



A YEAR OF CRISIS AND  
COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

# Kent County's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

ONE YEAR OUT



# Letter From BOC Chair and KC Administrator

Our community has been drawn closer through crisis this past year. Together, we mourn the hundreds of thousands of Americans – including more than 700 in Kent County – who have died. Our hearts break for their families and friends.

Despite the darkness, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought out the best in people throughout Kent County. This community drew on our history of collaboration and innovation to meet the unrelenting demands of the past 12 months. In that, we see great light and hope.

We are tremendously grateful to our community for the strength and resilience displayed throughout the pandemic. We thank all the healthcare, public health and lab workers, first responders and law enforcement officers, teachers, grocery store and restaurant workers, delivery drivers, business owners and others who sacrifice daily to deliver important services and fight the spread of the coronavirus.



**MANDY BOLTER, CHAIR**

*Kent County Board of Commissioners*

**Beyond expressing gratitude, it is important to chronicle our collective response to this crisis – to take inventory, record and report on it – not simply to honor the work, but to learn from it.**

This response was undertaken by the public and private sectors, for-profits and nonprofits, organizations and individuals. We cannot begin to take measure of the important work that has been done by every institution and individual.

But for our part, this document serves as a report to the community inventorying the collective actions of the Board of Commissioners and the nearly 1,800 people in 25 departments, offices and agencies that comprise your Kent County government. It has been our honor to work side-by-side with so many as, together, we served the people of our region.



**WAYMAN P. BRITT**

*Kent County Administrator/Controller*



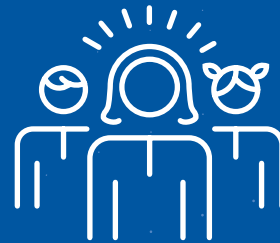
## Public Health Response

Kent County's earliest response came from the Kent County Health Department. Over the past 12 months, the work of our health department administrators, public health officers, nurses, technicians, sanitarians, contact tracers, community navigators, educators, finance, information technology, and communications team ranks among the most visible, sweeping and impactful in scope.

As they have led testing, contact tracing, and reporting; coordinated with state and federal agencies; issued public health orders and warnings; engaged in community discussions and public education campaigns; and administered the vaccine, **our health department team members have rightfully earned a place among the most transparent and trusted individuals in our community.**



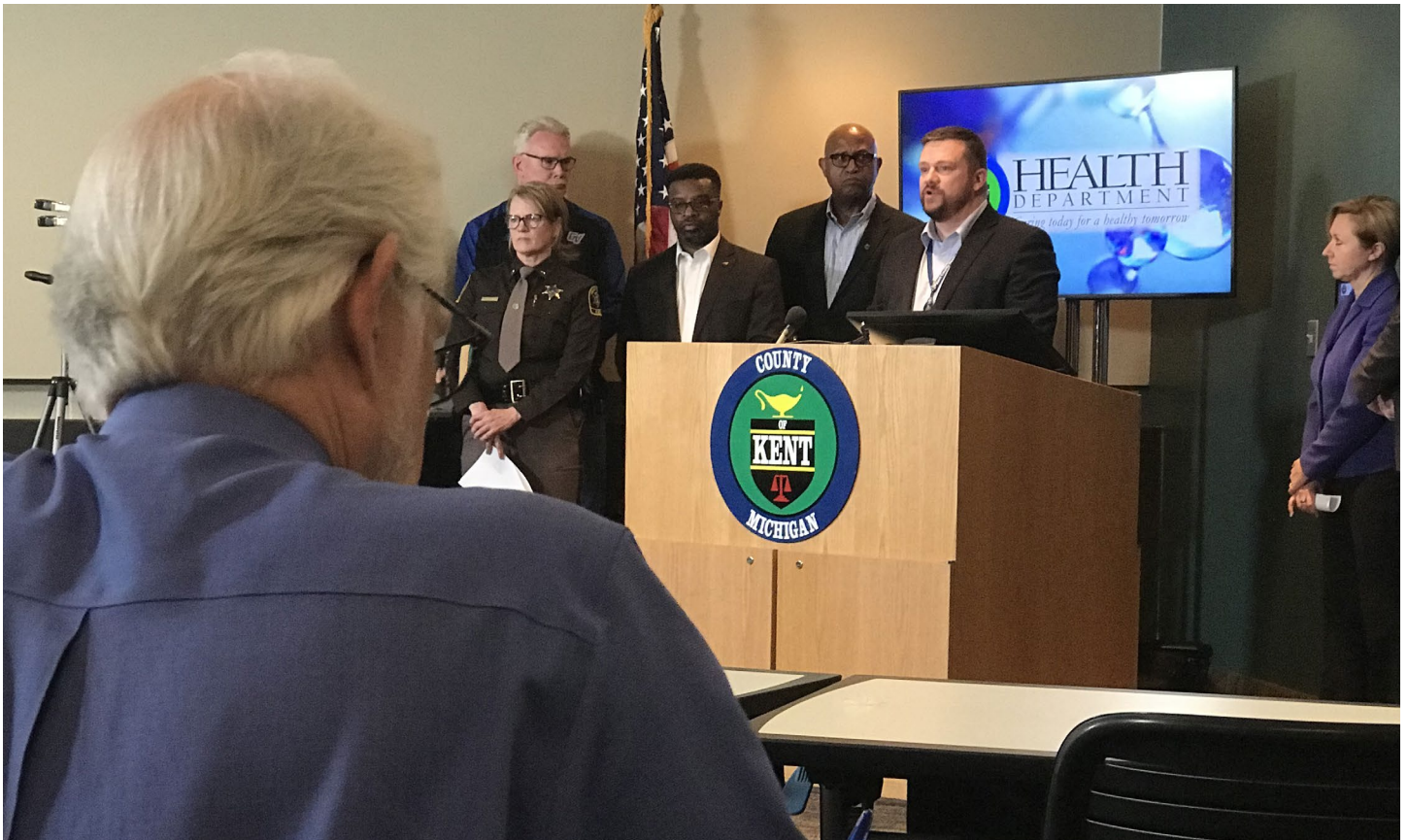
*Kent County Public Health Nurses*



### KENT COUNTY THANKS THE COMMUNITY

The entire Kent County team extends its sincere gratitude to our community for the many acts of kindness and fellowship over the past year. For those who took the time to drop off meals and snacks at the health department, write encouraging messages on social media or send handwritten thank you notes, please know that we greatly appreciate your caring words and actions. At times, they were what got us through the toughest days. And to all of you who patiently followed the guidelines and did all you could to help keep your family and community safe, **thank you.** You exemplify what it means to be good neighbors.





March 15, 2020 News Conference

## Emergency Response, Tracking + Mitigation

### Incident Command Team

Even before the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Kent County on March 20, 2020, Kent County Health Department administrative health officer, Dr. Adam London, and his team established an Incident Command Team to begin planning and developing the structure for the County's pandemic response.

Led by Dr. London and comprised of administrative and clinical leaders from throughout the department and the County, the cross-disciplinary team has planned and led the department's pandemic response, including logistics, staffing, testing, tracing, data collection, reporting, public health orders and warnings, vaccinations, finance, advocacy and communications.

The Incident Command Team has also collaborated with community partners on a diverse range of issues from mitigating the spread among people experiencing homelessness to implementing focused education campaigns among disparately affected populations to working with state and local partners to launch a well-coordinated vaccination effort.

The team is currently focused on protecting the community from another surge in cases and ensuring that the vaccine rollout continues in an equitable, efficient and effective way.

### Public Health Warnings & Orders

As the chief public health officer in the county, Dr. London has the authority and responsibility to issue public health warnings and orders designed to inform the public of health threats and notify them of actions that are recommended or mandated to help mitigate those threats.





*Incident Command*

On March 15, 2020, Dr. London issued the first Kent County Emergency Order related to the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing occupancy limits for licensed food service establishments, entertainment venues and physical fitness centers in Kent County by 50%. Announced at a joint news conference with leaders from other local units of government, law enforcement and chambers of commerce, the coordinated approach set the stage for a collaborative COVID-19 response in the months ahead.

Additional orders and recommendations in March called for health screenings at childcare facilities and aimed to mitigate the spread of the virus among critical service workers.

Then on November 20, amid skyrocketing infection rates, Dr. London issued a public health warning with guidelines for residential gatherings, businesses, K-12 schools, houses of worship and sports and recreational activities.

Finally — with vaccinations being the top priority and vaccine supplies expected to remain over 100,000 doses per week through the end of June 2021 — Dr. London issued a public health order on March 17, 2021 requiring that DeVos Place be made fully available for use as a mass vaccine clinic through June 30.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS**

The Kent County Sheriff's Office took an "education first" approach to all potential violations of public health orders. The Office responded to – either by

phone or in-person – and investigated all complaints. The aim of each response was to educate all involved parties about the orders and to seek compliance.

