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# 2nd treatment pill added

Merck's new medicine differs from Pfizer's in benefits, side effects

**MATTHEW PERRONE**  
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. health regulators on Thursday authorized the second pill against COVID-19, providing another easy-to-use medication to battle the rising tide of

omeron infections. The Food and Drug Administration announcement on Merck's molnupiravir comes one day after the agency cleared a competing drug from Pfizer.

Pfizer's pill, Paxlovid, is likely to become the first-choice treatment against the virus, because of its superior benefits and milder side effects. As a result, Merck's pill is expected to have a lesser role against the pandemic than predicted just

a few weeks ago. Its ability to head off severe COVID-19 is much smaller than initially announced and the drug label will warn of serious safety issues, including the potential for birth defects.

Both treatments will be free to patients in the U.S. after being purchased by the federal government.

The FDA authorized Merck's drug for adults with a positive COVID-19 test, early symptoms and who face the highest risks of

hospitalization, including older people and those with conditions like obesity and heart disease.

The agency said molnupiravir should be considered for patients "for whom alternative COVID-19 treatment options authorized by the FDA are not accessible or clinically appropriate." It did not include that restriction for Paxlovid, which was authorized for patients 12 and older.

Molnupiravir, made by Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics,

also will carry a warning against use during pregnancy. Women of childbearing age should use birth control during treatment and for a few days after while men should use birth control for at least three months after their final dose, the FDA said. The federal agency also said molnupiravir should not be used in patients under age 18 because it may affect bone growth. Dr. Nick Kartsonis, Merck's

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**GRETTA HOCHSPRUNG, THE POST-STAR**  
 David Bullock, a resident at Slate Valley Center in Granville, spent many years playing Santa Claus for children at Christmastime.

## Christmas memories

Nursing home residents share stories of favorite past holidays

**GRETTA HOCHSPRUNG**  
 ghochsprung@poststar.com

GRANVILLE — David Bullock was shopping at Colonie Center 41 years ago with his 5-year-old son.

"I brought my 5-year-old son to see Santa Claus and he wasn't there," Bullock said.

The sign said Santa would be back in an hour. Bullock returned an hour later, but the bearded jolly guy was still not there.

"Back at 1, back at 2 and at about 2:30, I see two young ladies dressed like elves pointing at me and talking," he said, "and I went over to them and said, 'Can I help

you?'" They told Bullock that the man who normally plays Santa had had a death in the family and wouldn't be returning that day.

Just two days before Christmas and the mall nearing closure for the day, Bullock volunteered.

That day, Bullock became Santa and played the part for years until his health prevented him from portraying the plump, jolly old elf.

Now a resident at the Slate Valley Center nursing home in Granville, Bullock gets around in a wheelchair and his hands shake with tremors, but he still treats everyone with a boisterous greeting and distributes handwritten Christmas cards to other residents and staff.

The 74-year-old still calls himself "Santa Claus' helper."

"I figured, heck, it was a one-time deal," he said. "They got me into costume and all and I said, 'I'm going to have fun.'"

There weren't a lot of kids waiting in line that day, so he decided to spend some time with each child on his lap or next to him in a stroller.

He would talk with them, ask them what they wanted from him for Christmas, sing a couple of Christmas songs with them, hand them a piece of candy and give them back to their parents.

His wife bought him a Santa costume from a Montgomery Ward that was going out of business. He visited malls and day cares, elementary schools and colleges, and dressed up in the red costume for his neighbors' children, ringing bells bound to a leather strap.

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## Guilty verdict in Taser mistake

Officer convicted in Daunte Wright's death

**AMY FORLITI AND SCOTT BAUER**  
 Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — A suburban Minneapolis police officer who said she confused her handgun for her Taser was convicted of manslaughter Thursday in the death of Daunte Wright, prompting tears from the young Black man's parents and a jubilant celebration by supporters outside the courthouse who chanted "Guilty, guilty, guilty!"

The mostly white jury deliberated for about 27 hours over four days before finding former Brooklyn Center Officer Kim Potter guilty of first- and second-degree manslaughter. Potter, 49, faces about seven years in prison under the state's sentencing guidelines, but prosecutors said they would seek a longer term.

Judge Regina Chu ordered Potter taken into custody and held without bail pending sentencing on Feb. 18. Potter had been free on \$100,000 bond posted the day last April that she was charged, which was three days after she killed Wright and a day after she quit the police force.

As she was led away in handcuffs, a Potter family member in the courtroom shouted "Love you, Kim!" Potter's attorneys left the courthouse without commenting and didn't immediately respond to phone messages or emails.

It was the second high-profile conviction of a police officer won this year by a team led by Attorney General Keith Ellison, including some of the same attorneys who helped convict Derek Chauvin in George Floyd's death in the very same courtroom just eight months earlier.

