

For Immediate Release

March 4, 2021

Contact: Dawn M. Cwierley, Public Relations Manager**Office:** (716) 447-6279 | **Cell:** (716) 225-9428 | **Email:** dcwierle@chsbuffalo.org**Catholic Health Partnering with Local Convents to Vaccinate Sisters**

There have been lots of prayers coming from Buffalo area nuns over the past year for relief from the coronavirus pandemic. Recently, hope arrived in the form of COVID-19 vaccines distributed to area sisters through the Catholic Health Infusion Pharmacy (CHIP).

In February, Catholic Health began vaccinating groups of sisters residing in local convents, and has continued to reach out to area religious orders as more vaccine has become available. So far, more than a hundred sisters have been vaccinated, including the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of St. Joseph. On Thursday, March 4, the Felician Sisters will receive their first dose of the Moderna vaccine at their motherhouse in Cheektowaga.

“The urgency to get older sisters vaccinated has always been a top priority, however, it has been one faced with challenges,” said Mark Sullivan, president & CEO of Catholic Health.

The healthcare system is obligated to follow New York State guidelines for the distribution of its allocation of COVID-19 vaccine, which was initially limited to hospital staff and other healthcare providers. Through its Infusion Pharmacy, Catholic Health is now able to expand vaccination to the sisters and other eligible members of the community in accordance with New York State regulations.

“We have been working hard to meet the vaccine needs of elderly sisters throughout our community, many of whom are part of the religious orders that founded our system,” added Sullivan. “We are grateful that we have been able to make these vaccines available to them.”

Nearly half of the sisters already vaccinated are enrolled in Catholic Health’s Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. The program, called LIFE – Living Independently for Elders, provides medical care and other services to help area seniors remain in their homes. And, in the case of the sisters, in their convents.

LIFE has two locations – in Lackawanna on the campus of the OLV Senior Neighborhood, and in Cheektowaga on the Villa Maria Campus. Many Felician sisters from the Villa Maria Motherhouse on Doat Street are enrolled in the Cheektowaga program.

“As more vaccines become available, we will continue to coordinate clinics for the participants at our two LIFE centers,” said John Beyer, president of Catholic Health’s LIFE program.

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