

# No COVID-19 deaths in more than a month in Oconee County

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR  
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — There haven't been any COVID-19-related deaths in Oconee County since mid-March, according to the state health department.

The March 15 death of



a resident between ages 35 and 64 was the most recent death in the county

reported by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

"While South Carolina is currently experiencing a plateau in regard to overall cases, and deaths and hospitalizations are declining from peak highs, some regions of our

country, including some of our neighboring states, are seeing an increase in COVID-19 disease activity," a DHEC official told The Journal on Wednesday. "Wearing a mask and continuing to practice physical distancing are

SEE DEATHS, PAGE A3

## DEATHS: 'Immunity can still be obtained'

FROM PAGE A1

still incredibly important to stop spread of the virus, and the most critical step we can all take to beat COVID-19 once and for all is to get the COVID-19 vaccine."

Since DHEC first began reporting cases in March 2020, there have been 8,554 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 126 confirmed deaths related to COVID-19 in Oconee. Approximately 66 percent of reported COVID-19 cases have been attributed to men, and 87 percent of confirmed deaths have been white residents, according to DHEC. Approximately 73.4 percent of all confirmed deaths in the county have been residents ages 71 and older. From Jan. 1 to March 17, Oconee's number of confirmed COVID-19-related deaths jumped from 59 to 125.

### VACCINATION UPDATE

Approximately 24,998 Oconee County residents had received

at least one shot of the COVID-19 vaccine as of Sunday, or around 31 percent of the county's population. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated there were approximately 79,546 people living in Oconee County in 2019. Those 65 years and older were estimated to make up almost 24 percent of the entire population. Nearly 20 percent of the population was younger than 18 years old, according to the estimates. AnMed Health and Prisma Health both received their initial vaccine allotments in the middle of December.

DHEC records vaccine statistics based on age, sex and race:

- Ages 16-24 receiving at least one shot: 1,039
- Ages 25-34 receiving at least one shot: 1,284
- Ages 35-44 receiving at least one shot: 1,637
- Ages 45-54 receiving at least one shot: 2,504
- Ages 55-64 receiving at least one shot: 5,078

• Ages 65 and older receiving at least one shot: 13,440

• A total of 13,737 women have received at least one shot, compared to 11,245 men

Approximately 70 percent of the county's oldest — and most vulnerable — population has received at least one shot, according to DHEC data.

In a media briefing on Wednesday, DHEC assistant epidemiologist Dr. Jane Kelly said herd immunity was possible for the state.

"Herd immunity can still be obtained," she said, even if those under 16 cannot be currently vaccinated. "We are still on this treadmill to get herd immunity and get everyone vaccinated."

All state residents 16 and older have been eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine since March 31. For more information, call DHEC's COVID-19 Vaccine Information Line at 1-866-365-8110.