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Cal Expo Hits One Year Mark Dedicated Almost Entirely to COVID-19 Response

Each day thousands go through Cal Expo gates seeking relief from pandemic

SACRAMENTO – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cal Expo has been unable to host public events in over a year, including its trademark State Fair last summer. Instead, Cal Expo has been dedicated to almost entirely COVID-19 responses, with today marking the one-year anniversary of their work to combat the virus.

During the past year, Cal Expo has made the facility available as a mass COVID-19 testing site as well as providing shelter trailers and warming stations for the unhoused. Since the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, Cal Expo has also been the site of two mass vaccination locations – one led by Sacramento County Public Health department and the other by Kaiser Permanente.

Kaiser Permanente alone has administered over 80,000 vaccines and the County over 40,000 vaccines at Cal Expo since the end of January. Combined, they are now administering upwards of 5,000 vaccines every day, and plan to vaccinate more than 10,000 people each day as supply becomes available. In addition, over 60,000 people were tested for COVID-19 in 2020 at Cal Expo.

“Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak one year ago, Cal Expo has played an important regional and statewide role in fighting the virus,” said State Senator Dr. Richard Pan. “Cal Expo has partnered with us to become a mass testing and vaccine distribution site and has provided refuge for our area’s homeless families and a safe location for blood and food drives. This has been an extraordinary year and we appreciate Cal Expo for helping us respond to the many challenges we have faced as a community.”

“It has been quite a year since the pandemic upended daily life for everyone,” said Jess Durfee, Chair of the Cal Expo Board of Directors. “While we have been unable to host public events, Cal Expo is honored to be able to provide support and much-needed aid to Californians during this health crisis.”

Assisting in times of crisis is nothing new for Cal Expo, which receives almost no public subsidy and runs almost entirely from revenue generated from their events. Through the years, Cal Expo has been that staging area to respond to natural disasters, including wildfires, floods, and earthquakes. They are also where the National Guard gathers to address issues such as civil unrest in the State’s Capitol City.

“Kaiser Permanente is proud to partner with Cal Expo on our vaccination clinic where we are jointly part of the effort to combat COVID-19 and protect our members and the communities we serve,” said Sandy Sharon, Senior Vice President and Area Manager, Sacramento, Kaiser Permanente.

“Sacramento County Public Health is appreciative of all the support received from Cal Expo,” said Dr. Olivia Kasirye, Sacramento County Health Officer. “The partnership between Cal Expo, Sacramento County Public Health and the California National Guard has made it possible for us to provide sustained resource for COVID-19 testing and vaccination to the Sacramento community.”

“The number of people coming to Cal Expo for their COVID vaccines each day is just astonishing,” said Rick Pickering, CEO of Cal Expo. “While we all look forward to hosting events very soon, we are proud to have been able to help the community during this very difficult time.”

As a result of being unable to host public events, Cal Expo has also been working on a shoestring budget and was forced to lay off more than half of their employees. They are hopeful to get approval to host events in the near future.

To determine if you are eligible for a vaccine and to schedule an appointment, please visit: www.saccounty.net/COVID-19.

Kaiser Permanente members can also visit: www.kp.org/covidvaccine

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