



COVID-19 VACCINE COMES TO BLOOMINGTON

In a welcome milestone of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bloomington Public Health staff began vaccinating emergency medical services personnel this week. Staff will continue these vaccinations through the following weeks for employees who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as part of the Phase 1a distribution plan. This includes certified emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and public health nurses who are vaccinating others. Employees have the option to decline the vaccine for any reason, or no reason at all.

“The news about the COVID-19 vaccines is exciting, but it’s going to take time to get everyone vaccinated,” Interim Public Health Administrator **Nick Kelley** said. “Until then, keep practicing healthy habits to help control the spread of COVID-19: wear a mask, stay six feet from others, wash your hands often and stay home if you are sick.”

The anticipated timeline to complete Phase 1a of vaccine distribution is two to three months. The Public Health Division has pivoted its COVID-19 response to focus on vaccination; this focus will continue for several months in 2021. It is unclear at this time when the next group of people will be able to get the COVID-19 vaccine in Bloomington. This depends on how much vaccine manufacturers are able to make and deliver, and how many people choose to be vaccinated in the first priority groups.

A COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ resource is available at blm.mn/vaccine-faq or visit CityBIZ, for a list of employee FAQs related to the vaccine. The FAQs will be updated regularly, so check back often. Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, including how we know they are safe and what you can do now, through the Minnesota Department of Health at blm.mn/vaccine.

CHIEF POTTS TO RETIRE

After being with the Bloomington Police Department nearly 30 years, with 12 years as chief of police, Chief **Jeff Potts** will retire on January 31.

Chief Potts started as a BPD patrol officer at age 23. He later established BPD’s branch base at Mall of America and served as a sergeant and commander. At the time of his promotion, he was the first chief to come from within the department in 35 years.

“Serving at the Bloomington Police Department for the past 29 years has truly been an honor and a privilege and I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to serve as the police chief for the past 12 years,” he said.

After he retires from his post with the City, Chief Potts will begin a new job as the executive director of the Minnesota Police Association.

“Chief Potts’ commitment to professional standards, innovative thinking, and community relations has been invaluable to the City Council and to me. We wish him well in his future pursuits,” City Manager **Jamie Verbrugge** said.

INSIDER

VOLUME 29, NUMBER 1

The *Insider* is distributed to all City employees during the first pay period of each month. Please send your comments and suggestions to the “insider” mailbox in Outlook.

HELLO

- Crime Victim Liaison **Sandra Seelhammer** started December 21.
- Civilian Police Dispatcher **Tona Fierra** started December 28.
- Utilities Maintenance Worker **Adam Chappuis** started January 4.



IN MEMORIAM: VINCE TRAMMEL

It was with heavy hearts that the Bloomington Police Department said goodbye to a coworker and friend at the end of 2020. Retired Officer **Vince Trammel**, #221, passed away in November. After 20 years of service at BPD, Officer Trammel retired in 2019. He was an exceptional officer and served as a fitness specialist and field training officer during his time with the BPD. His coworkers remember him for his positive attitude and work ethic. BPD provided an honor guard presence and an escort to the cemetery during Officer Trammel’s funeral services.



MANAGER’S MEMO

FINDING THE LIGHT

By City Manager Jamie Verbrugge

Every storm is followed by sunlight and clearing.

With that in mind, as I reflect on the year that was and the year that will be, I am able to find many examples of daylight emerging from the darkness.

We are not through the pandemic yet. The crisis of the past year has laid bare many truths that we have had to and will continue to confront in the future. Among them are the glaring socioeconomic and racial inequities in our nation’s health systems; the lack of coordination between federal, state and local governments and its tragic consequences; the proliferation of skepticism in our institutions and misinformation about science when we need to rely on each more than ever; and concern that our politics are not up to the moment.

Yet, there is optimism as the vaccine rollout continues. And here in Bloomington, the pandemic has demonstrated more clearly than ever the value of our Public Health Division. They have provided exceptional coordination and expert advice in our response. I am confident the months ahead will be filled with more good news stories than bad because of the relationships they have built throughout the community and with our partners at the city, county and state levels.

This past year, it has been painful to watch the civil unrest unfold in response to the George Floyd killing locally and other incidents nationally. It has been difficult locally for many who want to demand accountability from a criminal justice system that too often treats people differently; while at the same time being supportive of the police officers who serve our community well, who we work with and know to be professional.

Looking at where we are today, having lived through this past year, and knowing that more unrest is likely in the

future, the Bloomington City Council has adopted a Racial Equity Business Plan and is preparing to move on a resolution that declares racism as a public health crisis. As an organization, we are getting better at having courageous and difficult conversations that need to be had to understand one another’s perspective. We have launched racial equity action teams in each department and are embarking on work to develop a strategic plan for our racial equity work in the organization and in the community. We are learning and listening.

For many years, the Bloomington community has been well served by the institutions and organizations that are part of the community fabric, such as Bloomington Schools, Normandale Community College, Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, and nonprofits such as Bridging, VEAP, Cornerstone and Oasis for Youth. At the beginning of 2020, newly elected Mayor Busse talked about the importance of aligning with all these organizations to better coordinate how we serve our residents, businesses, students and visitors.

It seemed like a big lift last year. Today, we have a standing regular meeting with leaders of most of those groups formed to coordinate COVID response. The meeting has resulted in ongoing close communication. As we look to the coming year, continuing those close working relationships and expanding to include others will improve the connectivity in our community and increase the value that all these groups provide to those we serve.

I could go on, but I’ve exceeded my word count.

