

NEWS RELEASE

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SUNY ONEONTA STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN VACCINE EQUITY EFFORTS

ONEONTA, N.Y. – Over 50 SUNY Oneonta students have joined forces in an effort to spread the word about the availability of COVID vaccinations to communities across Otsego County.

The students, recognizing the need for additional outreach in areas where internet access isn't readily available, rallied together to distribute flyers to those who may need assistance with registering for a vaccine. The flyers share contact information that individuals can use to call for assistance when scheduling an appointment, as well as arrange for a ride to the vaccination site at SUNY Oneonta.

"These students, along with other volunteers, are doing a very important job," said Acting President Dennis Craig. "They are ensuring that all people throughout Otsego County have the knowledge and access to vaccinate themselves against COVID-19."

"We have such a wonderful group of students who did not hesitate to help," said Linda Drake, executive director of SUNY Oneonta's Center for Social Responsibility and Community. "We have over 50 students who want to make a difference in keeping the public safe from COVID."

According to Drake, students are distributing flyers at mobile home parks, laundromats, low-income housing developments, discount stores, and senior residences. Currently, the group has covered Unadilla, Wells Bridge, Otego, Sidney, Maryland, Schenevus, Worcester, Richfield Springs, New Berlin, Edmeston, Portlandville, Cooperstown, Laurens, Morris, Hartwick and Oneonta. They plan to continue their efforts until they reach every community in Otsego County.

Areli Meza, a childhood education major from Niverville, NY, said “ I want to help my community and let people know we are trying our best to help stop the spread of COVID. I want to give a little bit of hope by spreading the word about the vaccine.”

The student’s efforts are part of a community initiative including organizations such as Opportunities for Otsego, Otsego County Office for the Aging, Otsego Community Foundation, Bassett Healthcare and Otsego County Health and Wellness.

“SUNY Oneonta students involved in this outreach effort are providing a critical public service and I commend them for their work,” said Senator Peter Oberacker. “Along with helping protect the health and well-being of many in our region, this collaborative undertaking is also a positive relationship builder between students and area residents. My thanks to Acting President Dennis Craig and all involved in developing this winning program.”

Assemblyman John Salka said, “As more vaccine sites open, it is essential we provide rural residents with the knowledge and opportunity to get vaccinated. All New Yorkers deserve the chance to get the shot and these students are ensuring people have access to the vaccine. This benefits all New Yorkers, the sooner more people get vaccinated, the sooner we can re-open businesses and protect our upstate communities. It is encouraging to see students volunteer and spread the word about the COVID-19 vaccine.”