

CHAD KODIAK

By ALLISON SELK
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When Chad Kodiak followed his father's footsteps by attending pharmacy school, he knew he wanted to take a different path, to be in the community.

"To get out from being behind the counter for a larger cause and initiative was the key part of developing my passion," Kodiak said.

He took that leap when the pandemic hit in March 2020. Kodiak was tuned in to the news, listening for a way to use his knowledge and skills to help. He heard about making masks, but he did not sew. He heard about making hand sanitizer, which, again, was not an option. He felt defeated until he heard there was a vaccine.

"The vaccine, this we can do, not only can we do it, we already do this," Kodiak said.

In 1969, his father, Chip Kodiak, and business partner Dennis Dombrowski began KODO Pharmacy on the corner of Briggs and Washington streets. A high-rise opened down the street, and the owner called the pharmacy to fill prescriptions for the residents, which began the pharmacy's partnerships with long-term care facilities. This is now the majority of its business.

Twenty years ago, Illinois pharmacies were allowed to administer vaccinations, which fed into Kodiak's desire to keep people healthy and expand the day-to-day operations of his pharmacy career. The pharmacy became certified for immunizations under the Illinois Comprehensive Automated Immunization Registry Exchange.

Kodiak knew he wanted to first protect his clients in long-term facilities as he had taken care of their wellness needs. His mood deflated when he realized he would not yet have access to the vaccines and his patients did not fall under the umbrella of nursing home care, which was first on the list.

"I continued to plan, I called a national pharmacy organization, was told there was nothing we can do, our role was education," Kodiak said.

He reached out to the Will County Health Department, which was overwhelmed. He decided if he could get the vaccines, he would find a way to get to his patients in long-term facility care, followed by the community.

On Jan. 7, 2021, Kodiak picked up the vaccines and on Jan. 8, he began



to vaccinate.

"It was lightning. We took a section of the pharmacy and reorganized, cleared it out and vaccinated people as they came in," Kodiak said.

At the same time, Kodiak heard nursing students at the University of St. Francis needed vaccines in order to start clinical rotations. Kodiak vaccinated the students and gave them an opportunity for clinical experience. In order for Kodiak to keep with the volume of vaccines needed for the community, he needed storage, so he worked with the university to store

the vaccines on campus.

After the long-term care facilities were vaccinated, he began a mass vaccination clinic at Joliet Junior College, vaccinating students and staff at Lewis University. All three nursing schools in the area were a part of the movement.

As of October 2021, KODOCARE has given 40,000 COVID-19 vaccinations, with mass clinics led by pharmacist Jeff Surdej.

"There was not a clinic too big for him," said Kim Gibson, clinical coordinator of University of St. Francis'

Leach College of Nursing. "We had clinics of 1,000 to 1,300 people per day, which almost doubled the Will County clinic they did at the old Toys R Us location. He did it and he did it from day one."

Katie Weber, Will County Health Department emergency response coordinator, said Kodiak's help with long-term facilities and clinics helped the department focus on other populations.

"I don't think we would have been as successful with this if it weren't for Chad and KODOCARE," she said.