Additionally, the Sheriff's Office advised callers to contact MIOSHA for all complaints pertaining to businesses that were either non-compliant or not enforcing the order.

Continued non-compliance resulted in review by the Kent County Prosecutor's Office or Kent County Health Department.

**Like the Sheriff's office, the Kent County Health Department's Environmental Health Division's approach to suspected violations of emergency orders was to educate first to gain compliance. Sanitarians responded to each complaint and gave each restaurant the opportunity to state the company's policy and procedure regarding the suspected violation. Health department staff then provided an appropriate level of education, resources and guidance, including information on how to apply for grants and locate PPE.**

If the department received multiple complaints about the same establishment, sanitarians or investigators attempted to verify the validity of those complaints by in-person visits.

In cases where non-compliance was verified, cease and desist letters were issued describing the nature of the original complaint(s), and documenting the previous contact efforts.

In cases where non-compliance existed beyond these efforts, the health department reported these matters to appropriate state agencies.

## **RESTAURANT RELIEF**

Recognizing that restaurants were hard hit by state and local orders either closing down or limiting capacity of indoor dining, the Kent County Health Department extended the April 2020 deadline for annual food service licensing fees by four months. The extension was designed to offer some relief for the 2,324 Kent County food service establishments that are licensed through the department.

Then **on March 25, 2021, with restaurant capacity still limited to 50%, the Board of Commissioners voted to waive the 2021 food service licensing fee for all existing food establishments in Kent County.**

## Testing and Tracing

It was clear from day one that testing and contact tracing would be essential tools in tracking the virus and in working to stop its spread.

### COVID-19 TESTING

The first COVID-19 tests were administered in Kent County the week of March 16 by area health systems. Starting in early April, the health department offered community testing and was the first agency to begin testing in long-term care facilities. Over the past year, the department operated four testing sites and sent strike teams into the community to test factory employees, the unhoused, residents at senior living facilities and other vulnerable populations.

Initially, we relied on the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services lab to process the tests. Individuals were waiting, on average, seven to 10 days for results.

Today, the health department works with three local labs (*NxGen MDx, Arctic Labs, and Helix MDx*) to process COVID-19 tests, greatly increasing our testing capacity and diminishing the time individuals wait for results.

As we work to shut down the virus in 2021, a comprehensive network of health departments, healthcare providers and pharmacies are conducting tests throughout the region. **The Kent County Health Department, alone, administered 20,374 COVID-19 tests between April 1, 2020 and January 6, 2021.**

### CONTACT TRACING

But to be fully effective in helping to stop the spread of the virus, testing must be accompanied by contact tracing. At the height of the fall 2020 surge, the health department called on nearly 200 contact tracers – both department employees and trained community volunteers – working seven days a week to track and notify individuals who may have been exposed to the virus and to recommend protocols including testing and quarantine.



**150**

COVID-19 TESTS  
PER DAY AT PEAK



**20,374**

COVID-19 TESTS BETWEEN  
4/20 AND 1/21



**200**

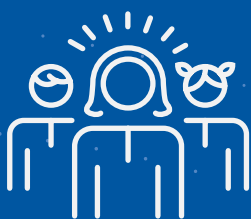
CONTACT TRACERS



CONTACT TRACERS IDENTIFIED

**8,649**

INDIVIDUALS WHO  
SELF QUARANTINED AFTER  
SUSPECTED EXPOSURE



**7**

COMMUNITY TESTING SITE  
AND TRACING PARTNERS



RACE AND ETHNICITY DATA  
COLLECTED ON

**87%**

OF CONTACTS AND REPORTED  
ON COMPREHENSIVE COUNTY  
DATA DASHBOARD

As of early March, 8,649 individuals in Kent County who tested positive for COVID-19 reported to health department investigators that, at the time they noticed symptoms or on the date of their positive test, they were already in quarantine due to a possible exposure. That means that contact tracing and public information campaigns were working. Thousands of residents got the message and quarantined after possible exposure, preventing the spread to thousands more.

## DATA COLLECTION

Beyond notifying residents of potential exposure and recommending quarantine, health department contact tracers gathered important data that informed our pandemic response. For instance, data from these investigations informed policy decisions such as public health warnings and orders on the local level.

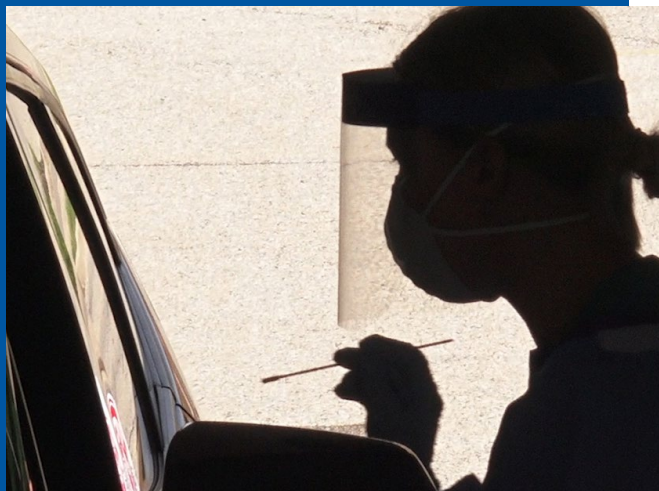
These investigations also enabled us to do more useful data analysis on our caseload, investigate potential outbreaks, attempt interventions – for example reach out to employers or schools when cases were tracked to an event or location – and tailor our outreach, education and mitigation efforts to various organizations, groups and communities.

Investigators collected race and ethnicity data on 85-87% of residents contacted. Additionally, we consulted our investigators' notes to find the frequency of the use of interpretive services each month and track which languages were being requested most often each month.

That analysis helped to inform our communications efforts and guide where we located testing sites. The analysis is now providing valuable information to help in locating vaccination clinic sites.

Thanks to community partnerships with the **Black Impact Collaborative, LINC UP, Baxter Community Center, Arbor Circle, Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, Maxim Healthcare, and The Potter's House**, the health department was able to extend its reach with testing sites and contact tracing in the county's hardest hit zip codes. These partnerships proved invaluable in our ability to reach and build trust in Black, Hispanic and Latinx and other traditionally marginalized communities that have been disproportionately affected by the virus.





COVID-19 testing

## Data Tracking, Analysis and Reporting

The health department's ability to collect and analyze data has been a critical tool in determining trends in the spread of the coronavirus, both locally and statewide. **The data is used to:**

- Track outbreaks and rates of transmission
- Identify disparities in infection rates among vulnerable populations
- Determine barriers to interventions, testing and vaccine
- Inform interventions
- Inform public health orders
- Guide education

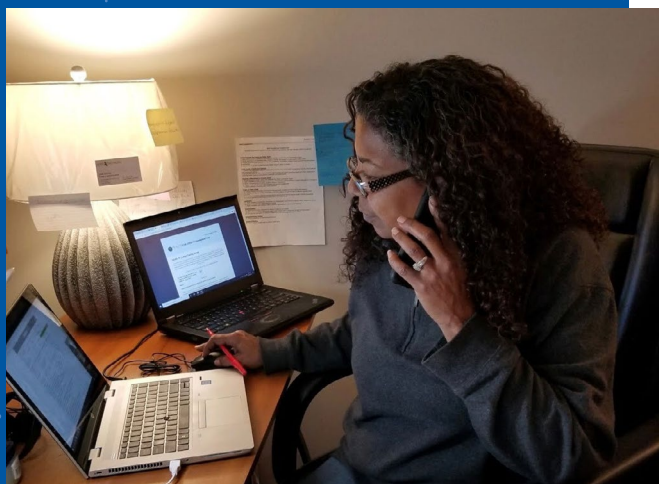
Since April of 2020, Kent County has maintained a comprehensive Data Dashboard at [www.accesskent.com/Health/covid-19-data.htm](http://www.accesskent.com/Health/covid-19-data.htm). Updated daily, the dashboard provides the community real-time data on county- and statewide cases, deaths, positivity rates and other critical information.

## Community Partnerships and Public Education

### Public Sector Partners

A pandemic is no time for territorialism. Collaboration among public sector partners has been more important than ever in ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of services to residents, nonprofits and businesses throughout Kent County over the past year.

Kent County Administration, Health Department and Emergency Management met regularly with local units of government and law enforcement personnel.



Contact tracer Loren Dunning with the Black Impact Collaborative



Public health nurse and contact tracer Laura Kuilema

Outcomes of these meetings included:

- Identified current and anticipated COVID-19 related expenditures which allowed the board subcommittee to evaluate the needs of our local units of government for funding allocation.
- Shared data on the path of the pandemic and best practices to mitigate the spread of the virus.
- Provided information on State and local public health orders and impact on operations.

