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As a young person skates, scores of people wait to enter the Midway Plaisance Ice Rink on Saturday, Jan. 2. To maintain social distancing, the Park District has limited the total number of skaters on the rink at one time to 50. A Park District employee at the rink estimated that the wait time to skate at midday Saturday was between one and one-and-a-half hours.

(Photo by Marc Monaghan)

City, UCMC stress vaccine safety as rollout continues

By AARON GETTINGER
Staff writer

The number of coronavirus infections continues to decline locally and across Chicago as vaccination continues its slow and steady rollout.

As of Dec. 29, Chicago is averaging 1,075 COVID-19 cases a day; Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady said the goal is to average fewer than 400 a day and ideally fewer than 200. The Dec. 29 percent-positivity is 8.4%, and the goal is fewer than 5%.

The city's first vaccine dispensing location opened on Dec. 29 at Malcolm X College, but only by appointment and only for health care workers and long-term care facility residents, who are being vaccinated by pharmacy strike teams. Larger outpatient clinics are having vaccine doses distributed directly to them, while smaller practices, home

health workers and urgent care workers are getting appointment codes.

Those workers will likely all be vaccinated sometime in February, Arwady said, cautioning that the timeline is in flux as the city does not know how much more vaccine will arrive and when and if and when additional vaccines will be approved, but she expects by early spring that older Chicagoans, frontline health care workers and other essential workers will be able to get vaccinated. She said the goal will be for people to get their shots from their own doctors.

In an interview, Arwady estimated that all adult Chicagoans will be vaccinated within the first six months of 2021, with child vaccine trials ongoing through that time frame.

In a Dec. 29 virtual town hall for University of Chicago Medical Center workers, Christina Ciaccio, chief of the

UCMC's Section of Pediatric Allergy and Immunology, said incidents of allergic reactions "appears exceedingly low" so far.

"To put it into context," she said, "out of the 4 million young children who eat peanut butter for the first time every year, 100,000 have an allergic reaction. Of the 2 million given doses of the COVID vaccine in the United States so far, I know of 10 reports of potential allergic reaction that are under investigation right now. We don't even know if this is a higher incidence than other vaccines that we commonly give, but we're collecting data, and we're trying to get there."

She said that allergic reactions include hives, wheezing, swelling and vomiting and typically happen within the first 30 minutes after the administration of a dose. Vac-

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Despite remote learning struggles, teachers worry about in-person return

By AARON GETTINGER
Staff writer

A whole semester at Chicago Public Schools has come and gone, and Hyde Park-Kenwood students continue to struggle with issues related to remote learning: a lack of opportunities for socialization, an unhealthy excess of screentime, and burn-out.

But educators, concerned for the safety of their students and themselves, are wary about returning to the classroom. In a series of interviews with the Herald, local teachers spoke about the challenges of remote education during a pandemic, as well as the difficult tangle of issues that accompany any possible resumption of in-person instruction.

As it stands, students from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade will be allowed to go

back on Feb. 1. They are not required to do so, however, and most families have not opted for in-person instruction: only one-third of CPS students are set to return, and those who will are disproportionately white.

Given that the vast majority of students who attend Hyde Park-Kenwood's public schools are African American — and a majority of CPS students are set to continue distanced learning at any rate — remote education will continue to be a defining feature of local public schools for the first several months of 2021.

Preschool

Brenda Lugo, a preschool teacher at Reavis Elementary, said she has been trying to maintain the ordinary classroom routine during online instruction. Since socialization is important for the preschool experience, Lugo starts each

day by letting her students talk amongst themselves and with their teachers.

"They definitely do know each others' names right now. Maybe one or two may not be as familiar with names, because they have a harder time learning names, but most of the kids do know each other, and they do talk to each other," she said. "So we give them that opportunity to talk. Talking is mostly what we try to give them time on."

Lugo said she and her colleagues give the preschoolers open-ended questions to relate to their life experiences, especially when they read stories. "That generally leads into good conversations and discussions of, 'Me too. Oh, I did that.' Or, 'My mom did that. I like to do that,'" she said. "We try to lead them into discussions with each other in

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Actor felled by COVID gets a tribute from her troupe

By ANDREA HOLLIDAY
Contributing writer

Dusty Trellis was her stage name. If you met her, she might offer you a business card bearing that name. But she had been baptized Elizabeth Rahuba 65 years ago in New Jersey.

She was living in subsidized senior housing in South Shore. She had a part-time acting job with the Chicago Police Department's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), where, in training exercises with cops, she would play the role of a person experiencing a mental health crisis.

She became involved in advocacy for people with mental health issues. In 2014, she spoke at a press conference put together by advocacy group ONE Northside, asking CPD to put more resources into responding to mental health crisis calls.

She had first auditioned for the Hyde Park Community Players in 2012. She didn't get cast. But she kept coming back. Finally, in 2013, she snagged a role in the annual Halloween Show. She went on to act in many shows, and to work the sound board or ticket desk for others.

Dusty was also in readings

with Black Olive Theatre, and got a small speaking role in an indie film. An avid Star Trek fan, she joined a group of fellow Trekkies. "I think she worked her way all the way up to Lieutenant or something like that," said her close friend Clark Weber.

But she was most at home with the Players. Whenever the troupe had something going on, Dusty was there. She was as dedicated as could be. And the Players became her family.

Where was her real family? She had a father, living, and a brother. A few years

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