



THE BULLETIN

SUMMER 2021



Maine Seacoast Mission
seacoastmission.org

OUR MISSION

Rooted in a history of compassionate service and mutual trust, the Mission seeks to strengthen coastal and island communities by educating youth, supporting families, and promoting good health.

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Bringing COVID-19 Vaccines to the Islands

Above: Mike Johnson at the Sunbeam helm. Cover: Paul, Matinicus Island, awaits his vaccination. PHOTOS, ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE

Just after 9:00 A.M. on Thursday, February 25, the Mission's Director of Island Health, Sharon Daley, RN, gave her first vaccination shot against COVID-19 at the Mill Pond Health Center on Swan's Island. By 3:45 P.M., after vaccinating sixty-one islanders, Sharon and the vaccination crew were headed back to Mount Desert Island on the state ferry. The first day of island vaccinations had gone off without a hitch, but there was little time to sit back and savor the accomplishment. Islanders, like everyone else, were eager to be vaccinated and free of the pandemic, and the Mission would be there to help.

The following morning, the vaccination crew left Northeast Harbor at 8:00 A.M. bound for Great Cranberry Island and another clinic. Katelyn Damon, Public Safety Coordinator for the Town of Cranberry Isles, said, "We were very fortunate to have the Mission's help in bringing the vaccine to the islands. Sharon, Douglas, and the crew pulled off a miracle in completing all the CDC paperwork and working with the MDI Hospital to establish a supply of vaccine. The Mission's dedication to the islands goes above and beyond."

Finished on Great Cranberry, the crew took a quick trip to Little Cranberry Island

for six more vaccinations, and returned to Great Cranberry and the *Sunbeam*. By 1:00 P.M., they were on their way to Frenchboro for the day's third clinic. Just a few hours later, the crew set up the clinic, administered sixteen vaccinations, packed up, and reboarded the *Sunbeam* for Isle au Haut. The crew would start preparing the next vaccination clinic at 7:00 the following morning.



Thus began the Mission's drive to bring COVID-19 vaccinations to island residents. Over the next three months, the Mission team vaccinated 343 people on seven islands. Sharon Daley and Douglas Cornman, Director of Island Outreach, were the organizers and leaders of the team. Rounding out the group were Mission President John Zavodny, and two additional nurses: Maureen Giffin, RN, and Peggy Akers, NP. Supporting them was the rest of the *Sunbeam* crew: Captain Mike Johnson, Engineer Storey King, and Steward Jillian.

Maureen and Peggy were moved by the Mission's island clinics. "What stood out to me," Maureen said, "was the profound gratitude the islanders felt for the Mission



Left: Douglas Cornman, Sharon Daly, Maureen Giffin, and John Zavodny (l to r) in a car aboard the ferry on their way to Swan's Island for the first COVID-19 clinic. Right: Maureen Giffin loading a syringe.

DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 VACCINES

February–May 2021

JANUARY

Mission seeks permission from Maine CDC to administer vaccine

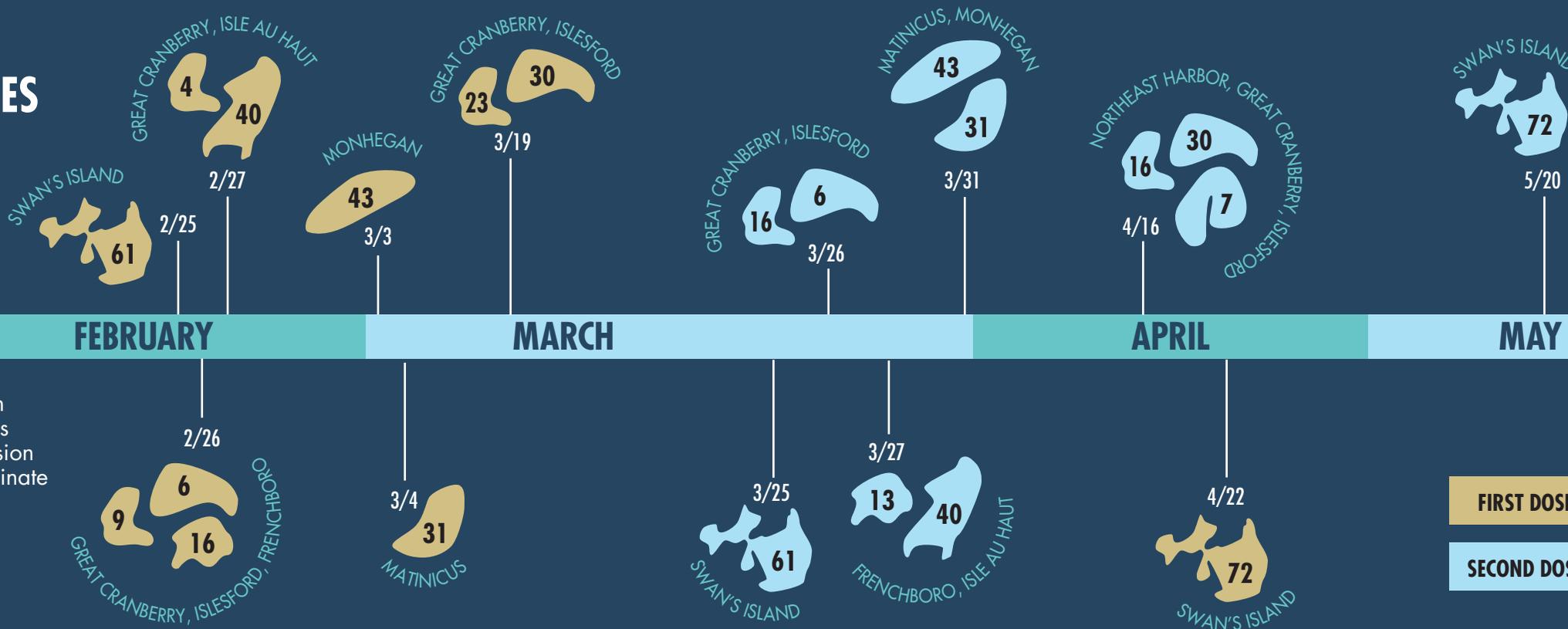
FEBRUARY

Mission receives permission to vaccinate

MARCH

APRIL

MAY



to have brought this vaccine to them. They talked excitedly about being able to hug their grandkids again or hug their daughters or visit parents for the first time in a year.”

Peggy agreed. “I felt so honored to be part of the Mission team and to help the islanders. It was wonderful to see the

trust everyone had in Sharon and in the Mission. Times like these show the vulnerability that comes with island life. There’s the risk of people walking around for days not knowing they’re contagious. There is inevitably close contact moving on and off islands.”

Taking the role of registrar, Mission

president John Zavodny was the first to meet and welcome islanders. “Meeting islanders and putting them at ease as they arrived was rewarding,” said John. The Mission made stickers proclaiming ‘I got vaccinated!’ as a way to celebrate the moment. I guess I gave out about seven hundred stickers in three months.”

“What struck me,” said Peggy Akers, “was how clearly this was a team effort. John was on every trip. He’s the president of the Mission, but there he was sitting at a table checking people in and taking their temperatures. You could see the enjoyment he got from working with the islanders and from watching the vaccination crew do their work.”

A Swan’s Island resident who was at that first day of vaccinations recalled how suddenly things had changed. “As the Swan’s Island annual meeting ended in spring 2020, no one knew it would be the town’s last meeting for more than a year. Within two weeks, much-loved social activities were cancelled. Our library closed and the recreation center closed, so there

were no summer programs for our kids. The loss of social connections was hard.”

