

Speaker 1: The effort to get the most vulnerable in our communities vaccinated continues today at a retirement community in Pharr. For many residents, the vaccine, a first step towards reuniting with their family. Here's Channel 5's Monica De Anda.

Monica De Anda: Earlier today, 87 residents and 30 staff members at Brook Ridge Retirement Community received the first dose of the Moderna vaccine bringing hope to those who have been in these buildings for nearly a year now. It hasn't been an easy year for those living at nursing homes or retirement communities [00:00:30] like this one.

Oscar Plaza: Very stressful, frustrating because suddenly your life changes. Even for us that we are old people, but we have plans.

Monica De Anda: Like many others, Oscar Plaza has had to sacrifice family time as the coronavirus pandemic continued forcing the doors of retirement communities and nursing homes to say shut in order to keep everyone inside safe.

Oscar Plaza: Life is very different, and for so long, because at the beginning, everybody thought this is just short time. [00:01:00] No.

Monica De Anda: It'll soon be a year since Plaza has hugged his loved ones. He's had to adjust his daily activities, doing his best to keep busy.

Oscar Plaza: For example I read, I listen to music. I watch material because I am an educator. I keep active in learning.

Monica De Anda: In October, the US Department of Health and Human Services announced it was partnering with CVS and Walgreens to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Americans in long-term care facilities nationwide. In Texas, CVS began its efforts [00:01:30] on December 28, giving priority to nursing homes, not independent living facilities like Brook Ridge.

Elsa Rios: It has been challenging because we are an independent living community. The assisted living memory care, I know have priority. We have had to go through many channels to try and get the residents vaccinated because there is no way that I can take them over and make lines to be able to get their vaccines.

Monica De Anda: Rios's team took action, looking for the fastest way to get [00:02:00] vaccines to their residents.

Elsa Rios: I started probably working with the County since we found out that the vaccine was coming out. I want to say probably the second week in December.

Monica De Anda: And after working with Hidalgo County's health department, Rios was able to secure vaccines for both residents and staff. Today's first dose of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, making everyone optimistic about the road ahead.

Oscar Plaza: It's the first step, and we hope that we'll be in the right direction. Not for me, for everybody.

Monica De Anda: [00:02:30] Monica De Anda, Channel 5 news at six.