## Race, Equity and Inclusion Team

COVID-19 has not had an equal impact across racial and ethnic lines. In fact, Black and brown Americans have experienced disproportionately high infection and death rates nationwide and in our own communities. Early on, COVID-19 death rates among Black residents in Michigan was nearly five times higher than among white, non-Hispanic individuals.

The Kent County Health Department began tracking demographic variations in local rates of infection in early April 2020. While African American residents make up about 10% of the Kent County population, in April 2020 they accounted for about 20% of diagnosed cases of COVID-19 – a rate 100% higher than their proportion of the population. People identifying as Hispanic also make up about 10% of the population. In May 2020, they accounted for 44% of diagnosed cases in Kent County – a rate 400% higher than their proportion of the population. At that time, people identifying as Asian were diagnosed at a rate 300% higher than their proportion of the county population.

To address these disparities, **health department leadership and the department's Race, Equity and Inclusion Team have met regularly with community groups that represent diverse populations to ensure their voices carry weight in selecting community testing sites, developing and sharing educational materials, conducting contact tracing and ensuring equitable access to other important resources.**

These efforts have had an impact. By June 2020, the Asian population case rates normalized to rates at or below their overall percentage of the population and have remained at these levels. Case rates have declined among Black, Hispanic and Latinx residents, as well, and as of April 2021, stand about 30% higher than their respective proportions of the population.

This important work continues as the priority shifts to vaccine access, education and advocacy. The aim is to break down historically rooted distrust of medical research and the healthcare system and encourage high-risk populations to take the vaccine.



*Asian Community Outreach distributed Lunar New Year baskets to vulnerable seniors throughout Kent County*



# Race, Equity and Inclusion Community Partners

Many thanks to our partners for  
their trust, insight and tireless work.

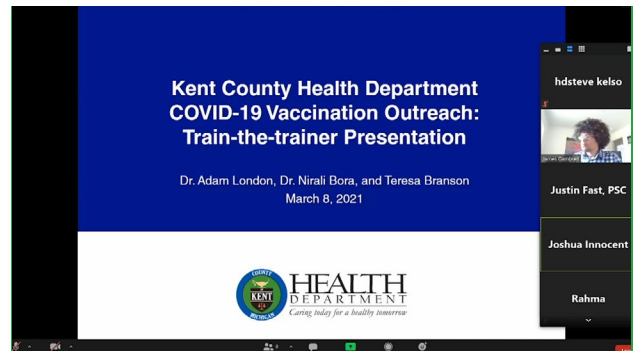
They include:

- Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan
- Baxter Community Center
- Bethany Christian Services
- The Black Impact Collaborative  
powered by The Institute of Ubuntu

*(Proactive, AGO Design Group, Baptist Fellowship, Baxter Community Center, Brigham Consulting, LLC, Endless Opportunities, Family Outreach Center, Forty Acres Enterprises, Genesis Consulting Group, GRABB, Grand Rapids Urban League, Greater Grand Rapids Branch NAACP, Greater Grand Rapids National Panhellenic Council, Kent County Black Elected Officials, Lead 616, Muhammad Study Group of Grand Rapids – Nation of Islam, Prince Hall Masons, Project GREEN, WYGR)*



Dallas Lenear, Chair of the Black Impact Collaborative, and Christopher Bendekgey, KCHD Public Health Division Director, at a LINC UP testing day last June



REI Team conducts “Train the Trainer” session for organizations providing outreach to the immigrant and refugee communities

- Black Nurses Association
- Bhutanese Community of West Michigan
- Cedar Springs Baptist Church
- Cedar Springs Schools
- City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation – Garfield Park Gym
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
- Disability Advocates of Kent County
- East Hills Council of Neighbors
- A Glimpse of Africa
- Godfrey Lee Public Schools – Early Childhood Education Center
- Godwin Heights Middle School
- Grand Rapids African American Health Institute
- Grand Rapids Public Library
- Grand Rapids Public Schools – Cesar Chavez
- GR Pride Center
- Heart of West Michigan United Way 2-1-1
- Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
- Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force
- Kent County Essential Needs Task Force
- Kent County Health Connect
- Kent District Library



## • LatinxGR

(Latina Network, Latino Community Coalition, Urban Core Collective, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and West Michigan Latino Network)

## • LifeQuest Ministries

## • LINC UP

## • Migrant Legal Aid

## • MOKA

## • North Kent Connect

## • Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

## • The Potter's House

## • Refugee Education Center

## • Rolling on the Road

## • Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association

## • Samaritas

## • Seeds of Promise

## • Senior Neighbors

## • Treetops Collective

## • Visually Impaired Persons for Progress

## • West Michigan Asian American Association

## • West Michigan Friendship Center

## • Wyoming Senior Center

## • YMCA Camp Pandalouan

We also thank our dedicated community connectors who linked us with leaders in the African American, Burmese, Congolese, Ethiopian, Karen, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Nepali, Native American, Sudanese, Vietnamese, disability, and refugee communities to further increase COVID-19 awareness and education.

**Pruebas comunitarias de COVID-19 GRATUITAS**

Por favor inscribase por internet en [accesskent.com/Health/covid-19-testing.htm](https://accesskent.com/Health/covid-19-testing.htm) o llame al **616-632-7200** para averiguar dónde se encuentra el centro que le resulte más práctico.

**¿Quién puede ser examinado? CUALQUIER PERSONA**  
¡Cualquier persona de 6 meses en adelante puede tomar la prueba!

**¿Cuánto cuesta esto? ¡GRATIS!**  
El costo es GRATIS pero por favor trae tu tarjeta del seguro si tienes una.

**Las pruebas están disponibles dentro de la Galería en LINC UP**

Donde	Cuando
1167 Madison Ave SE Grand Rapids, MI 49507	Martes y miércoles 1:30 PM - 7 PM Viernes - 9:30 AM - 5 PM

**Lo que debe saber ANTES de ir:**

- Lo alentamos a inscribirse. Por favor inscribase antes de ir al centro de pruebas.
- Por favor lleve consigo su tarjeta del seguro, si la tuviera. No se necesita ningún otro tipo de identificación.
- Por favor use mascarilla al llegar al lugar de la prueba.

**Lo que debe saber DESPUES de ir:**

- Lo llamarán para darle sus resultados en un plazo de 48 a 72 horas. Si el resultado fuera positivo, recibirá una llamada adicional del Kent County Health Department (Departamento de Salud del Condado de Kent) para hacerle una breve entrevista.
- Para obtener más información, entre en [accesskent.com/Health/coronavirus.htm](https://accesskent.com/Health/coronavirus.htm)

**MIỄN PHÍ Xét Nghiệm COVID-19 cho Cộng Đồng**

**AI có thể được xét nghiệm? BẤT KỲ AI**  
Bất kỳ ai từ 6 tháng tuổi trở lên đều có thể được xét nghiệm

**Chi phí xét nghiệm là bao nhiêu? MIỄN PHÍ**  
Xét nghiệm là MIỄN PHÍ, nhưng vui lòng đem theo thẻ bảo hiểm nếu quý vị có.

**Việc đăng ký được khuyến khích, nhưng không bắt buộc.**  
Quý vị có thể đăng ký trực tuyến tại [accesskent.com/covid-testing](https://accesskent.com/covid-testing) hoặc bằng cách gọi số 616-632-7200.

**Địa điểm**  
Những địa điểm sau đây được hỗ trợ bởi hoặc phối hợp với Kent County Health Department.

Baxter Community Health Center	LINC UP
935 Baxter St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506 Mở cửa 1 giờ 30 chiều - 4 giờ chiều Thứ Ba và Thứ Năm	1167 Madison Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507 Mở cửa 1 giờ 30 chiều - 7 giờ tối Thứ Hai và Thứ Tư, 9 giờ 30 sáng - 5 giờ chiều Thứ Sáu

**Tìm các địa điểm khác tại [accesskent.com/covid-testing](https://accesskent.com/covid-testing)**

**Điều quý vị cần biết - TRƯỚC KHI ĐẾN:**

- Quý vị được khuyến khích đăng ký. Vui lòng đăng ký trước khi đến địa điểm xét nghiệm.
- Vui lòng đem theo thẻ bảo hiểm nếu có. Quý vị không cần mang theo giấy tờ tùy thân khác.
- Vui lòng đeo khẩu trang khi đến điểm xét nghiệm.
- Quý vị sẽ nhận được một cuộc gọi thông báo kết quả trong vòng 48-72 giờ. Nếu kết quả là dương tính, quý vị sẽ nhận thêm một cuộc gọi từ Kent County Health Department để thực hiện một cuộc phỏng vấn ngắn với quý vị.
- Để biết thêm thông tin, hãy truy cập [accesskent.com/covid-testing](https://accesskent.com/covid-testing)

Public health materials were translated into more than a dozen languages



Church Task Force leaders bless the West Michigan Vaccine Clinic (Photo courtesy of Spectrum Health)

## Kent County Church Task Force

A task force made up of Kent County Health Department staff and faith leaders from throughout Kent County met on a regular basis to share information and best practices, and to collaborate on solutions to some of the primary challenges houses of worship faced during the pandemic. They partnered to develop a website where faith leaders could share information of interest to their colleagues. They also drafted, circulated and co-signed two important pledges to help mitigate the spread of the virus. The first was a pledge to hold virtual worship services following a surge in COVID-19 cases leading into the holiday season. The second was to serve as ambassadors advocating for the vaccine among their colleagues, congregations, members and community leaders.