How it Started

Getting the Mission certified to be a provider for COVID-19 vaccines took a lot of behind-the-scenes work and needed to be done quickly. “When vaccinations first became available in January,” Sharon Daley recalled, “people on the islands started calling and emailing, asking me if I could vaccinate them. I contacted Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockport, Mount Desert Island Hospital, and various pharmacies saying that I would love to vaccinate people on the islands if I could get the vaccines. I needed to receive permission from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and was told I had to become an official provider. But the Mission didn’t fit into any of the usual Maine CDC categories.

“While I am a registered nurse,” Sharon said, “the Mission is not a medical institution. The forms the CDC gave us



Left: Matinicus Island resident Seth shows the Band-Aid he received after his vaccination. ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE. Right: In the Islesford library, John Zavodny checks in residents of Little Cranberry Island for their vaccinations. ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

were designed for more conventional providers. We had to set up a Zoom meeting with three people from the CDC to figure out how to fit the Mission into boxes that weren't designed for an organization like ours. The people at the CDC worked hard to make this happen because they knew we were ideally suited to take on this challenge."

The appreciation was mutual. After the vaccinations were complete, Sharon received a note from one of her contacts at the CDC which read, "Thank you very much for all the hard work of your vaccination team. It is really amazing what you all have accomplished. Working with you and all of the island stakeholders has been really rewarding—Where there is a will, there is a way!"

"One of the most important adjustments the CDC made was to allow us to vaccinate people 18 and above," said Sharon. "At the time when we were getting approved to do this work, only older Mainers were eligible for the vaccine. This was hugely important because we'd be going to islands where there might be only three or four people over seventy. We made the

case that vaccinating everyone over 18 would be much more efficient. Even more important, it would also prevent waste. Once a vaccine vial is started, it can't be kept for later. It has to be used that day. Granting the Mission that flexibility was important to our success."

"Although each vial held ten doses, the CDC encouraged our team to try squeezing out an eleventh dose," said John, "and our team got eleven out of almost every vial. That's great work."

Administering the vaccines also meant documenting every vial touched and every shot given. Douglas Cornman recorded all vaccinations in the CDC's database. "The ImmPact database stores information on immunizations administered in Maine," explained Douglas. "ImmPact is huge and complex with a number of idiosyncrasies. I was registered and trained as a user, but once again our work did not mesh easily with the system. A pharmacist at MDI Hospital told me, 'Just call if you have a problem and I'll help you out.' And every single time I've had a question, she stopped what she was doing and helped me figure it out."



Above: Islesboro residents Lindsay (left), her daughter, Marina, and Kaitlyn (center) do a happy dance with Mitchell to celebrate their COVID-19 vaccinations, Little Cranberry Island. ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

Facing page: Volunteer Kathy, wearing hat, and nurse Maureen Giffin huddle aboard the lobster boat Island Girl piloted by owner Jeremy Alley (far left) on a wet and windy ride from Islesford to Great Cranberry Island. ROBERT F. BUKATY/AP

“The amount of detail is bewildering,” Douglas continued. “Each vaccine vial has a lot number that has to be on the patient’s vaccine card. That lot number also has to be on the paperwork that I use to record their vaccine in the state’s database, so the number must stay consistent from the vial to the vaccine to the form to the state database. And it had to be done quickly. The state wanted the paperwork back within twenty-four hours of each vaccination. As John said, we got an extra dose from most vials, so we had to keep track of those so we were sure we brought enough vaccine on trips for the second doses.

“In the end, everything worked out,” said Douglas. “ImmPact had a help hotline, and every time I called and left a message, I got a call back right away from someone who was helpful and always pleasant. Working with these people restored my faith in humanity. Not once did I go to someone with a problem and hear, ‘I can’t help you with that.’”