Let me close with this reminder: As people, we almost always come through the storm stronger, more resilient and more committed than ever to a better tomorrow. That’s how I’m starting 2021.

BPD GIVES BACK OVER THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season brings many things. For Bloomington Police Department staff, it offers a chance to make positive connections with the people they serve. This year, BPD got creative to find new ways to continue its tradition of giving back to the community.



Bloomington Police Officer Megan Thul and Animal Control Coordinator John Carlson deliver toys to children through the Holiday Helpers in Blue program.

The Department held a successful gift drive despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, receiving an estimated 400 toys and numerous gift cards. The annual Toys for Tots drive shifted a bit this year to keep donations local, according to the drive's organizer, Detective **Chad Clauson**.

"I have been told that now more than ever we need these donations specifically for Bloomington kids," Clauson said.

Thanks to generous donations, BPD officers and staff were able to deliver toys and gifts to 80 Bloomington children who had a brighter holiday season thanks to the City's efforts.

For the seventh year in a row, BPD and the Joint Community Police Partnership hosted Holiday Helpers in Blue. The program usually pairs children up with officers and a volunteer from the community to shop for holiday gifts to give to their family members. COVID-19 brought changes to the program. Officers and Multicultural Advisory Committee volunteers were not able to shop with participants in person, but instead shopped from a wish list, wrapped and delivered gifts afterward.

MEET ASHLEY

Communications Specialist **Ashley Klemer** has been with the City for five years. She writes the *Insider* and the *Briefing*.

- Enjoys being in nature, exploring new trails, reading and taking photos when she's not working.
- Started running in 2019 and signed up for her first half marathon in 2021.
- Has almost doubled her house plant collection since beginning to work from home last March.
- Has never finished reading the *Harry Potter* series, but is told she's a total Hufflepuff.
- Last book she read was *Little Weirds* by Jenny Slate.



WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON?

SHOWING LOVE FOR THE COMMUNITY AT THE FEBRUARY BLOOD DRIVE

The next blood drive at Civic Plaza takes place Wednesday, February 17, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Similar to other recent drives, the Red Cross is testing all blood, platelet and plasma donations for COVID-19 antibodies to help provide donors insight into whether they may have been exposed to the coronavirus. As an added incentive, all February donors will receive a \$5 Amazon gift card by email. Advance registration is required for this event. For more information or to register, visit blm.mn/blooddrive.



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RING IN 2021 WITH HEALTHY HABITS

As the new year begins, many people make resolutions to improve their health. That often includes goals around healthy eating or exercise. This year it might include kicking bad habits developed while in quarantine or working from home, and reducing stress.

Here are some tips to help you make 2021 your healthiest year yet.

- Make goals that are simple and measurable.
- When setting goals, focus on the process, not the outcome.
- If possible, do it with a partner who shares the same goal and will encourage your success
- Start small and build on successes.
- Add an extra serving of fruits and veggies to one meal a day.
- Eat less added sugar and salt.
- Make sure you are up to date on tetanus and flu shots.
- Get 7–8 hours of sleep a night.
- Reduce stress by taking deep breaths, meditating, spending time in nature or doing Tai chi or yoga.

KUDOS TO YOU!

Public Health's **Molly Snuggerud**, *at right*—Through the past nine months, Molly has led the Operations Unit of Bloomington's COVID-19 Incident Response. She has done so very effectively, always with grace and a smile. Molly takes the time to check in with others and ensure they are doing self-care, realizing that the pandemic response is a marathon, not a sprint. I have learned a lot from Molly during my time with the City, and I appreciate having her as a teammate!



— *Public Health Communications Specialist Colleen Hermann-Franzen*

Building and Inspection's **Kelly Beyer**, **Viv Carlson** and **Meredith Vandewege**—After having to move to a work-from-home schedule at a day's notice during a busy/short holiday week, this team joined together and got things done while having multiple people out of the office due to illness etc. They worked together seamlessly and provided excellent customer service to our residents. They made my job here in the office so much easier with their awesome communication skills and determination. I appreciate their hard work so much especially this week!

— *Building and Inspections Supervisor Bernadette Gillespie*

IT's **Mike Arvidson** and **Tou Vang**—With the news of additional City building closures due to COVID on 11/20, Mike and Tou prepared laptops for Public Health staff at laser speed with short notice. Their commitment to providing staff the technology they need to do remote work in a moment's notice is appreciated and commendable!

— *Public Health Office Supervisor Linda Riski-Lundeen*

Building and Inspection's **Jon Aaron**—We had a scheduled inspection for a patio door that was installed. Jon arrived on time and was very thorough in following up with our contractor. When he found that there was a portion of the job that was the homeowner's responsibility to finish, he made sure to explain what needed to happen and even gave ideas of how to fix it to protect our home. This was extremely helpful and very much appreciated. Thank you Jon!

— *Shea Pose, resident*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

JANUARY

- M 11 City Council meeting
- F 15 Payday
- M 18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
Offices closed.
- M 25 City Council meeting
- F 29 Payday

COWORKERS WISH POLICE CHIEF WELL IN RETIREMENT

As seen on page 1, Police Chief **Jeff Potts** will retire at the end of January after nearly 30 years with the City. After working with the Executive Leadership Team for more than a decade, Chief Potts had this to say: "I have really loved my 29 years and especially the past 12 years working with all of you!!" Other department directors have responded with their well wishes saying that they will miss Chief Potts:

"Jeff—Congratulations on your retirement!"

"WOW. SO HAPPY for Jeff. So sad for our team!! Congratulations Jeff!! Sending you a huge virtual hug."

"You've had quite the career in Bloomington. It's been a pleasure working with you."