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ST. LUCIE COUNTY LAUNCHES #ArmAgainstCOVID CAMPAIGN TO BOOST COVID-19 VACCINATION RATE, ADDRESS MYTHS & VACCINE INEQUITIES



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St. Lucie County, FL — Encouraging St. Lucie County residents to roll up their sleeves for the COVID-19 vaccine, the #ArmAgainstCOVID campaign rolls out this month.

The campaign was created by Comet Media Group for the St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners in partnership with the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County (DOH-St. Lucie). It aims to inspire a high vaccination rate, counter hesitancy and support vaccine equity.

Trusted Messengers

Healthcare professionals are the most trusted source of information about the vaccine. This is the finding of several national surveys conducted in 2020 and 2021 by firms such as Gallup Polls and the Harris Poll. St. Lucie County residents have also expressed a desire to hear from community leaders that live and work here.

Several local healthcare professionals and community leaders have answered that call.

In the campaign, they directly appeal to residents to “help us get back to the life we want” by arming themselves against COVID-19 with a vaccine.

“Hearing from trusted messengers helps build confidence in the vaccine,” said George Byfield, CEO of Comet Media Group. “Especially when that person is a local healthcare professional who looks like and talks like you or is a community leader that you know or have seen in the past.”

Each of these trusted messengers tells viewers “I got the vaccine for my family members and for yours. Now it’s your turn. Arm against COVID. Get your shot today.”

“The tagline underscores the fact that, even if you are not in a high-risk group yourself, the vaccine protects you from spreading the disease to those you care about, who may be at high-risk,” added Byfield.

Encouraging Vaccine Equity

As research shows higher levels of vaccine hesitancy among racial and ethnic minorities, the #ArmAgainstCOVID campaign includes messages speaking to the unique concerns of each.

For example, the highest level of vaccine hesitancy was found in the African American community – even though this is the group disproportionately affected by the disease.

“The COVID death rate in the black community is nearly double that of the white community. For hospitalizations, it’s nearly three times greater,” said Dr. Wilhelmina Lewis, President & Chief Executive Officer of Florida Community Health Centers, in one of the spots. “When you look at the situation that we are in now ... we can either watch it continue or we can take the vaccine to stop it.”

Dr. Lewis also points out that an African American woman helped invent the vaccine. African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities have been at the table at every stage – from research and development of the vaccine and participating in clinical trials to reviewing the data and approving the vaccine for emergency use.

Campaign messaging also seeks to reaffirm that the vaccine is safe and effective and works to counter common myths, such as the vaccine can give you COVID-19 or that there is a microchip included in it.

In Spanish language messages, Linda Tapia, a resident of St. Lucie County for more than 40 years, who has dedicated her time to the community outreach, addresses myths commonly heard in the community. One that she has heard frequently is that the vaccine affects fertility, which has been proven false by the data. She also confidently assures residents that there will be no immigration enforcement at vaccination clinics or locations.

Also figuring prominently in the campaign is Dr. Marie M. Remy, Family and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Owner/Director of Connect Healthcare Services, LLC, who delivers messages in English and Creole and Dr. Moti Ramgopal, Infectious Disease Specialist, Director, Midway Immunology and Research Center – Fort Pierce, who touches on the economic impact as well as the significant human toll taken by COVID-19.

‘High Level’ of Collaboration

There was a “high level” of collaboration between public and private entities, community leaders, and healthcare professionals in developing the #ArmAgainstCOVID campaign, Byfield said.

“It is reflected in the messaging, with a spirit of inclusiveness and health equity for all,” he added. “The goal is for everyone to benefit from the availability of the vaccines.”

“We’ve reached a new phase in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout,” said Clint Sperber, Administrator of DOH-St. Lucie. “The supply is more plentiful and is available to all Florida residents of age. Now, it’s time for those who haven’t stepped up to get the shot. We want to ensure that residents are ready to arm themselves with the vaccine. It’s open and free to all.”

DOH-St. Lucie staffers have been out in the community vaccinating the public at neighborhood stores, nail salons, and sporting events.

Vaccines are available at grocery stores, including Publix, Wal-Mart, Winn Dixie and Sam’s Club and pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens, as well as at area doctor’s offices and more. The vaccine is also available at DOH-St. Lucie at 5150 NW Milner

Drive in Port St. Lucie. To schedule an appointment, call (772) 462-3800 and press "1" twice.

For more information, residents can visit RecoverStLucie.com, contact the Florida Department of Health COVID call center at (866) 779-6121 (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week), or call the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County at (772) 446-8480 (open 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday). The public can also email COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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Follow DOH-St. Lucie on Twitter at [@FDOHStLucie](#). To learn more about DOH-St. Lucie programs, visit <http://stlucie.floridahealth.gov/index.html>.

About Comet Media Group

Comet Media Group is a marketing consulting agency with offices in Port St. Lucie and Lakeland, Florida. Comet previously worked with the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County on the H1N1 Swine Flu Vaccination campaign in 2009.

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