“I was in complete awe,” Peggy said. “Sharon and Douglas had this down to a science. To give a vaccine in



Isle au Haut teacher Marcela receives a vaccine from Sharon Daley, in the library of Isle au Haut Town Hall. ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE

any community is complicated and challenging. But that’s nothing to what it’s like on an island. A clinic location had to be identified on every island. Boats and land transportation had to be coordinated. There were restrictions and requirements for the safe handling

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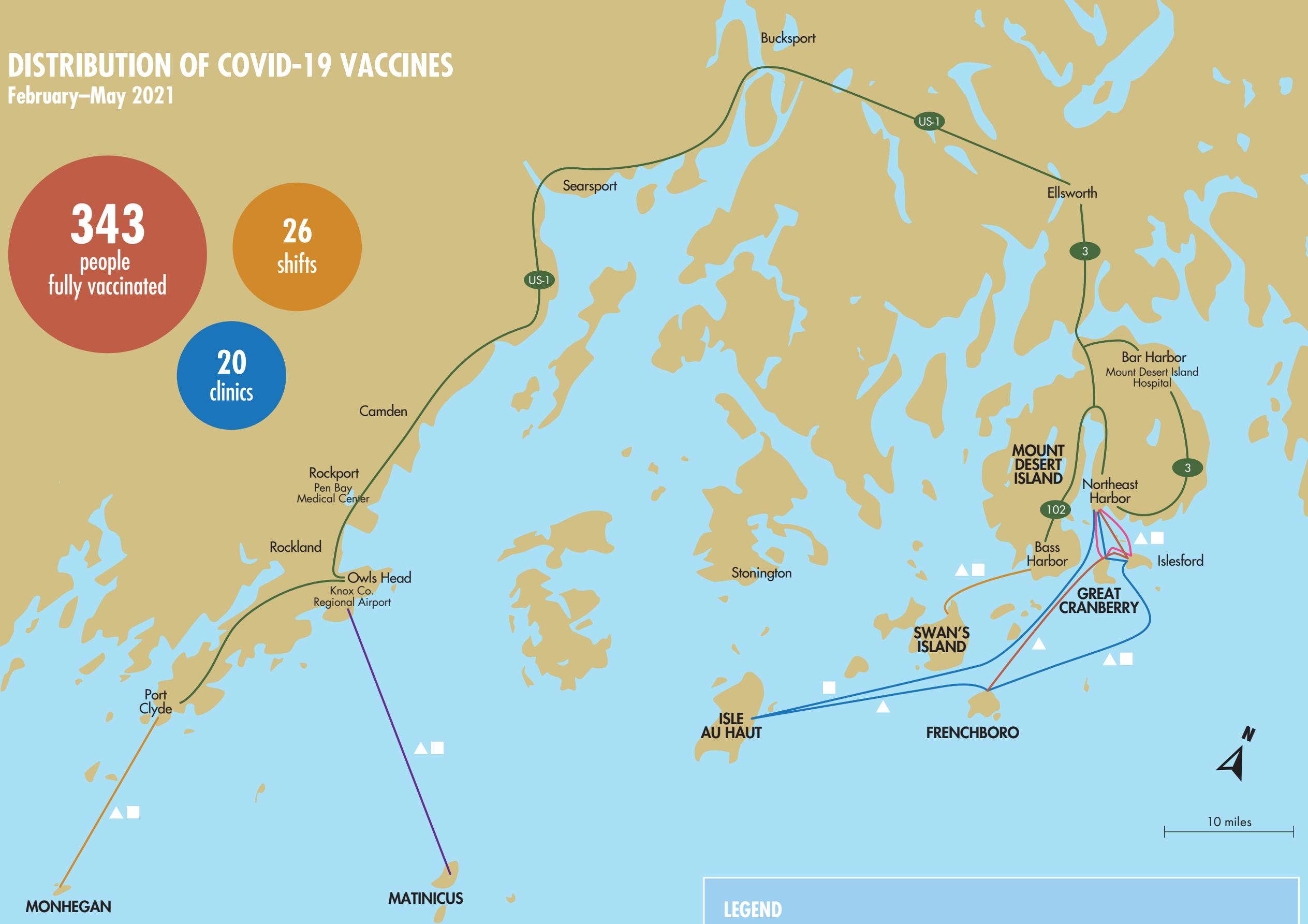
DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 VACCINES

February–May 2021

343
people
fully vaccinated

26
shifts

20
clinics



Our generous donors and community partners made this work possible. Thank you.

