

HYDE PARK HERALD

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City won't expand vaccine eligibility, citing supply issues

HERALD STAFF REPORT

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle have jointly announced that their jurisdictions will opt out of the state's expansion of vaccine eligibility to people with comorbidities and underlying conditions, citing supply issues.

"Our goal is to get as many people vaccinated as quickly and efficiently as possible," they said in a statement. "That said, our greatest challenge in doing so is the very limited supply of vaccine we are receiving. While we are making progress every day with vaccinating people in 1a and 1b, at this time we are not being supplied with enough doses that would allow us to expand eligibility in these phases."

"Doing so in Chicago and Cook County would add well over one million additional people to 1b, and the result would be that those currently eligible, including seniors, frontline essential workers and those in our most heavily COVID-burdened communities, would have an even harder time getting a vaccine."

Per Chicago Department of Public Health guidelines, Chicagoans who are health care workers, long-term care facility residents and workers, 65 years old or older, living in homeless shelters, correctional centers or other residential settings, first responders or who work in grocery stores, manufacturing, daycares, education (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade), public transportation, the Postal Service, certain areas of the government and in care of "medically fragile children or adults" are eligible for the



CPS students return to school

After Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union reached a deal last week, students returned to schools across the city. Here, Zoey waves goodbye to her mother as she prepares to enter Kozminski Community Academy, 936 E. 54th St., for half-day preschool on Thursday, Feb. 11.

(Photo by Marc Monaghan)

Hard times for Hyde Park restaurants continue

By AARON GETTINGER
Staff writer

Nearly one year into the coronavirus pandemic, Hyde Park restaurants are uneasily hanging on, and eagerly anticipating an end to the public health crisis that has shattered profits.

Government assistance and the recent resumption of limited indoor dining has allowed some to bring more employees back, but they say it will take summer warmth and the long-awaited end of the pandemic, one way or another, to bring their businesses back to viability.

Salvatore Pappalito opened the Sit Down Cafe & Sushi Bar, 1312 E. 53rd St., in 2008 and said he is making it work today, mostly through moderating labor costs. Without

indoor dining, he doesn't need dishwashers, bussers or servers. "We went down front of the house, we went down back of the house. It's adjustments. It's all it's about," he said.

Nevertheless, he ended 2020 "down big numbers," he said: "There's no way around it. There's people who are not going out. You've got people who are scared to go out. You've got people who don't have the means to go out, people losing their jobs everywhere, not only in the restaurant industry but other industries. And without work, you don't have the means to have extra spending money."

It remains to be seen if 2021 will be better than 2020, but the coronavirus will certainly be a long-term disruption to society. At the very least, there will be months to come before

anyone who wants to get vaccinated can get their shots.

But in the meantime, Pappalito said he wants to have more indoor seating. Having to close every few months and losing experienced staff then reopening, training staff, then losing them again, he said, is unsustainable.

"I know there's no way to make consistency out of it, but restaurants are a heavily regulated industry as is," he said. "Health certificates are needed for almost everyone in the restaurant. Sanitation on a daily, hourly, table-by-table basis. For us, if you keep the spacing in a restaurant it's 190-times better than a tent outside that has four walls on it."

The Sit Down Cafe invested in a heating, ventilation

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Kenwood Food Project expands, helping Bret Harte and refugee families

By CHRISTIAN BELANGER
Editor

Nearly a year after it began, the Kenwood Food Project has grown, expanding to help provide food from local restaurants and grocery stores to families at Bret Harte Elementary School and the Hyde Park Refugee Project.

The initiative started last March as a partnership with Kenwood Academy. Counselors there would identify students at risk of going hungry, and provide them with gift cards from the Kenwood Food Project to local restaurants like Pizza Capri and Cafe 53, as well as Hyde Park Produce and Food and Paper Supply Company.

The gift cards are funded by donations to the Food Project. It's a way to help families in danger of going hungry, as well as local restaurants who may be struggling during the pandemic. Last June, the Food Project began working with the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club (HPNC), which allowed the organization to write off donations as tax-deductible.

"The community responded so well that we had more gift certificates than Kenwood had a need for at that particular time," said Linda Swift, who started the project. One day, after getting her haircut, she walked by Bret Harte and saw one of the school employees handing out free lunches. "I chatted with the lunch lady, and she already had 26 people. I was asking her, you know, maybe we could give (the gift cards) out."

Swift got in touch with Charlie Bright, the principal at Bret Harte. ("He has a

perfect name for an elementary school principal," she noted.) Bright agreed that it was a good idea, and began thinking of the best method to target families in need.

"When she came there and just asked if I would be able to pass out the gift cards — without a doubt, I'd be able to do that," he said. "We started with families that we hadn't received forms for. When they turned in their forms and we found out they were receiving free and reduced lunch, we were able to give them a gift card at the same time they brought those forms."

Bright also gave gift cards to families who came to the school on Fridays to receive groceries as part of the Feeding South Shore program, as well as students who picked up Chromebooks and iPads.

"Our school as a whole is over 70% free and reduced lunch," said Bright. "It's not everyone, but it's a good number of families."

He said the gift cards had come in handy for one family after their refrigerator broke. "I was talking to the mother and she said, 'You know, the timing was perfect. All our food had spoiled.' This was a chance for her to go to the store and buy some more fresh fruits and vegetables," he said.

"Right now with the pandemic, so many of our families — and so many families through the city — can use support. So the Kenwood Food Project has been a great way to tell (families) we're thinking about them."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Swift said that the Food Project has raised over \$11,000, almost all of it since

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