we do a food drive and donate it to the local food bank. In December, we do a toy drive and give the toys to the Sheriff's Department."

Former Saddle Club President and essential member in the development of the organization Gerald Patterson gave a brief history on how the arena came to be.

"We used to buddy with the Kiwanis, and we would put on two shows a year," Patterson said. "The only place that we really had to do it was on the football field."

"You can imagine the ones that were running barrels and running up there on that sod, it was a tore up mess, and

nobody liked it, and nobody was happy with it."

Over the years, the Saddle Club moved its events to different venues, including where the back nine holes of Butternut Creek Golf Course are now.

Needless to say, finding a proper location for the Saddle Club was difficult, and Patterson credited Commissioner Lamar Paris for including the Saddle Club in the Recreation Board.

"I went in and I went down, and I think (Paris) was the only friend I had sitting in there," Patterson said. "This was where I first learned that Lamar Paris would be fair with you. I'm serious, it hit me before I left there. I knew that he loved children - I knew that."

Added Patterson, "We go in, and I got golfers sitting in there looking at me, and I've got some other cats that just didn't want no horse arena."

Paris talked about his involvement and the construction of the arena and how it has benefited the county since it was erected.

"The people that ride horses and have anything to do with horses are some of the greatest people there are," Paris said. "They are hard working, they are honest, you can count

on what they do and what they say, and we just appreciate the fact that this facility ended up here and we can do everything we can do here."

Paris noted that the arena was made possible through voter-backed SPLOST funds, which have helped finance many initiatives of the Recreation Department and allowed different activities for children and adults around the county.

Rep. Gunter, a Blairsville resident and formerly the chief judge of the Enotah Judicial Circuit Superior Court, spoke on the achievements of Union County and his pride in the area.

"One thing I can say is that the folks of the Saddle Club, (former Commissioner) Glenn Gooch, and Lamar Paris all have something in common - they have great vision," Gunter said. "They knew what this county needed."

"You provided a segment of entertainment to our community, and you bring in people from all over the area, and it really benefits Union County. I think that is great vision. It started a long time ago, and it was a lot of work. Just by looking at this place, this is magnificent."

Enotah Garden Club wants you to win this garden cart



Want to win this garden cart? Enotah Garden Club members are shown with the overflowing garden cart, which the club will be raffling in May. Raffle tickets will be sold at various local locations, including weekends at Hamilton Gardens. You can help support the group's many local beautification projects by purchasing a chance for just \$1 per ticket. And there is a second duplicate cart to be raffled as well! NT(Apr21.H1)SH