LEGEND

Sunbeam	Airplane	Automobile	First dose
State ferry	Mailboat	Lobster boat	Second dose

Continued from page 7

of the vaccine. Islands don't have drug stores; they had to bring every syringe, needle box, mask, thermometer, Band-Aid, alcohol pad, disposable glove, disinfectant, and hand sanitizer with them. Registration required a laptop, forms, pens, clipboards, signage, and more. All this had to be packed in plastic bins and hauled along."

The logistics were daunting, but everyone was motivated to make it work. Donna Wiegler, who runs Swan's Island Mill Pond Health Center, agreed. "Logistically, it was complex. Weather forced us to change schedules and anytime there was a change, sixty phone calls had to be made. Because our clinic is so small, people were scheduled about three or four minutes apart, so scheduling had to be precise, and paperwork had to be filled out ahead of time. After their vaccination, people left the building and went to wait in their car.

An EMT was the parking attendant and people were told to honk their horn if they didn't feel good or had any symptoms. After fifteen minutes, they could drive off."

"The success of this work comes from Sharon and Douglas," added John. They have worked together for years and are a great team. When I think of this effort, I will always think first of Sharon and Douglas and their problem-solving huddles. They huddled over boxes of the Moderna vaccine. They huddled over computers. They huddled over hot drinks. They huddled so much that I occasionally referred to them as 'Shouglas.'"

Delivering the Vaccine

The *Sunbeam* provided an essential staging area for trip preparation and a comfortable base for the crew, but some vaccination trips were better served by other modes of transportation. "The vaccinations had to be given at specific times without much flexibility in the schedule," Captain Mike Johnson explained. "That inflexibility combined with turbulent winter and early spring weather in the North Atlantic does not match the *Sunbeam's* strengths. Her size is perfect for providing hospitality to the islanders, but that size can be a liability if you can't adjust your schedule for the weather. She travels well when it's rough, but docking in tight harbors with poor protection can be risky—especially for the dock. Most normal *Sunbeam* trips can wait a day or two, but the vaccine trips could not."

In addition to the *Sunbeam*, the crew traveled on ferries, mailboats, lobster boats, and small, single-engine airplanes to get to the islands with their precious cargo. But, regardless of how they traveled, the *Sunbeam* was always home base. "What I'll always remember is coming back to the *Sunbeam* after two or three or four islands and clinics," said Maureen. "I'd be worn out and dragging, and there was steward Jillian ready with



Above: Two islanders show off the "I've been vaccinated" stickers they earned. Below: Katelyn and Barb (l to r) applaud the vaccination team after the vaccination clinic at the Islesford library. BOTTOM PHOTO, ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE

a warm meal and her nurturing spirit. It felt like coming home. No matter how we traveled among the islands, we always returned to the *Sunbeam*. When you feel nurtured, you're able to do good work."

Sharon summed up the support they received. "From any resident on the islands to any captain with a boat, to anyone at Penobscot Island Air, everyone has said, 'OK. We'll get it done. Let's figure it out.' And they'd bring us fresh doughnuts. It was amazing."

Complexities of the Work

The effort to bring second vaccine doses to two more remote islands exemplifies the challenges the team faced. Second-dose clinics were originally scheduled for Monhegan on March 31 and Matinicus on April 1. The plan was to sail from Port Clyde to Monhegan and back on Monhegan Boat Line's *Laura B.* on the first day, and on the next day fly from Knox County Regional Airport to Matinicus and back on Penobscot Island Air.

Transporting the vaccine requires careful planning, since it can only be in the transport coolers for a total of twelve hours before it has to be discarded. On

March 30, Douglas picked up the vaccine at the Mount Desert Island Hospital pharmacy, where it had been stored at the required low temperatures. Then Douglas drove with John and Maureen to Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockport, where they had arranged for the vaccine to be stored overnight in the pharmacy's refrigerator. They continued to Owls Head where they met Sharon and Peggy at the Airbnb they had reserved for the night.