**“Faith leaders know that we must protect the individual health of our most vulnerable citizens if we all want to share the blessings of a healthy community.”**

- Rev. Khary J. Bridgewater, Coordinator,  
Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force

## Education Team

### K-12 SCHOOLS

To say that schools had to shift teaching and learning models during the pandemic would be an understatement. Since March 2020, Michigan's K-12 schools, administrators, teachers and staff have had to plan, re-plan, flex and operate through statewide, regional and district-wide closures; fully online and hybrid learning; and in-person learning with unprecedented safety measures in place to guard against the spread of the virus.

To assist Kent District schools as they sort through the uncertainty and overcome the challenges of the past year, the Kent County Health Department assigned a liaison to meet weekly with area superintendents. These discussions have focused on key concerns, including:

- Data to continually monitor the status of the pandemic and its impact on schools
- Effective mitigation strategies to help keep schools open and safe
- Decision making regarding when schools should be kept open, implement a hybrid model, or move to all-virtual
- Coordinating the effort to vaccinate educators and all school staff

**The County and KCHD communications teams also came alongside educators and provided COVID-19 communications toolkits, health screening awareness yard signs, and other resource materials to inform, build awareness, break down barriers and fear, and advocate for adoption of best practices to help keep students, teachers and staff healthy.**

### COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Kent County Health Department Education Team members also attend regular meetings with area college and university representatives hosted by Grand Rapids Community College. The team is available to answer questions about topics like contact tracing and team sports, and to work alongside the institutions to identify possible outbreaks and provide mitigation guidance.

The team also participates in twice-weekly calls with the Ottawa County Department of Public Health and Grand Valley State University.

## Public Health Education

Well beyond our REI and Education Teams, the County and health department communications teams embraced the task of providing essential public health information to all residents of Kent County.

**Information has been shared in multiple languages on all available platforms** – websites, social media, radio, television, print, billboards and newsletters. We have engaged the assistance of local media, community groups, neighborhood centers, houses of worship, healthcare providers, employers, schools and others willing and able to expand our reach into all parts of the community.

Platforms of note include three websites:

- ACCESSKENT.COM/HEALTH/CORONAVIRUS established in February 2020 – The Kent County Health Department's comprehensive source for up-to-date information on the coronavirus, regional data, test sites, vaccine, employee and employer resources and more: <https://www.accesskent.com/Health/coronavirus.htm>
- KENT COUNTY BACK TO WORK, launched in May 2020 in partnership with Meijer, Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and Spectrum Health. Offers safety guidelines, best practices and resources for reopening and operating Kent County businesses: <https://kentcountybacktowork.com/>
- VACCINATEWESTMI.COM, launched on December 15, 2020 in partnership with a consortium of West Michigan area health departments, healthcare systems, colleges and universities and pharmacies, serves as the region's go-to source for information on the vaccine: <https://vaccinatwestmi.com/>

Other important tools include:

- Weekly [COVID-19 video updates](#) from KCHD Director, Dr. Adam London (*English, Spanish and ASL*)
- Media relations – Maintained a regular flow of [media statements, news releases and news conferences](#) to keep the public up to date on infection rates, public health orders and recommendations, testing, relief funding and PPE, vaccines and other critical information
- Multi-lingual paid and [social media campaigns](#)
- Webinars for employers, restaurant and bar owners and employees, and County employees
- Targeted community newsletters
- Speaker's bureau of KCHD and County officials for community meetings



*In his October 29 video, Dr. Adam London demonstrates how masks block droplets that carry the coronavirus. ASL interpreter Erica Allen of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services translates.*



# Advertising Campaign



## BILLBOARDS

250 billboards across 3 campaigns: COVID-19 multilingual campaign, *Close to Home*, and *I Love You So...* holiday campaign



## NEWSPAPERS

Weekly Spanish language advertising in: El Vocero and El Informador (8 months at 4 issues per month)  
Holiday advertising in: Grand Rapids Times and La Voz (Spanish language) (1 month)



## RADIO

Radio ads in La Poderosa (Spanish language ads) and Power 91.9



## TELEVISION

\$200,000 ad buys on local stations and OTA: multiple ads and PSAs including the *I Love You So...* and *Close to Home* campaigns.



## YOUTUBE

Multiple ads across YouTube including *Close to Home* campaign (110,000 views; English and Spanish) and *I Love You So...* campaign (310,000 views).



## SPOTIFY ADS

Bilingual *Close to Home* campaign on Spotify garnering 156,733 ad plays.



## FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM

Bilingual campaigns including:  
*KC Takeout Challenge* – Reaching 182,977 people  
*I Love You So...* Holiday Campaign – Reaching 465,628 people  
*Close to Home* Campaign – Reaching 89,007 people  
Testing Site Ads – Reaching 46,647 people and garnering 3,212 link clicks



COVID-19 advertising “I Love You So...” campaign



COVID-19 advertising “Close to Home” campaign



## CARES Act Funding

As CARES Act funding was debated and passed by Congress in the spring of 2020, the Kent County Board of Commissioners began by establishing a COVID-19 Relief Subcommittee.

The subcommittee's role was to identify all of the available federal and state funding and the allowable uses of each fund and recommend to the Board of Commissioners guidelines for disbursement of the dollars ultimately allocated to Kent County.

The County was awarded \$114.6 million in Federal CARES Act funding on April 24, 2020.

The Board of Commissioners COVID-19 Relief Subcommittee convened its first meeting on May 7 and presented the COVID-19 Relief Subcommittee Report to the full board on June 11. The group met 17 times over the course of six months, with more than a dozen community groups, foundations, chambers and agencies presenting at subcommittee meetings, and representatives from several County departments, offices and agencies providing vital data, information and resources.

As the local administrator of CARES Act funding, Kent County administration used the findings and recommendations of the subcommittee as the blueprint for a highly collaborative approach to allocating resources to the community.



*GRow1000 received \$75K in CARES Act funding for its youth job training program. LifeQuest Ministries partnered with GRow1000 to provide on-the-job training*

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS COVID-19 RELIEF SUBCOMMITTEE:



**BOC Chair**  
Mandy Bolter



**BOC Vice Chair**  
Stan Stek

#### Commissioners:



Emily Brieve



Diane Jones



Roger Morgan



Stan Ponstein



Phil Skaggs



Jim Talen



Robert Womack





Commissioner Brieve and Chair Bolter presenting check to Caledonia Public Schools



Commissioner Ponstein presenting check to Title Boxing



Commissioner Hennessy presenting check to The Comedy Project



Commissioner Sparks presenting check to Kentwood Public Schools



Commissioner Womack presenting check to GR Street Food

## Business Assistance Grants

**\$34.24M.** The largest pool of 2020 CARES Act dollars went to business assistance grants. **Kent County partnered with the Grand Rapids Chamber to solicit and review grant applications and allocate funding to assist 3,545 local small businesses with grants of \$5K-\$40K.** This included an initial round of \$25M in grants in June 2020 and supplemental funding for businesses hit hard by the second state shutdown in November and for small businesses with 25 to 50 employees.

**The County and Chamber partnered with local organizations to expand reach into urban, suburban and rural communities throughout the county, including communities of color, and among businesses that may have language barriers. In all, 37% of this funding directly served women-owned businesses, and 47% went to minority-owned businesses.**



Commissioner Jones presenting check to Larkin's Restaurant





Commissioner Skaggs presenting check to East Grand Rapids Public Schools



Commissioner Wooden presenting check to Northview Public Schools

## Chamber of Commerce Assistance Program

**\$334K.** This program provided grants to several local chambers of commerce to support them as they provided assistance to their members and constituents and helped spread the word about County relief programs.

## Kent County Operational Response

**\$32.62M.** Given the breadth of frontline services impacted by the pandemic – from the health department to programs for vulnerable populations to the county correctional facility – Kent County's COVID-19 -related costs have been tremendous. Expenditures of note include COVID-19 testing (\$2.53M), contact tracing (\$2.48M), public education & outreach (\$2.3M), homeless isolation (\$1.9M\*), corrections (\$5.1M), Sheriff (\$5.53M) and employer PPE (\$955K). Vaccine distribution planning got underway before the end of the year, and \$2.5 million was allocated to that effort in 2020.

