



United Way of West Central Mississippi's Carlotta Ferguson helps a Warren County resident secure an appointment to receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. To date, the United Way has helped more than 100 people get an appointment. (Terri Cowart Frazier/The Vicksburg Post)

United Way helps residents secure COVID-19 vaccine appointments

By [Terri Cowart Frazier](https://www.vicksburgpost.com/author/terrifrazier/) (<mailto:terri.frazier@vicksburgpost.com>)

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Meeting new friends can happen in all kinds of circumstances.

Alesia Shaw, United Way of West Central Mississippi's Director of Marketing and Resource Development, made a new friend recently when she was helping them get an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

"While gathering the information of one applicant, I noticed that her birthday was the same as my best friend," Shaw said. "So I started a conversation with the applicant, letting her know that she and my best friend shared a birthday. Well, we struck up a conversation and talked about more than her COVID registration and she was just a lovely lady."

Shaw, along with the rest of the staff at the United Way, has tirelessly been helping those who for whatever reason are having trouble getting online to secure an appointment.

"We knew that there would be a need due to the digital divide we felt the community of low income, elderly and disabled would experience," Shaw said.

Therefore the non-profit organization reached out to Jennifer Harper, Director of the Senior Center, and Warren County Emergency Management Agency Director John Elfer, and his team to find out what they could do to assist. In February, the United Way staff began helping to fill vaccination appointments.

Shaw created a flyer with information about the service the United Way could provide, along with a phone number, and with the Senior Center having a built-in audience, it was made available at the facility.

The flyer was also placed in 600 meals that were distributed to housing complexes for the elderly and low-income residents and by word of mouth.

"Even my mother was letting people know that we could help them, all they had to do was call United Way," United Way of West Central Mississippi Executive Director Michele Connelly said.

A form that followed the questions of the online application was also made. This information, from those who called in needing assistance, Shaw said, allowed the United Way staff to complete the online registration when an appointment became available.

After an appointment was secured the individual was contacted and supplied with the date of their appointment.

“And to let them know to stop by our office to pick up the paperwork they need for their appointment,” Shaw said.

To date, the United Way has assisted more than 100 individuals in registering for their vaccine.

Feedback from those who have been helped has been positive, Shaw said.

“Everyone is very thankful, and we are building great relationships by assisting them in getting something they may have thought they wouldn't be able to get,” she said.

Connelly said it has also been gratifying working alongside others who are aiding in the vaccine distribution.

“It's rewarding to know that we've had a very small part in anything that makes such a huge impact on others. It's an honor to be trusted by the Warren County Emergency Management Team to take on such an important task,” Connelly said.

For those interested in having the United Way assist them in making a COVID vaccine appointment, call 601-636-1733 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Over the past two years, United Way has worked diligently in supplying support services and basic needs to the community.

In 2019, the United Way helped with the flood and currently with the COVID-19 outbreak.

To date, Shaw said, \$1,445,812.56 has been raised in COVID Relief, with funds used for seniors and disabled feeding programs, for basic needs, providing personal protective equipment, supporting mental health practitioners, and providing for childcare for first responders.

ABOUT TERRI COWART FRAZIER



Terri Frazier was born in Cleveland. Shortly afterward, the family moved to Vicksburg. She is a part-time reporter at The Vicksburg Post and is the editor of the Vicksburg Living Magazine, which has been awarded First Place by the Mississippi Press Association. She has also been the recipient of a First Place award in the MPA's Better Newspaper Contest's editorial division for the “Best Feature Story.”

Terri graduated from Warren Central High School and Mississippi State University where she received a bachelor's degree in communications with an emphasis in public relations.

Prior to coming to work at The Post a little more than 10 years ago, she did some freelancing at the Jackson Free Press. But for most of her life, she enjoyed being a full-time stay at home mom.

Terri is a member of the Crawford Street United Methodist Church. She is a lifetime member of the Vicksburg Junior Auxiliary and is a past member of the Sampler Antique Club and Town and Country Garden Club. She is married to Dr. Walter Frazier.

“From staying informed with local governmental issues to hearing the stories of its people, a hometown newspaper is vital to a community. I have felt privileged to be part of a dedicated team at The Post throughout my tenure and hope that with theirs and with local support, I will be able to continue to grow and hone in on my skills as I help share the stories in Vicksburg. When asked what I like most about my job, my answer is always ‘the people.’

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