Then, Penobscot Island Air contacted the team with the news that they would not be flying to Matinicus as scheduled due to expected high winds and foul weather. The team discussed their options and decided to move the Matinicus trip to the 31st following the Monhegan trip. Suddenly the day would be twice as long, and everyone on the Matinicus had to be informed of the last-minute change.

Early the next morning, John and Douglas made the 20-minute drive back to Rockport to retrieve the vaccine, turned around, and drove to Port Clyde to rejoin the others in time for the 7:00 A.M. departure of the *Laura B.* to Monhegan. Once there, they were met at the dock and driven on a 4x4 ATV to the clinic site at the parsonage. The captain held the



Penobscot Island Air Cessna with the vaccination crew aboard lands on Matinicus Island. ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE



On Frenchboro, Maureen Giffin prepares vaccines while Sharon Daly administers a vaccination. ERIN CLARK/
BOSTON GLOBE

boat for them while they completed the vaccinations, and they returned to Port Clyde. “We were so happy to be able to help the Mission vaccinate Monhegan residents,” said Amy Barstow, who is part of the family-run Monhegan Boat Line. “It was incredible what the Mission did. It completely changed the atmosphere on the islands. People are willing to visit more and travel more.”

The vaccination crew then immediately drove to Knox County Airport to board a Penobscot Island Air plane to Matinicus. The team administered the vaccine on Matinicus, flew back in increasingly

strong winds, and offered more vaccinations at Penobscot Island Air’s facility to Matinicus residents who were on the mainland.

“Despite all these stresses,” Maureen remembered, “the Mission team remained pleasant. They were so nice you’d never guess everything that was on their plates and what responsibilities they were carrying. The work unfolded seamlessly. We’d get off the boat and the person with a vehicle was there to take us to the vaccination site. Everyone was there and waiting for their shots. It was incredible.” 🌟

Left: Isle au Haut post office. Right: Matinicus residents line up waiting for their vaccinations. PHOTOS, ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE





Left: John Zavodny takes a temperature while checking in an islander for her vaccination. Right: Douglas Cornman holding the cooler containing the vaccine, Matinicus Island. PHOTOS, ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE

Message from the President

“This isn’t even the Mission’s first pandemic.” The first time I heard myself say that to a reporter, I even shocked myself, but the Maine Seacoast Mission had already been working with coastal communities in Maine for over a decade before the 1918 flu pandemic. Thankfully, no one ever asked me the natural follow-up question, “How did the Mission serve during the 1918 pandemic?” I could find nothing online. My Mount Desert Island historical experts didn’t unearth anything. And if there is documentation in the Mission archive, it’s buried, or sparse, or both.

In order to share the story with our current friends and to help make sure we have good documentation of the effort for posterity, this edition of the Maine Seacoast Mission *Bulletin* is largely dedicated to one historic moment—the Mission’s COVID-19 island vaccination effort. I think of this edition of the *Bulletin* as a kind of time capsule of this moment. And, as with any time capsule, some of the contents are specific to the island vaccination effort and some will give future readers (Hello, future reader!) the flavor of this time at the Mission including vaccination support from our base in Cherryfield and other work happening now.

Let’s throw into our time capsule some of the I-got-vaccinated-today stickers. I’ll also throw in a box of empty vials. While we’re at it, let’s add one of the special syringes that helped the nurses draw that

life-saving eleventh dose. At least one of the two coolers must be included: the neat little white and red one and the big gaummy Styrofoam one in a reusable shopping bag. The med team had to switch to Styrofoam with a digital temperature probe as the protocols changed.

Finally, let’s make sure there are lots of pictures of masked faces in our time capsule, because, more than anything, it’s the smiling eyes that I’ll remember from this adventure. Islanders’ eyes full of gratitude, trust, and hope. The eyes of the lobstermen and women who crewed us from shore to shore. Our team’s eyes full of purpose, dedication, and compassion. As you take in this time capsule, focus on the eyes.

