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Governor Phil Murphy

Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy, Senate President Steve Sweeney, NJEA President Marie Blistan, Congressman Donald Norcross, Congressman Tom Malinowski, Department of Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli, and Acting Department of Education Commissioner Angelica Allen-McMillan Mark the Start of New Jersey's Teacher Vaccination Effort

03/6/2021

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DEPTFORD—Governor Phil Murphy and other state leaders on Saturday visited the Rowan College of South Jersey COVID-19 Mega-Vaccination Site in Deptford Township to watch the first few educators in the state receive their vaccinations to kick off the eligibility period for teachers, support staff and childcare professionals.

Jack DeAngelo, deputy coordinator of emergency management for Gloucester County, and Marc Pellegrino, incident commander for the New Jersey All-Hazards Incident Management Team, led the dignitaries in a tour around the facility, stopping and greeting vaccine administrators and those getting the shots, who responded with elbow bumps and waves.

Touting the facility as the highest-performing mega-site for vaccinations in the state, and one of the highest performing in the country, Murphy told the educators they are “the tip of the spear and the beginning of what is going to be a tremendous campaign.”

Theresa Kerney, a cosmetology teacher for more than three decades at the Gloucester County Institute of Technology, a vocational-technical public high school in Deptford Township, was the first in the group of educators to receive the vaccine, calling it a “game changer.”

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“And it’s now back to the classroom,” she said.

Kerney also indicated how thrilled she was "to be a symbol for all the teachers who want to say, 'thank you – we're so excited to be able to educate our students and to be able to get them back into the classroom and have a normalcy of life again," she said.

"And it's just wonderful to be selected – I feel so honored, and I can't tell how special that is to me," she added.

The room burst into applause upon Kerney receiving the vaccine, with five of her colleagues from Gloucester County Institute of Technology and the Gloucester County Special Services School District following her in line for the next shots.

"When I see the teachers, I think about the kids," said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli. "They have to get back to school – the social aspects of school and the learning. I am always concerned about these kids being left behind. We know that remote working is difficult. Remote learning for kids is also difficult. I look at the teachers, and I say, 'God bless you; we need you. Let's get back to school. The kids need you.'"

Andy Milone
Reporter
Pine Barrens Tribune

VIDEO
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The Philadelphia Inquirer

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