



GARY MIDDENDORF/DAILY SOUTHTOWN

Smith Crossing resident Tillie Bulthuis receives the initial dose of COVID-19 vaccine Thursday at the Orland Park facility.

The first injections

Residents, staff of Smith Crossing in Orland Park get COVID-19 vaccine

BY MIKE NOLAN

After a long career as a chemical engineer, Rich Misorowski took an analytical approach to COVID-19 and the vaccine he was about to get Thursday morning.

"You look at the probability of things," said the resident of Smith Crossing, an elder care center in Orland Park. "You know this (virus) could kill you so you try to do the things to prevent yourself from getting the disease."

"The probability is this (vaccine) is going to help you," Misorowski, 85, said. Misorowski, who moved to Smith

Crossing in early March, was among about 400 residents and employees at Smith Crossing getting their initial dose of the Pfizer vaccine, being administered by Walgreens.

Smith Senior Living also operates Smith Village in Chicago's Beverly community, where staff and residents were expected to get their initial dose next week.

Employees and residents at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities are following hospital workers in the list of people getting vaccines. Employees at Smith Crossing, such as Deb Davis, a licensed practical nurse, said they were

excited about getting the shot.

"For me I think it's a true miracle that Pfizer and Moderna came up with this vaccine," Davis, who has worked at the facility for eight years, said.

Smith Crossing provides independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing care and memory care along with long-term rehabilitation at the 32-acre site, north of Orland Parkway and about halfway between LaGrange and Wolf roads.

Fernando Corona, who works in the environmental services department, said he spent 12 days at Palos Community Hospital in Palos Heights after being exposed to the virus sometime in No-

vember.

"I started getting really sick and couldn't breathe," the 66-year-old Orland Hills resident said. "For two days I thought I wasn't going to make it. It was that bad."

Corona said that, after being discharged, there was no pressure on him to return to his job, and he stayed home for three weeks but suffered lingering effects.

"I was not myself," he said. "I felt depressed, I was falling into a depression."





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Smith Crossing resident nurse Caroline Tubongbanua receives the first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine Thursday.

Vaccine

Corona said that his wife and their son were also positive for COVID-19 around the same time he fell ill, but their symptoms were relatively mild.

He said returning to his job last month has helped, but that he still has issues focusing.

“I have to think twice about what I’m doing,” he said.

Corona said that following his bout with COVID-19, he has been an advocate for the vaccine among friends and co-workers.

“I don’t want them to go through the experience I did,” he said.

With four grandchildren working as nurses, and a

brother who contracted COVID-19, Tillie Bulthuis said she needed no encouragement to get in line Thursday.

Bulthuis spent seven years volunteering in the assisted living portion of the facility after the death of her husband, Edward, in December 2007, before becoming a resident herself on Valentine’s Day in 2017. She previously lived in the nearby Eagle Ridge subdivision in Orland Park.

“It’s rather a shock to me,” she said of the spread of the coronavirus. “The deaths are so high.”

Misorowski moved to Smith Crossing March 3 of last year after his Frankfort home became too large to manage. He said his wife died 13 years ago.

He said he has a granddaughter who works as a

nurse in New York City who contracted the virus at one point last year.

“She had some trouble breathing but recovered and returned to work,” he said.

Misorowski he “weighs the positives and negatives” of getting the vaccine and understands “there are some people out there who are hesitant about it because they believe too much in unproven data.”

Davis has worked at Smith Crossing for eight years and tends to 45 residents. She said they are eager to receive the vaccine, noting the pandemic and the isolation they have experienced as a result.

“They’ve been through so much,” she said. “They held their own, they are very strong.”

mnolan@tribpub.com