*\*Kent County has applied for a FEMA grant to reimburse these expenditures. The County is awaiting response as to whether this grant will be awarded.*

## Local Units of Government COVID-19 Response

**\$14.65M.** In May, County staff surveyed cities and townships throughout the county to estimate their coronavirus-related expenses through the end of the year. The County provided a total of \$14,645,000 to 32 local units of government to use toward expenses such as IT upgrades, PPE, testing and other COVID-19 -related costs.

## Nonprofit Assistance Grants

**\$9.36M.** Kent County provided \$9.36 million in federal CARES Act dollars through the Kent County Nonprofit Organization COVID-19 Grant Fund. The grants aimed to assist local nonprofit health and human service organizations located in Kent County serving individuals and communities that have been directly affected by COVID-19.



County Administrator Wayman Britt presenting check to New City Kids Inc.

The County partnered with Heart of West Michigan United Way to solicit and review grant applications and allocate funding. **In all, 186 nonprofit organizations received grants ranging from \$5K-\$150K.**

Awardees assisted diverse communities throughout the county, reporting that those who benefited from their programs included youth, families, seniors, refugees, immigrants, non-English speakers, people experiencing homelessness and others. The aim of the funding was to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on households and individuals experiencing food and housing insecurity, those unable to cover basic needs and those that require support for physical and mental health. Other services focused on literacy, language barriers, education and after-school programming, transportation and employment. In all, 38% of the agencies identified as being led by a person of color and 57% identified as being led by a woman.

### Personal Protective Equipment

**\$2.54M.** Kent County spent more than \$2.5 million to provide PPE kits at no cost to qualified small businesses and other small employers. The Kent County Purchasing Division used its buying power to secure the PPE at a low cost and established a web-based portal where employers could place orders. The department continuously surveyed employers and adjusted contents of the PPE kits based on their needs. **In all, local employers received 6,443 PPE kits through this program.**



PPE Program

### OTHER COMMUNITY NEEDS

#### Black Impact Collaborative

**\$74.5K.** The Black Impact Collaborative was awarded a \$74,500 grant to develop and produce ten 30- and 60-second radio spots with corresponding digital and print ads for use on social media, in newspapers and in newsletters. The campaign addressed various topics related to COVID-19.

#### Experience Grand Rapids

**\$820K.** Due to the impact travel restrictions and business shutdowns have had on leisure and business travel and the subsequent reductions in hotel tax and assessment collections, Experience Grand Rapids was forced to make drastic reductions to marketing and convention sales initiatives in March 2020.

In August, Kent County allocated \$820,000 to Experience Grand Rapids to invest in programs to accelerate recovery of the tourism and meetings industry in Kent County. The recovery investments were made to attract short-term business for Kent County hotels, food and beverage businesses, retail, and local attractions, and to secure and reschedule meetings and convention business for the future.



Grand Rapids Community College was awarded a nonprofit assistance grant to support its food pantry





First Steps Kent was awarded a nonprofit assistance grant to provide cleaning and other supplies to childcare providers throughout the county

## First Steps Kent - Child Care Provider Grants

**\$450K.** In September 2020, Kent County awarded \$450,000 in CARES Act dollars to First Steps Kent to assist licensed child care providers in meeting new health and safety requirements. The organization used funding to provide PPE, cleaning and safety supplies and easy-to-clean toys to licensed child care centers and in-home providers throughout the county. Additionally, it is using the grant to provide technical support, such as assistance in applying for past unemployment benefits and in tax preparation, to these providers. **In all, First Steps Kent provided support to 322 licensed providers serving 7,785 children across 20 Kent County zip codes.**

## Grand Rapids-Kent County Convention/Arena Authority

**\$1.99M.** The CAA received nearly \$2 million to install state-of-the-art air purification systems and touchless drinking fountains, and to purchase new sanitation and personal protective equipment for the Van Andel Arena, DeVos Place and DeVos Performance Hall. The air purification system was an important upgrade that allowed the health department, Spectrum Health and Mercy Health Saint Mary's to open one of the largest vaccination clinics in the country at DeVos Place in January 2021.



Commissioner Stek presenting check to Walker Barber Stylist

## Hispanic Center of Western Michigan

**\$217K.** The Hispanic Center of Western Michigan was awarded \$217,000 toward their Family Support Services and Workforce Development Program. The services work to break down barriers to self-sufficiency and independence. Services include assistance with applications, filings and forms, resume building, job placement, career planning and training. The programs also provide referrals to partner agencies for mental health services, victim support, clothing, transportation, food, housing assistance and medical and dental care.



Commissioners Kallman and Brieve presenting check to Byron Center Public Schools

Additionally, HCWM used grant funding to continue to provide free and reduced-cost translation and interpretation services to West Michigan nonprofits and businesses in order to bridge the gap in language accessibility and support those who are suffering most.

**In all, HCWM used grant dollars to make an impact on the lives of 12,676 individuals.**

## John Ball Zoo

**\$200K.** The John Ball Zoo used a \$200,000 grant to cover COVID-19 related equipment and supplies such as hand washing and sanitizing stations, PPE and signage; added maintenance costs; costs for pandemic-related construction requirements and delays; and a COVID-19 response video and member survey.

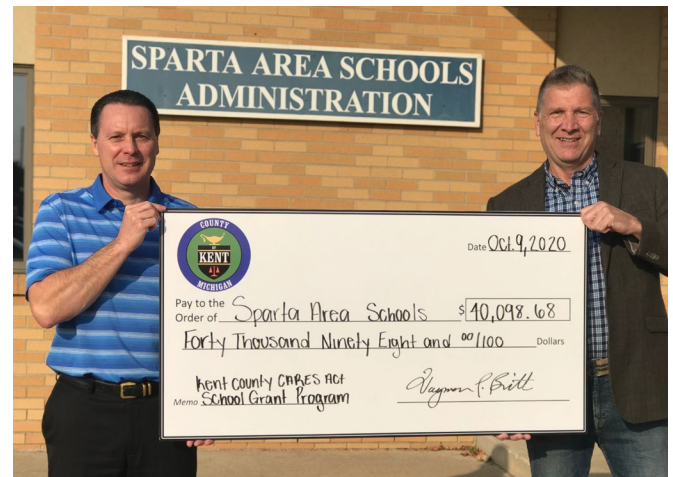
## K-12 School Grants

**\$2.95M.** Kent District schools were awarded nearly \$3 million in CARES Act funding associated with safely reopening in the fall of 2020. The grants were based on the number of students enrolled in each school in 2019, with schools that accepted funding receiving approximately \$24 per student. **Grants were designed to help schools safely bring students back into the classroom and offer quality virtual learning.** Schools were provided with flexibility in how they used the funds including purchase of personal protection equipment and sanitation supplies, building and classroom modifications, technology costs necessary for enhanced virtual learning and financing mental healthcare and school nurses.

All Kent County schools – public, private and charter – were eligible for this funding.



Chair Bolter and Commissioner Thiel presenting check to Forest Hills Public Schools



Commissioner Antor presenting check to Sparta Area Schools

## Mitigation of Homelessness

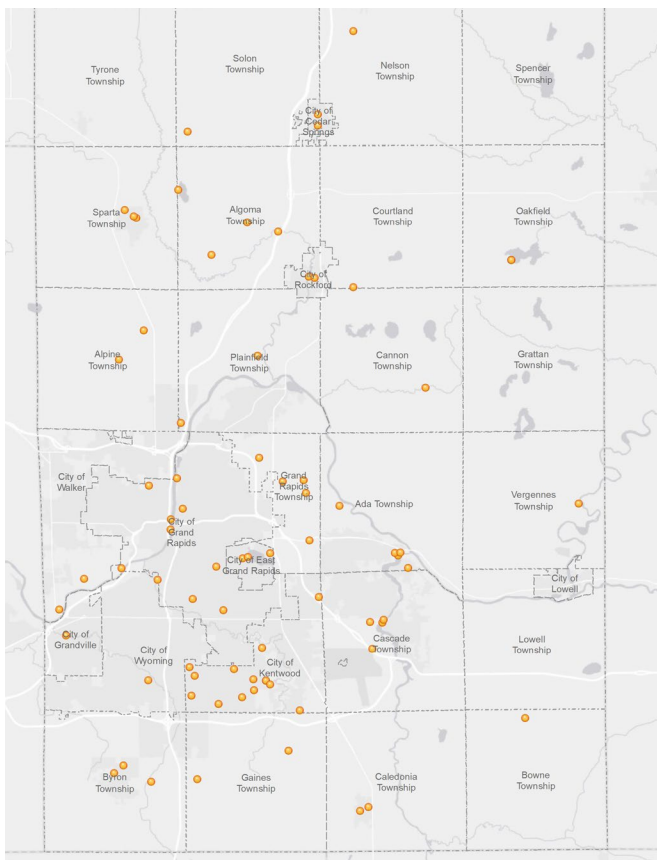
**\$8.2M.** This pandemic has shined a light on tremendous need. Within our generous and thriving community, many live on the edge. Missing a paycheck or two can push some of our neighbors onto the streets. And many already experiencing homelessness face even bigger challenges as they struggle to find safe shelter.