The media response was incredible: the *Boston Globe*, the Associated Press, National Public Radio, Maine Public, *Newsweek*, a public service announcement produced by Walgreens, and countless local articles and TV news spots. But it’s the details and the small stories that most need to be documented. And that’s been one of the purposes behind this bulletin. If you’re reading this in 2021, thank you for your support that made this work possible. If you’re reading this from some time in the future, welcome to our time capsule.

For the Mission,

John Zavodny, President



Vaccination clinic at the Mission's Downeast Campus Community Center with Mano en Mano and the Maine Mobile Health Program. Sign translation: Without hands there is no work.

Vaccinations Downeast

Mission staff at the Downeast Campus have been busy with COVID-19 vaccinations. The Mission, the Maine Mobile Health Program (MMHP), Mano en Mano in Milbridge, and the Harrington Family Health Center have worked together to vaccinate Downeast residents and seasonal workers.

At two clinics held in the Downeast Campus Community Center, Mano en Mano (“Hand in Hand” in Spanish) both publicized and worked at the clinics as part of its mission to help Latinx and farmworker communities thrive in Maine. Nurses from MMHP supplied the vaccine and gave the vaccinations. In all, 112 people received their COVID-19 vaccinations at these two events. Mission staff from the Downeast Campus also volunteered at three vaccination clinics held at the Harrington Family Health Center.

The MMHP is Maine’s federally qualified health center for serving migrant and

seasonal workers. Executive Director Lisa Tapert, MPH, was enthusiastic about the clinics. “We worked to put this together for many months and were delighted to bring the COVID-19 vaccine to Downeast Maine. Residents here have had a difficult time accessing appointments at the large clinics and there aren’t too many sites close to this area. Organizations like Mano en Mano and Maine Seacoast Mission are so committed to the community. We wouldn’t have been able to do anything like this without them.”

“The Mission was happy to offer its Downeast Community Center as a clinic site,” said Megan Smith, Community Resource Coordinator for the Mission. “We appreciate MMHP offering health care access to our community members, and we look forward to continuing to support community health Downeast.” 🌟

Sunbeam Gala Award Honorees

The Maine Seacoast Mission is delighted to announce that the Sunbeam Award Gala is back. Mark your calendars for Thursday, August 12, to join us under the big tent at the Bar Harbor Club. The two honorees at this summer's Sunbeam Award Gala are Acadia Senior College and Sigma Kappa. President Zavodny said, "The values and accomplishments of these two inspiring organizations are clear examples of actions and spirit that make communities strong. Maine Seacoast Mission is honored to celebrate these two organizations' contributions."



Sigma Kappa volunteers working with the Mission's Housing Rehabilitation Program.

SIGMA KAPPA

Sigma Kappa, a national sorority founded in 1874 at Colby College, has been the Mission's partner for over a century. Sigma Kappa values personal growth, friendship, service, and loyalty, and among its philanthropic priorities are gerontology studies with an emphasis on Alzheimer's disease research. Through its foundation, individual members, and alumnae, Sigma Kappa supports such Mission programs as housing rehabilitation, Christmas gifts, and island services.



Early Acadia Senior College member E. Farnham Butler pays close attention at an ASC class.

ACADIA SENIOR COLLEGE

Acadia Senior College provides intellectual stimulation, practical knowledge, social interaction, and fun for older persons. The knowledge and talents of community members work in service of the region's senior population. It offers programming that informs, challenges, entertains, and strengthens community through courses in areas such as history, art, law, music, science, and self-care.

The evening begins with cocktails on the patio, followed by the award program and dinner, served under a tent on the lawn. Capacity is limited this year, and we request that anyone who plans to attend be vaccinated. For reservations, call Anna Silver at 207-801-6011 or register online at seacoastmission.org/gala2021. 🌍



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The Sunbeam at the Isle au Haut dock.
ERIN CLARK/BOSTON GLOBE

