

## PRESS RELEASE

### Stepping up... To get a shot

#### Nogales private sector offers help for COVID vaccine distribution.

Nogales, Arizona

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As the pandemic has ravaged the nation, in large metropolitan areas and small rural communities, government and the private sector have had to figure out how to best tackle this gargantuan task. In Santa Cruz County, this public-private partnership is having a significant impact on the ability for county officials and medical professionals to get the vaccines into people's arms.

"We are a small community, but if we shut down, the ripple effects will be felt throughout North America and that is something we must not let happen," said Jaime Chamberlain, Chairman of the Greater Nogales Santa Cruz County Port Authority. "This is not a time to stand by and wait. We are actively working with the state, the county and even our federal law enforcement agencies to make sure that 1A and 1B eligible people get their vaccines as quickly as possible," added Chairman Chamberlain.

"Every vaccine we have received is now in someone's arm," said Bruce Bracker, Santa Cruz County Supervisor. The County, working with Mariposa Community Health Center in Nogales, has created a synergistic system to ensure that as vaccines come in, and people schedule an appointment to get their shots, the vaccines are doled out based on the criteria mandated by the Arizona Department of Health Services. "But part of the task required us to define what we had to do, including the who, what, when, where and how that are all critical parts of the process. Keeping in mind that once you thaw out the vaccine it must be used. And if it is not used, then it is wasted and that could be someone coming down with the virus," added Supervisor Bracker. "We have a pretty tight system now. We just need more vaccines," he added.

The level of coordination is unprecedented. South32, which owns the Hermosa Project near Patagonia, has offered to assist with filling an acute need for more vaccinators in the county. "We are committed to helping our community through these challenging times," said Pat Risner, Hermosa Project President. "To assist with vaccination pace, we're at the ready to provide helpers from our own medical services contractor as soon as the county's vaccine supply is replenished."

The Fresh Produce Association of the Americas has offered to coordinate daily lunch for the 35+ workers and volunteers that are helping with the registration of people that arrive to get their shots. "Our industry, because we are a critical part of the nation's food supply, is deemed essential. If we shut down, fresh produce will not reach our North American customers. We have implemented strict protocols for our in-house operations in Nogales, but we must now do everything we can to help our community. Getting lunch for the volunteers is the least we can do, and we are prepared to do more", said Lance Jungmeyer, President of the organization.

Santa Cruz County, with a population of just over 46,000, has demographics that are heavily skewed towards those deemed essential. “Between medical professionals, those over 75 years old, and all the other sectors including teachers, enforcement personnel at the local (police), county (sheriff) and federal (Customs and Border Protection, Border Patrol, Drug Enforcement Administration) levels, first responders (police and fire), logistics workers (customs brokers, freight forwarders, truck drivers), produce warehouse personnel, city and county government personnel, and if you include the population that is between 65 and 75 years old, that is probably close to a third of our total population and we are still in 1B!” added Chairman Chamberlain. “We continue our dialogue with the State of Arizona, but we understand that it is not just us, but all the metropolitan and rural areas of the state that are in the same critical need for more vaccines,” he added.

“At the request of the county, we are working on creating a roster of volunteers that can be called up within a 24-hour notice, and there is no shortage of people that want to help out,” stated Terry Shannon, Chairman of the Nogales Santa Cruz County Economic Development Foundation.

One of the main challenges is the coordination and scheduling of those coming in for their vaccinations. “We are reaching out to our members to see if we can come up with a call-center-like service that can work at the direction of the county to schedule all of the residents of Santa Cruz County. It sounds simple but it takes personnel, experience and the systems and software to make it happen,” offered Josh Rubin, Board member of INDEX, the Maquila Association of Sonora.

“We have created a system that can scale up overnight. So, we are ready to receive more vaccines and use them as soon as they come in,” added Supervisor Bracker. “We are working hand in hand with the Mariposa Health Center and the City of Nogales and other entities in the county to make the process as seamless as possible.” he added.

Santa Cruz County has set up an online registration portal that is available through the County’s website: [www.santacruzcountyaz.gov](http://www.santacruzcountyaz.gov). Those interested in volunteering please contact Shelly Jacobs, Volunteer Coordinator at Santa Cruz County, at (520) 375-7800 or via email at [sjacobs@santacruzcountyaz.gov](mailto:sjacobs@santacruzcountyaz.gov).