In addition to our partnerships to establish emergency and isolation shelters, Kent County allocated nearly \$3.5 million in revenue from the Community Services Block Grant CARES Act Supplemental program, Coronavirus Relief Fund, and the Emergency Solutions Grant to help mitigate homelessness. This funding went to grants to assist community members with utilities, rent arrearages, and mortgage payments. A majority of this grant funding has been extended to 2022.

The Board of Commissioners also allocated \$4.7 million in CARES Act funding to affordable housing projects (\$2.18M), rent assistance (\$1.43M), an emergency overflow shelter at the Purple East building in downtown Grand Rapids (\$165K\*), and hotel/motel vouchers for people experiencing homelessness (\$920K\*).

*\*Kent County has applied for a FEMA grant to reimburse these expenditures. The County is awaiting response as to whether this grant will be awarded.*





*78 public hot spots opened Wi-Fi access to residents throughout the county*

## Wi-Fi Hot Spots

**\$476K.** Connectivity is essential in order for children to learn virtually and for adults to work from home. Yet 14% of Kent County households lack a broadband internet subscription.

**Kent County allocated \$476,000 in CARES Act funding and partnered with The Right Place to install and fund the data for 78 emergency public Wi-Fi hot spots on township-owned land, all County parks and rural and urban locations across the county.** Additionally, the Kent ISD purchased 11 Wi-Fi hot spots to help students connect to their virtual classrooms.

## NAACP Grand Rapids

**\$100K.** The Greater Grand Rapids NAACP used a \$100,000 grant to manage and execute COVID-19 community “give back” and testing days. The organization produced and executed virtual town halls to help businesses stay in business and to connect them with available resources such as the Kent County PPE program, the Business Assistance Grant and Small Business Recovery Programs, The Right Place, and other resources identified by the County.

The organization will also put grant funds toward four new positions dedicated to community outreach and research exclusively related to COVID-19. Work includes creating podcasts and other marketing and messaging to guide young adult listeners through COVID-19-related challenges.

## Youth Violence and Crime Prevention Grants

**\$483K.** The pandemic's tremendous toll on the mental health and economic well being of our residents was reflected in many ways, including a significant uptick in violent crime in our community. Kent County partnered with Heart of West Michigan United Way to solicit and review applications and allocate \$483,000 in community violence prevention and education grants to qualified nonprofits throughout the county.



## Other Kent County Operations, Offices and Services

Every County department, office and agency felt the impact of COVID-19 and adjusted operations to continue serving the people of Kent County over the past year. Here is how some of our teams adapted.

### County Administrative Operations

On March 18, 2020 Kent County Administration announced that we were curtailing in-person services and implementing workplace policy changes to more effectively comply with social distancing recommendations. We identified essential services, evaluated which operations could transition from in-person to phone and online service and determined which team members could do their jobs from home. Then we put added safety measures in place for those services that continued in-person.

Following a full analysis by fiscal services, human resources and legal counsel, we implemented COVID-19 compliance and mitigation measures – including daily health screenings for anyone working onsite – as well as new, more flexible, leave policies. We also issued a comprehensive *Kent County Employee COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan*. To assist employees in shifting to remote work, our IT department issued more laptops with enhanced security tools, encryption and a platform for better managing cloud-based applications.

On the next few pages, we have highlighted how some specific offices, departments and agencies have continued to serve the people of Kent County over the past year.



*Sheriff's Lt. Deanna Bergstrom is ready to head out on patrol*

## Law Enforcement & Courts

Our County criminal justice operations are among the many essential services that could not simply shut down during the pandemic. Instead, they adapted while continuing to provide the high level of public safety and judicial services our residents expect and deserve.

### Kent County Sheriff's Office

Kent County Sheriff Michelle LaJoye-Young and her office implemented several safety measures and procedural changes that affected both patrol and correctional facility operations.

#### KENT COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

**Reduced flow in and out of the facility.** To reduce the likelihood that COVID-19 would be introduced into the facility, the Sheriff's Office limited those entering to essential traffic. Recognizing the impact this would have on the inmate population, **KCSO arranged for free video visits and phone calls for all of those incarcerated, expanded video visits for professional visitors and clergy, and purchased tablets to expand the administration of inmate programming and to increase communication options for inmates to their loved ones.** In addition, as was the case throughout the community, the Sheriff's Office expanded use of electronic visits with medical professions.

**Reduced population.** It was very important to reduce the number of incarcerated individuals to allow for proper separation. To do this, the Sheriff's Office worked with area courts and carefully evaluated each case to determine if it was possible to transfer an individual to a community based program or defer the sentence to a safer time. As a result, the Kent County Sheriff's Office Correctional Facility brought its average daily population down from 1,087 in February 2020 to 641 by June 2020. As of February 15, 2021, the average daily population has hovered around 800.

**Disinfection.** Between March 13, 2020, and February 15, 2021, a Skytron UVC system has been used over 2,000 hours to disinfect and help sterilize areas of the facility on a rotating basis.

## PATROL

During routine patrols and while handling calls for service, Kent County Sheriff's deputies minimize face-to-face contact when possible. Deputies handle property crimes and non-urgent calls for service over the phone. If personal contact with an individual is necessary, deputies attempt to speak with them in an open-air environment and outside if possible.



*Kent County Dispatchers show off their masks, handmade by one of our dispatcher's mothers early in the pandemic.*

## GENERAL OPERATIONS

Many divisions, including law enforcement and the emergency communications center, initiated a staffing rotation to prepare and allow for any COVID-19 outbreaks within the department while maintaining vital services to the residents of Kent County.

The Kent County Sheriff's Office also implemented a video production team tasked with creating innovative video communication pieces, both for internal debriefing and training and for engaging and informing residents.

## LENDING A HAND

Sheriff's Office personnel stepped in to assist in various capacities to help meet the overwhelming needs during this crisis.

For instance, Public Information Officers lent their time and expertise to the Kent County administration and Kent County Health Department communications teams in the early months of the pandemic to help manage the constant flow of critical information to area residents.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Kent County Emergency Management, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Office, stepped up to help the community. They served as a vital partner in a collaborative effort to help mitigate the spread of the virus among individuals experiencing homelessness (*see Part 4: Community Response, Relief and Recovery, below*).

Emergency management also worked alongside County Administration to apply for more than \$1.5 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants to reimburse costs associated with mitigating COVID-19 in the unhoused population, and they worked closely with local units of government throughout the county to help them identify and apply for much needed state and federal assistance.

Additionally, they were instrumental in the Alternate Care Site planning during the height of the pandemic.

Finally, emergency management was called upon to assist with the onboarding and scheduling of thousands of community volunteers to support non-clinical roles within the West Michigan Vaccine Clinic at DeVos Place. Working in tandem, the Kent County Correctional Facility took on the responsibility to run background checks on more than 2,500 volunteer candidates in under one week, enabling a process to ensure that every volunteer was vetted in an equitable manner.

## County Courts

In mid-March 2020, Kent County Courts implemented procedures to reduce the spread of the virus. Depending on the nature of the cases under consideration, they adopted all-virtual, limited in-person or hybrid formats in an effort to maintain operational continuity while complying with health and safety directives. To ensure secure virtual hearings, they updated cameras, microphones, software and other technology in all County courtrooms. They, in conjunction with the Kent County Clerk's Office, allowed email filings and electronic signature for certain types of cases.

Working with guidelines from state court administrators and the health department, the 17th Circuit Court – which temporarily stopped all jury trials in March 2020 – resumed limited in-person hearings on March 1, 2021. At that time, 950 criminal cases were awaiting action. Knowing that the delays have been a struggle for victims, witnesses, legal teams and those awaiting trial, 17th Circuit Court Judge Mark Trusock's priority is to clear the backlog in the safest manner possible.

## Other Critical Services

### Corporate Counsel Office

As the situation changed by the day, Kent County Corporate Counsel Linda Howell, and Assistant Corporate Counsels Sangeeta Ghosh and Craig Paull, were challenged with the daunting task of providing legal counsel and services to the board of commissioners, County administration, and departments, offices and agencies across the organization – often with little to no lead time.



*Hispanic Center Food Distribution*

The agile team worked countless hours to keep up with the demand for new contracts and general counsel in this unprecedented time.

### Department of Public Works

When it became clear that it was only a matter of time before the coronavirus reached West Michigan, the Kent County Department of Public Works began planning how to operate during a pandemic.

