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### **Philadelphia Housing Authority and Temple University's College of Public Health Deliver COVID-19 Vaccines in High-Risk Neighborhoods**

**Philadelphia, PA - March 22, 2021** - The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) and Temple University's College of Public Health have launched a ground-breaking initiative to vaccinate residents in high-risk, lower-income neighborhoods against COVID-19.

In recent weeks, faculty and fully trained nursing student volunteers from Temple University's College of Public Health and the School of Pharmacy have participated in clinics set up to vaccinate residents at PHA's senior living locations.

"We are grateful to Temple for the resources invested in our PHA communities," said, PHA president and CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah. "The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare inequities in the healthcare system. Working alongside PHA residents, PHA and Temple are developing strategies for culturally responsive healthcare that centers on a community's unique needs. This new model makes residents and healthcare workers partners in improving health outcomes and ensuring all residents have access and opportunity to convenient care that best suits their needs."

"We are the agents that put the needle in the arm, but what makes this successful is the collaboration with the residents of the community," says Temple Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs and Interprofessional Education Susan VonNessen-Scanlin. "Service to the community is central to the College of Public Health's mission, and we feel so honored to be able to partner with PHA, be welcomed into our local communities, and be part of the solution to ending this pandemic."

The collaboration is multi-pronged, with broad participation from several Temple schools and academic disciplines. Additionally, Resident Council leaders from PHA communities are working in tandem with the healthcare teams. They have hosted tables to sign up residents for the vaccine and gone door to door to hand out materials ahead of each event to help calm vaccination hesitancy.

The healthcare professionals, PHA staff, and resident leaders are working closely to provide an opportunity for people to ask questions and express concerns.

Following the vaccinations, Temple then follows up with community members to evaluate experiences,

ask about side effects, and foster second dose compliance.

Over the course of the first three weeks of the program, more than 500 PHA seniors have been successfully vaccinated across eight sites in this very targeted approach. Vaccines were distributed with no wait and in a safe and comfortable setting.

Ruth Tasic, resident council president at PHA's Nellie Reynolds Gardens, where a clinic was held March 15, reported that 83 percent of the building's residents have now received their first shot.

"The Temple staff was so professional, so cordial and so caring about our residents," Ms. Tasic said. "We didn't have to travel or stand in line. We had this blessing right in our own community, right where we live. It doesn't get any better than that."

These vaccine clinics are part of Temple University Health System's community effort, but the holistic strategy also includes a new workforce initiative called PHA Cares. This program created by Temple hires PHA residents to serve as its community health outreach workers at select PHA housing developments.

The community outreach workers have the latest information on a range of critical health topics, including the vaccine clinics. Student volunteers at Temple have translated the materials into Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and other languages, so no resident gets left behind.

The Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University's Center for Urban Bioethics and Temple University's Lenfest North Philadelphia Workforce Initiative and the Temple Center for Population Health are partnering on PHA Cares.

Each of the community health workers hired to promote health education is a PHA client. At PHA's Germantown House, nearly 70 percent of the building's 133 residents received the vaccine.

"I can't even rate the job that Temple did. It was just so outstanding and tremendous," said Veatrice Johnson, resident council president. "Earlier, we had done COVID testing, and that helped make residents comfortable and helped us convince them to come take the vaccine."

The program's focus moving forward will be to increase the numbers of residents receiving the vaccine at each site, and to better understand the reasons why some might be choosing to decline vaccination at this point.

"When the program began, we found through our surveying that 25 percent of senior residents had already been vaccinated," Jeremiah said. "It's the remaining 75 percent that our outreach team is concentrating on now. We understood that it would require this very special level of attention through the volunteer efforts of Temple and our resident leaders."

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The Philadelphia Housing Authority is the nation's 4th largest housing authority, serving nearly 80,000 residents. PHA is also a major real estate developer. Learn more at [www.pha.phila.gov](http://www.pha.phila.gov).