



**Paul Loffreda, Market President at Blue Cross Complete:** Hi everybody. My name is Paul Loffreda. I'm the market president of Blue Cross Complete of Michigan. Today I'm joined by Debbie [Debra] Brinson, from Honor Community Health in Pontiac, Michigan. Debbie, thanks for joining us today.

**Debra Brinson, CEO at Honor Community Health:** Thanks, Paul. I appreciate having the opportunity to have this talk with you on something that's so important to the work we've been doing for the last year and a half.

**Paul:** Can you tell us about your organization and how you're playing a role to keep people safe in the community around COVID-19?

**Debra:** I'd be glad to, Paul. Honor Community Health is a community health network center located in Pontiac and our goal is to serve and make sure that all individuals have access to health care services. Since day one of the pandemic, we have remained open. We have been seeing patients both in person, as appropriate, but also we've converted to telehealth services, making sure that our patients, often really vulnerable populations in some cases, have access to health care during the pandemic.

We immediately began doing testing, so we did both scheduled appointments and walk-in testing of community members. And when vaccines became available, we were one of the first FQHCs, or community health centers, in the state to be able to deliver vaccines to the Pontiac and Oakland county area. As of today, we've done almost 8,000 vaccines and we're very excited about that.

**Paul:** That's a great segue for my next question. You shared the plan that you have for helping the community during COVID-19. I understand you recently announced the opening of a new clinic, located in Pontiac. How will this play a role in the vaccine distribution?

**Debra:** We're thrilled with our partnership with Oakland County Health Department. We did open a new center today. That center actually has been quietly delivering services during the pandemic.

But we have been in partnership with Oakland County Health Department to create two new centers that are co-located right within the health departments, so one's in Pontiac and the other's in Southfield. We will be doing vaccines. We'll be coordinating vaccine services at those locations with our county health department. But all of our sites have been doing vaccines and will continue to do them, both in walk-in and through appointments. And on Monday, we start doing our first vaccines within the schools. We're working with adolescents, students, so we can get them back to school.



**Paul:** That's awesome. Debbie, what's been the most rewarding part of helping the community during this pandemic?

**Debra:** Most rewarding is that we've administered almost 8,000 vaccines. And that's very rewarding as a community health center, to be engaged and be a part of the solution, so that's one. The other [reward] is I have been really amazed at the love and concern that people have had for their neighbors, in a way that I hadn't seen before. So there have been times where, our first one or two vaccine sessions, Paul, people cried. Both because they were excited to be getting the vaccine, and then staff who really, during that moment, recognized that they were making a historical difference.

**Paul:** Debbie, what can the community do to support the work that Honor Community Health is doing for our communities right now?

**Debra:** Of course, Paul, the first thing that people can do to support the work that Honor and all of us are doing is to get vaccinated. The second piece is if they know someone who has not been vaccinated, to talk with them and to share their story of why it was so important for them to get vaccinated. Then help them develop a plan or, more importantly, maybe even take them to a place where they can get vaccinated. Because vaccines now are readily available. There should be no question about being able to get vaccinated. So those are the first things.

Then the second one is, I don't want people to forget about getting primary care. We want people to stay their healthiest, because we're going to have to do boosters. The one shot [or two] is getting us through the first stage of addressing the pandemic. The next one is getting the booster. But, equally important is taking good care of our health and making sure that people we're concerned about also are taking care of their health. We want them to come in for physicals, we want them taking good preventative methods, we don't want them stopping their other health care services. That is equally important.

**Paul:** That's great. And we truly appreciate the relationship and the work we've been able to do together for our members. I really appreciate your time today, Debbie, it's been really enlightening and, again, thank you for everything you and your team do for our members and our communities. Thanks so much.

**Debra:** Great. Thank you, Paul. I appreciate having the opportunity to talk.



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