Following recommendations from the CDC and the National Waste and Recycling Association, the department implemented distancing and PPE protocols to ensure employee and public safety.

Waste hauling continued throughout the year. But the department paused operations at its recycling facilities on March 27, 2020 because recycling requires a high level of handling and sorting. In addition to worker safety, the shutdown was necessary due to disruptions in recycling markets for processed materials. As other manufacturing processors shut down their facilities due to the pandemic, Kent County DPW's ability to get recyclables to processors and end-users was limited.

After ensuring that all recommended safety measures were in place, DPW resumed recycling operations on May 4.



## Kent County Clerk's Office

Clerk Lisa Posthumus Lyons and the Election Department utilized CARES Act dollars to launch a pre-General Election **#KentCountyVotes** outreach campaign. The campaign utilized social media, radio ads and tele-townhall meetings to emphasize that in-person and absentee ballot voting would be safe and secure. It provided guidance on voter registration as well as requesting and securely returning an absentee ballot. Finally, the campaign stressed that Kent County elections are always fair, accurate and transparent, but that due to the expected number of absentee ballots, it may take longer to tabulate results.

## Kent County Community Action

**Over the past year, Kent County Community Action hosted five food distribution events and provided more than 1.5 million pounds of food to eligible residents.**

The agency also used nearly \$1.8 million in federal relief funding to assist families with internet and device access; provide stipends to migrant and seasonal farmworkers who needed to isolate due to COVID-19; provide 40,000 masks as part of *Mask up Michigan*; assist individuals and families with hygiene kits, cleaning supplies and food boxes; and provide emergency assistance for burials, medical supplies, car insurance, home repairs, and other critical needs for those adversely affected by the pandemic and to mitigate the spread of the virus.

# #KentCountyVotes Campaign Reach



### SOCIAL MEDIA

968,368 ad impressions reached  
198,653 individuals in Kent County



### RADIO

30-second ad ran 1,141 times  
on 4 stations



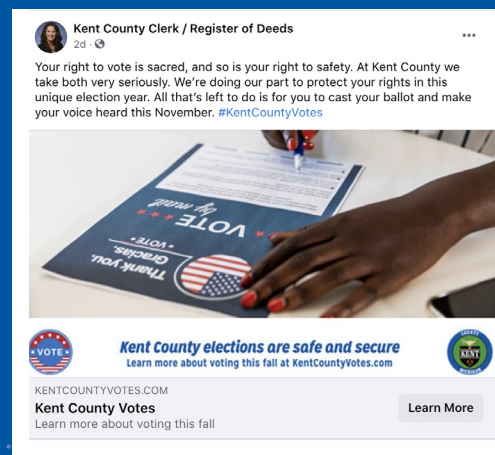
### TELE-TOWNHALLS

Two tele-townhalls. 40K Kent County voters invited to participate.



### WEBSITE

Kent County Election Department website rebranded KentCountyVotes.com. Re-designed to make voter registration, absentee ballot requests, and locating ballot drop boxes and polling locations easier.



#KentCountyVotes Campaign

## Kent County Parks

At the onset of the pandemic, the Kent County Parks Department held off on opening many facilities and buildings in the spring of 2020, but trails and outdoor park areas remained open and available for the public to use and enjoy. While almost all indoor entertainment was prohibited, the parks offered a free space for patrons to exercise and play, while staying safe and socially distanced. In fact, **2020 was one of the busiest summers for parks and trails in the history of the department.** As guidelines from the state and local health departments permitted, the parks department was later able to open Wabasis Campground, Kaufman Golf Course, Millennium Park Beach and Splashpad, and park restrooms—all with enhanced safety and cleaning protocols.

## Kent County Veterans Services

With regular in-person veteran programs canceled due to the pandemic, Kent County Veterans Services shifted thousands of dollars in funding to provide much-needed grocery vouchers for area veterans. The agency also significantly increased the amount offered to qualified veterans for things like rent assistance and utility shut off protection.

## Kent MSU Extension

While this university-community partnership previously offered some virtual programming, they have seamlessly transitioned nearly every program to a digital platform over the past year. Then the organization launched a one-stop-shop resource page listing all of the available remote learning opportunities — many of which are free of charge to residents.



*GVSU Cook Leadership Academy at Millennium Park*



The organization, founded on agriculture and agribusiness, has extended programming to horticulture, natural resources, youth and volunteer development, health and nutrition, and community development.

This past year, the youth development program — one of their most popular with 20,000 enrollees — provided lessons that served to supplement an unprecedented school year for participating high school students. And, as the stress and uncertainty created by the pandemic had a far-reaching impact, MSU Extension launched a six-class *Stress Less with Mindfulness* program to help adults effectively manage their stress and anger. These classes attracted participants from across the state and nation.

By expanding its online platform, MSU Extension grew its reach and continued to serve entrepreneurs, veterans, youth and other community members. As a result, **Kent County residents attended 681 programs offered by MSU Extension last year.**



KCCA PPE Distribution



Hispanic Center Food Distribution



Early in the pandemic, Dr. Adam London welcomed Crystal Bui of Su Alterations to the health department as she delivered a supply of handcrafted masks





# Community Response, Relief and Recovery

## Community Support Partnerships

*"The true measure of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable members."*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

### Isolation and Emergency Housing for People Experiencing Homelessness

As infection rates rose, people experiencing homelessness were uniquely vulnerable. Those who tested positive but had mild cases had to isolate in a safe environment. Area shelters were already stretched to their limits as they worked to safely provide services to their clients while mitigating the spread of the virus.

In early April, the Kent County Health Department partnered with Guiding Light to establish its facility on S. Division Ave. as an isolation center for people experiencing homelessness who had tested positive for COVID-19 or were awaiting test results. Health department staff worked to assess medical and operational needs and transition the facility into an isolation center. The partnership received critical support and supplies from the City of Grand Rapids, area nonprofits, community hospitals, Amway and Meijer.

In late April, the Kent County Emergency Management & Homeland Security team



*Guiding Light*

partnered with City of Grand Rapids Emergency Management, the Diocese of Grand Rapids, Mel Trotter Ministries and the Salvation Army to establish a temporary shelter for women experiencing homelessness and presumed negative for COVID-19 at Catholic Central High School in downtown Grand Rapids. The emergency shelter could accommodate 75 women and allowed permanent shelters in the area to reduce their daily populations so individuals experiencing homelessness were better able to physically distance.

In early May, the health department team partnered with the City of Grand Rapids and Holland Home to open a shelter at the Fulton Care Center. This program could serve a larger population of people who had tested positive or were awaiting test results and offered transportation, safe housing, food services from the Salvation Army and health monitoring.

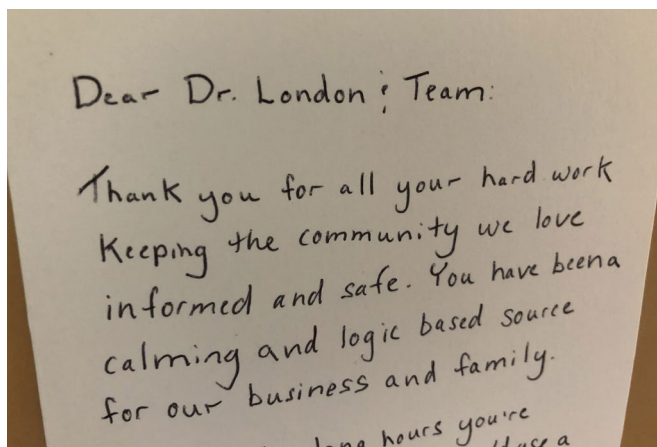
Finally, in a continuing effort to reduce the population in area shelters, the health department reserved several hotel rooms through the end of April 2021 for people experiencing homelessness.

**All these initiatives are part of an important strategy to care for some of our most vulnerable residents and minimize community transmission of the virus. All were made possible through innovative public-private partnerships – a hallmark of this community.**

## Isolation Housing and Public Health Information for Migrant Agricultural Workers

On August 3, 2020, the State of Michigan mandated COVID-19 testing of agricultural and food processing employees. While some agricultural workers who tested positive were able to isolate on the farms where they worked, the State contracted with the Kent County Health Department to provide housing for workers who did not have a safe place to isolate.

Together with Muskegon, Ottawa, and Allegan counties, the department arranged for Camp Pendalouan in Muskegon County to serve as the area's isolation center. **The health department also provided a team of contact tracers dedicated to communicating with agricultural workers who tested positive and quickly move them into isolation.**



*The health department team appreciates the kind notes they received from many members of the community*



*KCCA MI Mask Aid distribution at the Deltaplex*

## MI Mask Aid Project

In August 2020, the State of Michigan, Ford Motor Company and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) partnered to distribute 4 million free masks to the most vulnerable populations throughout the state.

