



Contact: Renown Public Relations
M: 775-691-7308 **E:** news@renown.org

FIRST COVID-19 VACCINES ADMINISTERED TO PHYSICIANS & FRONT-LINE HEALTH CARE WORKERS TODAY AT RENOWN

Reno, NV (December 17, 2020) – This week, many of the nation’s health care systems in communities across the U.S. began vaccinating physicians and health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19. Many of these health care heroes have been on the front-line of this pandemic and working around-the-clock over the last ten months.

Vaccinations signal hope for the future

Here in Washoe County, today is the highly anticipated start date of what public health and medical experts hope is a nationwide wave of vaccinations that signal the beginning of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today’s good news from Renown coincided with a dark new milestone for Washoe County—[384 confirmed COVID-19 deaths](#), and over 13,579 active cases in our population of nearly 500,000. COVID-19 positivity test results and hospitalizations continue to be high across the country, our state and here in northern Nevada; straining hospital capacity, physicians and healthcare workers.

Today we saw a bright light at the end of this dark tunnel. Renown began vaccinating health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19, and invited media to view the first vaccinations of those on the front-line of COVID-19.

One vaccine, a Herculean effort of thousands

“Although the vaccination process as you see it here looks relatively simple, it took a herculean logistical effort to implement the COVID-19 vaccination process that has begun today,” said [Tony Slonim, MD](#), DrPH, President & CEO of Renown Health. “Today, thanks to the synchronized efforts of thousands of people and organizations across the country, we give thanks for this vaccination provided to Luis Martinez, an excellent ambassador for the thousands of healthcare heroes caring for patients with COVID-19. The health and safety of our staff is our top priority, and we remain steadfast in our determination to fight the good fight for our community.”

Luis, on the front-line of the COVID-19 pandemic, receives 1st vaccine from Renown

Luis Martinez received the 1st of his Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine which received emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration last week. He will receive the second and final vaccination in the series in 21 days.

The first dose of vaccine was given to Luis outside of his vehicle so cameras could capture the experience. Renown’s COVID-19 Vaccination process includes pre-scheduling physicians and employees through the EPIC MyChart electronic medical record used by Renown. Employees are masked, and in their personal vehicles, as they drive through the vaccination site. Each physician and healthcare worker provides their verification, identification, documentation and consent. They then extend their upper arm to receive the Pfizer vaccination. Following the receipt of the vaccination they have a 15-minute observation period to assure they do not experience any immediate side effects.

These Tier 1A healthcare employees were encouraged to schedule their vaccination after their completed work schedule to have time to rest. As with all vaccinations, there is a potential for injection site reactions (redness, swelling and pain) as well as fever, fatigue, headache, chills, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and/or joint pain. Fever is not an infrequent side effect, especially on the 2nd dose, so these vaccinated employees will self-monitor their temperatures, as they cannot work at Renown with a fever.

In addition to Luis, you’ll see, first in his truck- Dr. Bret Frey, representing the Medical Staff and Emergency Medicine physicians at Renown; Nurse Matt Polak, Supervisor of Clinical Nursing of Renown’s Respiratory

Intensive Care Unit representing Renown nurses; Holly Irwin, a Clinical Respiratory Therapist in her vehicle; Alexis Bertauche, Respiratory Specialist in his vehicle; Eric Whitney, the supervisor representing the 168 members of Renown's Environmental Services team who have performed extensive disinfecting measures throughout the pandemic, physician representatives from partners at [UNR School of Medicine](#), [Reno Orthopedic Clinic](#), the [Surgery Center of Reno](#) and across the community.

Brighter days ahead for Luis

Luis has been working in [Renown's Alternate Care Site](#) in the Mill Street parking structure since it opened to patients in mid-November. He's been at Renown since 2016, where he started as a phlebotomist and was encouraged to explore career advancement in the medical field. He applied to work as a technician on Renown's Clinical Decision Unit- a short stay unit within the hospital for people who need clinical care, but do not need to be admitted to the hospital. Luis worked with patients and clinicians in the Clinical Decision Unit for a year before requesting to work in Renown's innovative Alternate Care Site, built for patients recovering from COVID-19, for additional care before they returned home.