Wright was killed while that trial was happening not far away, and it set off a wave of angry protests outside the police station in Brooklyn Center, where demonstrators demanding "Justice for Daunte" clashed with officers in

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**Memories**

From A1

"The kids went nuts," Bullock said. "It was so much fun." And he never charged a penny. "I did that for quite a while until my knee went bad and I just couldn't pick the kids up anymore, it hurt too bad," Bullock said.

But playing Santa has become a family tradition. Bullock's oldest son, David, has been Santa at malls for many years, and his youngest son, Tim, also has a Santa outfit and portrays the gift-giving saint for friends and family. "I enjoyed making people happy," Bullock said. "I really did."

**A pair of roller skates**

Dorothy Devoe, who turned 100 in July, grew up in a big family on Long Island and remembers their traditional pancake and scrambled egg breakfasts on Christmas morning. She and her siblings had to eat before they could open any gifts.

"Then we were allowed to go, and of course it was a mad rush to find your name," said Devoe, who is a resident at Glens Falls Center. Devoe came to the area when her son opened an ice cream shop in Lake George.

The best gift she ever received was a pair of roller skates, the metal kind that attached to the bottom of your shoes and could be adjusted with a key.

"We had black paved roads," she recalled, "and there was a hill just beyond our house where cars went down, and somebody would stop the cars while you came down the hill."

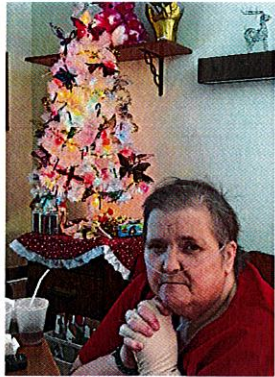
In the winter they would ride a sleigh down the same hill.

**Winter was 'great times' in Whitehall**

John Spizzo, 89, grew up in the village of Whitehall and remembers the great fun of sledding down the steep hill on the side of Second Avenue.

"We were all friends. Everybody there were friends, because we were all Italians," said Spizzo, who now lives at Glens Falls Center.

Spizzo was raised by his grandfather because his mother worked at the garment factory. His father worked 50 years on the railroad. He always looked forward to



Penny Baker, a resident at Slate Valley Center in Granville, decorated her white Christmas tree in memory of her mother and sisters, who all died in the last three years. The hummingbirds are for her mother and the butterflies are for her sisters.



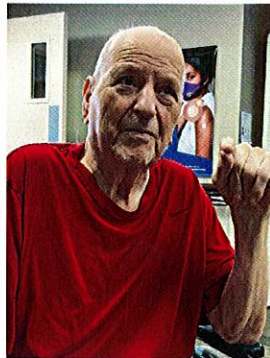
Dorothy Devoe, age 100, a resident at Glens Falls Center, remembered having a traditional Christmas morning breakfast of scrambled eggs and pancakes with her six siblings.



Barb Yedlowski, a resident at Glens Falls Center, remembered her father putting her and her siblings in a big box and letting them pop out of it on Christmas.



John Spizzo, 89, a resident at Glens Falls Center, remembered his winters sledding down a hill on Second Avenue in Whitehall with his two friends John Affinito and John Sparano.



Jerry Sacco, a resident at Glens Falls Center, remembers celebrating Christmas with his five brothers and two sisters and eating a big Italian Christmas dinner.

on Christmas Eve, and her parents would host 30 to 40 people at their home on Christmas Day.

"When my mom was home, she loved it," Baker said. "The more, the happier."

Baker lost her mother and both her sisters in the last three years. Next to her bed at Slate Valley Center in Granville sits a white Christmas tree decorated with hummingbirds for her mother and butterflies for her sisters.

**A special family picture**

Barb Yedlowski, 73, has a Christmas memory from when she was a little girl on Long Island.

"I remember when we were small, my father used to take pictures," said Yedlowski. "And he put us all in the box, and he would close the box and we'd pop out of it."

She always enjoyed receiving dolls for Christmas, said Yedlowski, who now lives at Glens Falls Center.

"One time I got a big doll. It was a walking doll. She was a big thing. I was surprised to get her. She was almost as tall as me," she said. "It was fun."

She found out on Monday that her son, his wife and their four kids will be visiting her from Rhode Island this Christmas. She has only been able to communicate with her son via video.

"I haven't seen him in real life in a long time," she said. "It's going to be great."

Gretta Hochsprung writes features and hometown news. She can be reached at 518-742-3206 or ghochsprung@poststar.com.

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a  
*Wonderful Christmas*  
*and a Happy New Year!*  
 May the spirit of Christmas bring you and  
 your family hope, happiness and love.

• Merry Christmas and Happy New Year •  
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