

The drive to bring COVID-19 vaccines to the mountain top brings out the community spirit in Tannersville, NY!

By Angie Firmalino and Greg Madden

From the moment Ed Ullmann opened the doors of his unique pharmacy and wellness center on main street in Tannersville, a merging of the community took on a new energy. By strengthening its core and foundation, Wellness Rx became an anchor for what would lie ahead in the years to come.

During this past year throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wellness Rx team has stepped up to be a light in the darkness. Wellness Rx doubled down on its efforts to find strategies to help its patients and residents. Helping to find answers to the many questions people had surrounding the Coronavirus, and providing guidance and navigation through these challenging times, Wellness Rx remained strong. Being present and of service to every person who came through their doors or called asking for assistance in some way, Wellness Rx became a safe haven for many.

As an essential business during the pandemic, Wellness Rx Pharmacy remained open, providing the community with much needed services, pharmaceuticals, supplements and supplies. Many of our neighbors stepped up and donated to the patient assistance fund which allowed Wellness Rx to help hundreds of our neighbors in need. Always lending a helping hand to those in our community in need of emotional or financial support, advice, products, even home delivery of prescriptions or wellness items to those in quarantine, Ed and his team stayed vigilant to make sure that everyone was taken care of. This helped to calm and stabilize our shaken community.

Ullmann, the Chief Pharmacist and CEO at Wellness Rx, researched, analyzed and stayed connected to all of the health and government agencies in order to share up to date information to the local residents and visitors, putting out weekly YouTube videos and social media updates about the Coronavirus. When the time came for COVID-19 vaccine administration, Wellness Rx worked with the NYS Health Department and state leaders to become the first approved location in Greene County to administer COVID-19 Vaccines. Wellness Rx received its first 10 vials of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine in January and was able to vaccinate 119 people, focusing on our senior population.

Following their first in house clinic, the flow of vaccines to Wellness Rx then slowed to a halt. It appeared that the vaccine allocations were going to mass immunization clinics, hospitals, medical centers and larger chain pharmacies, as opposed to the local independent locations, and they went weeks without receiving any more doses. But, they did NOT give up! They continued submitting requests each week for more vaccinations and reached out to government agencies seeking help with securing more shots for the mountain top. In March, they were relieved and elated to finally be allocated another 10 vials to the pharmacy. Wellness Rx successfully gave another 119 Moderna COVID-19 vaccines to our community members over a

four day clinic at Wellness Rx, with the help of some amazing volunteers including but not limited to, Dolph Semenza, Jill Piccoli, and sisters Winnie and Katie Pan.

Now the momentum was unleashed and many local organizations and people were partnering together to serve our community. Two more vaccine clinics were in the works on the Mountain Top. The first was a pop up clinic held at the Villa Vosilla on March 26th, allowing 118 essential workers to get vaccinated with the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine. Many local workers, especially our restaurant, hotel, and skilled trade workers, expressed how much safer they now felt working with the many people who have come to the Catskills for respite from the pandemic. Wellness Rx joined forces with that clinic, and Ed Ullmann became the vaccine provider along with local volunteer nurse Kathleen Giagrande administering those 118 doses. Beth Renning and Scott MacKay from Wellness Rx also volunteered their time at the clinic. It was a huge community effort! The Hunter Foundation's Carolyn Riggs was the engine behind the clinic, lining everything up and organizing the appointments. Mayor Lee McGunnigle provided the space for the clinic at the Villa Vosilla and even prepared lunch for all the volunteers. Political muscle came from New York State Senator Michelle Hinchey's office, with her Constituent Services Liaison, Jessica Singleton, volunteering her time that day. Also visiting was Patrick Dooley of Governor Andrew Cuomo's staff. Many locals enthusiastically stepped up to volunteer and make that day possible. It was a huge success and we all feel so much gratitude to everyone who made it happen and volunteered their time.

A second mass vaccination clinic hosted by the County Health Department was held the following week in the Tannersville High School gymnasium providing 700 more Moderna COVID-19 vaccines to the community. Laura Feguson of Haines Falls said it was very well organized and that they provided a very thorough explanation of all the possible side effects and how much protection from the virus to expect after the first and second vaccinations.

Within that 10 day span in March, 937 COVID-19 vaccines were administered to Greene County and mountain top residents. If you include the first round of vaccines from January at Wellness Rx, over 1000 local residents have now been vaccinated! That is something to be celebrated!

Amidst all of the difficult moments everyone has endured over the past year, there have also been moments of greatness, a community spirit revealing itself, teaching us that no matter how difficult a situation becomes, there is always light to be found and shared. We must all be that light, and reconnect with each other as human beings, lifting each other up and strengthening the bonds within our ever growing community. When we work together, beautiful things happen.
#MountainTopStrong #VillageGreene