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January 14, 2010

**NORTH TONAWANDA FLU CLINIC A MAJOR SUCCESS  
SEES 55% JUMP IN INOCULATIONS OVER PREVIOUS CLINICS**

NORTH TONAWANDA—Niagara County Health Department officials described a flu vaccination clinic in North Tonawanda Thursday as an “absolute success” after providing more than 2,200 does of seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccine to county residents.

This marks a jump of more than 55 percent over previous clinics, which had been averaging approximately 1,400 does dispensed. The clinic, held at Gratwick Hose Fire Co., also set a first for the county as trained volunteer emergency medical technicians helped administer the flu vaccines.

“We put through well over 1,000 people, and gave about 2,200 injections,” said Elaine Roman, the Health Department’s planning and information officer, a little over an hour before the 12-hour flu clinic was set to close. “We had H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine in all different formulations—nasal, injectable, and thimerosal-, or preservative-free that we administered to infants and pregnant women.”

Roman said that, to date, the county has provided well over 8,000 doses of vaccine at mass-inoculation clinics, or points of dispensing—referred to by the acronym PODs—since receiving its initial allocation of H1N1 vaccine through the New York State Department of Health late last year.

“There’s still a great need in the community,” Roman said. “If anything, we’re seeing more people coming through our PODs than they have in the past.”

Roman also noted that peak flu season is still ahead, probably sometime in March or April. She said that the Health Department has seen an uptick in reported cases of flu from county school districts.

“The need is still out there,” she said. “There is definitely a need to get this out into the community.”

Roman noted that the POD also provided a resource for the uninsured and those with high-premium plans to ensure they received critical vaccinations.

Roman and County Public Health Director Daniel J. Stapleton also offered high praise for North Tonawanda’s emergency responders, noting that in addition to providing the Gratwick Hose facility and EMTs, North Tonawanda Fire Chief Joseph Krantz had helped arrange for auxiliary police and fire police to direct traffic at the POD.

“We had a lot of support from our fire department, and we think this is an excellent venue,” Roman said. “They bent over backwards to really make this a true community effort.”

Krantz, who was present throughout the clinic, said he was pleased with public participation.

"The public response has been really great today," he said. "I haven't heard anything but positive comments from the folks that I've come in contact with. In the first hour alone, we vaccinated approximately 300 individuals."

Krantz noted that the clinic actually began processing vaccine recipients earlier than its set 10 a.m. start time because of the high volume of people arriving early.

Krantz said the North Tonawanda Fire Department had offered its assistance out of a belief that it could play a key role in protecting the community from more than just fire.

"It's just something that we felt compelled to do," Krantz said. "We wanted to participate and help out the community."

Krantz also said North Tonawanda's fire stations would be ready to host future PODs.

"As long as the PODs are being scheduled, we'd like to be part of the organization and host another," he said.

The POD also served as a model for future mass inoculations, with numerous local leaders stopping in throughout the day to review the operation, including Niagara County Legislator Pete Smolinski, R-North Tonawanda, who chairs the Community Services Committee that oversees the Health Department, fellow Legislator Phillip R. "Russ" Rizzo, I-North Tonawanda, Sen. George D. Maziarz, R-Newfane, Mayor Robert G. Ortt, R-North Tonawanda, Alderman-at-large Nancy Donovan, R-North Tonawanda, and others.

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