Luis was scheduled to take the Medical College Admission Test® in April of this year to fulfill his dreams of becoming a doctor, but the COVID-19 pandemic forced him to change his plans. He plans to reschedule his medical school admission exam in February. He is excited to begin his training, possibly at UNR School of Medicine, and hopes one day to be a physician caring competently and compassionately for those in need.

Luis has so much to look forward to, after such a difficult year. Luis turned 33 in October, and on his birthday, contracted COVID-19 after attending a family party. He experienced fever and noticed how dramatically the COVID-19 virus affected his breathing, his lungs, and his energy level. After spending time at home recovering, Luis recovered, tested negative, and returned to work. As a result of his experience and his interest in medicine, Luis has done a lot of research on the vaccine.

Luis is bilingual and volunteers with [CARE Chest of Sierra Nevada](#), a non-profit organization that provides free medical equipment, supplies, and prescription assistance to underserved populations when he is not working at Renown.

Vaccine one more tool to help fight pandemic

"The best protection from COVID-19 will be a combination of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, and washing your hands often," says [Amy McCombs](#), MSN, RN, CCRN, CNML, vice president of Quality for Acute Services for Renown, and the champion of the vaccination effort for Renown. "No one tool alone will stop this pandemic, it will take a combination of all of us using all of these efforts to fight the spread of this virus. Though there has been positive news about vaccine development, no one knows when those vaccines will be ready for widespread use. In the meantime, everyone must remain vigilant, take precautions and follow public health orders."

"This vaccination is a game-changer in terms of improving the health of our community," said [Paul Sierzenski](#), MD, MSHQS, Chief Medical Officer, Acute Services, Renown Health. "Given the demands of this COVID-19 pandemic, we are pleased to be able to provide this vaccination to help in the fight. We will follow CDC recommendations for a tiered approach to vaccine distribution. Our goal is that by spring, all Renown physicians; employees and their family members; and all Hometown Health members and Renown patients interested in receiving the vaccine will have an opportunity to be vaccinated."

The COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory for all Renown employees, but is strongly advised. Renown is covering all costs of the vaccine, and it is being offered free of charge to employees.



Contact: Renown Public Relations
M: 775-691-7308 **E:** news@renown.org

Register for Renown EPIC MyChart now.

To streamline the notification, consent, scheduling and reminder process for vaccine distribution, as well as to post to [Web IZ](#) Nevada's Statewide Immunization Information System, all who are interested in receiving the vaccine through Renown will need to enroll and obtain an [EPIC MyChart account](#).

Stay Up-to-date on COVID-19

Renown Health is prepared to safely screen, diagnose and care for patients with respiratory illness, including COVID-19. To stay up-to-date on communications regarding Renown's distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, FAQs and the scientific evidence behind the vaccine, visit <https://covid.renown.org/>

Join the Renown team

Renown Health remains committed to hiring key roles in our organization to support the health and well-being of our community. To join the Renown family to Fight the Good Fight, apply on line at <https://careers.renown.org/>

Support the Renown team

Renown Health, a charitable, not-for-profit organization, is so grateful for our community's support during these unprecedented times. To donate to Renown patients or providers, visit <https://www.renown.org/donations-covid-19/>.

###

About Renown Health

Renown Health is a locally governed and locally owned, not-for-profit integrated healthcare network serving northern Nevada, Lake Tahoe and northeast California. Renown is one of the region's largest private employers with a workforce of more than 7,000. It comprises three acute care hospitals, a rehabilitation hospital, the area's most comprehensive medical group and urgent care network, and the region's largest and only locally owned not-for-profit insurance company, Hometown Health. Renown has a long tradition and commitment to continually improve the care and the health of our community. For more information, visit renown.org.

About the Washoe County Health District

The Washoe County Health District has jurisdiction over all public health matters in Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County through the policy-making Washoe County District Board of Health. The District consists of five divisions: Administrative Health Services, Air Quality Management, Community and Clinical Health Services, Environmental Health Services and Epidemiology & Public Health Preparedness. [More info can be found here.](#)