Kent County Community Action and the Kent County Health Department Race, Equity and Inclusion Team mobilized dozens of community groups to help get those masks to the households that needed them most. We are very grateful for the vital role these community partners played in helping to slow the spread of the virus.



*Board Chair Mandy Bolter delivering a home cooked meal to the health department*

# Thank You Community Partners



These organizations were vital partners in distributing masks and health kits throughout Kent County

Alger Heights Neighborhood Association

Apostolic Faith Church

Area Agency on Aging West Michigan

Association for the Blind &  
Visually Impaired

Berean Baptist Church

Bhutanese Community of Michigan

Black Impact Collaborative

Cherry Health

Community Food Club

Creston Neighborhood Association

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services

Eastern Avenue CRC

Eastown Community Association

Feeding America

Fuller Avenue CRC Food Pantry

Garfield Park Neighborhood

Goei Center

Grand Rapids Housing Commission

Grand Rapids Public Library

Iglesia Bautista Biblica

Karen Community

Kent District Library

Kent School Services Program (*Pinewood  
Middle School*)

Kinyarwanda Community

Latinx Community Outreach

Leonard Terrace Apartments

LINC UP

Meals on Wheels West Michigan

Mel Trotter Ministries

Michigan Department of Health & Human  
Services - Kent County

Michigan Department of Health & Human  
Services - Migrant Services

Midtown Neighborhood Association

Millbrook Community Bridgeworks

Neighbors of Belknap Lookout

Network 180

Noor's Heaven

North Kent Connect

Northwest Food Pantry

Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

Oakdale Neighbors

Other Way Ministries

Roosevelt Park Advocates

Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association

Seeds of Promise

Senior Neighbors

Solutions to End Exploitation

Spectrum Health

Tabernacle Community Church

Tigrinya Community

United Way

Urban Church Leadership Center

Vietnamese Community

West Grand Neighborhood Association

West Michigan Asian American Association

West Michigan Friendship Center



## Health Kits for New Americans, Native Americans, People of Color and People with Disabilities

Since summer 2020, Kent County Health Department staff, family members, friends, retirees and community partners have assembled more than 22,000 COVID-19 Health Kits for Kent County community members in need, including people of color, people with disabilities, Native Americans and New Americans who now call Kent County home.

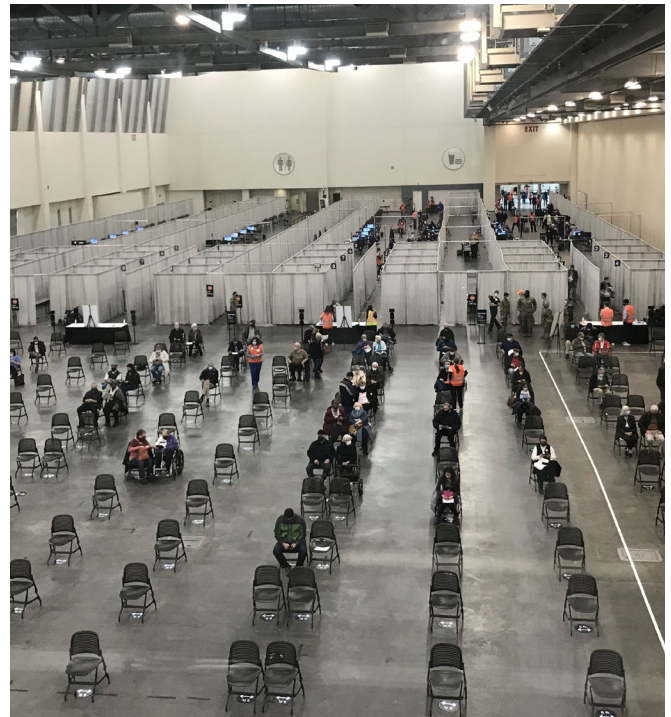
Kits contained a fabric mask, bar of soap, individual use hand sanitizer, digital thermometer and cards printed with simple information about COVID-19 mitigation measures and community resources. **The cards were translated into 15 languages: Arabic, Braille, Burmese-Chin, Dinka, English, French, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Nuer, Rohingya, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya and Vietnamese.**

The health department's Race, Equity and Inclusion Team and Community Connectors distributed the health kits to a diverse group of community partners. Our thanks to all of them for their assistance in getting the kits out to thousands of people in our community.

Additionally, the health department partnered with our friends at MOKA in December 2020. The organization, which serves children and adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities, engaged participants in its Residential and Community Supports program to assemble 2,445 kits for the community.



*Distributing Kent County Health Kits in the Nepali community.*



*West Michigan Vaccine Clinic at DeVos Place*

## Working Toward Recovery

As we enter year two of the pandemic, we are emerging from the darkness into the spring of hope. Clearly we are in a better place today than we were one year ago.

### Beating the Virus

#### SAFETY GUIDELINES

We know more about the virus, how it spreads and how to stop it from spreading than we knew at the outset of the pandemic.

Employers have access to **safety guidelines, best practices and resources** to protect their workers and customers. Schools – while still facing tremendous challenges – are finding ways to educate our children while minimizing the risk for teachers, staff and families. And by wearing masks, distancing and washing our hands, each one of us can do our part to stop the spread and help get this virus under control.

## THE VACCINE

**But the biggest cause for hope at this one-year mark is the availability of safe and highly effective COVID-19 vaccines.** Between December 11, 2020 and February 27, 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved three COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use in the United States.

The first COVID-19 vaccines were administered in Kent County the week of December 14, with the Kent County Health Department administering its first dose to the department's immunization program supervisor on December 18.

Because supplies were very limited across the country, the CDC and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services implemented a phased approach to distribution, prioritizing the highest-risk populations.

Between December 18, 2020 and March 26, 2021, the health department administered 37,333 doses to county residents. As of April 26, 35.2% of Kent County residents had been fully vaccinated.

## VACCINATEWESTMI.COM

To help Kent County residents learn about the vaccine, stay up to date on eligibility and register to get immunized, the health department led development of **[www.VaccinateWestMI.com](http://www.VaccinateWestMI.com)**. Launched in December in partnership with the Vaccinate West Michigan consortium, the site continues to serve as the region's go-to resource on the vaccine.



*West Michigan Vaccine Clinic at DeVos Place has capacity to vaccinate up to 140K residents per week*



*KCHD immunization program supervisor, Mary Wisinski, BSN, RN, and Shelley Grissom, GR resident -- the 1st and 20,000th people to get vaccinated at the Kent County Health Department*

## WEST MICHIGAN VACCINE CLINIC

**To prepare for mass vaccination, the health department, Spectrum Health and Mercy Health Saint Mary's, in collaboration with the Vaccinate West Michigan consortium, launched one of the largest regional vaccination hubs in the country at DeVos Place in downtown Grand Rapids.**

On March 29, a record 12,000 residents received vaccines at the clinic, and on March 30, partners expanded vaccine eligibility at the clinic to all residents age 16 and older.

This large-scale, collaborative clinic at our publicly owned convention center is truly a medical marvel. While this clinic isn't an option for all, it is an option for most, and the use of this space allows us to pool resources and provide the most efficient way to vaccinate our community as vaccine supplies increase.



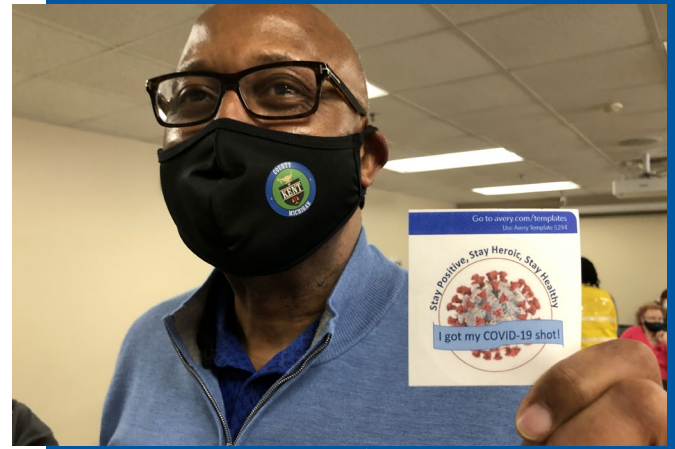
## Economic Recovery

Of course pandemic recovery means more than beating the virus. It means our county is open for business. It means our people are working and our businesses are thriving. It means our residents have the financial means to house, feed and care for their families.

The economic impact of this pandemic has been deep and it will be lasting. But leaders from business, nonprofits, philanthropy and government have been preparing, planning and investing so we can hit the ground running when the health crisis subsides.

**We look forward to working with these leaders to help our local businesses, nonprofits, municipalities, schools and – above all – our people emerge strong.**

We believe that the same dedication, innovation, collaboration and kindness that brought us hope and light in the darkest days of this pandemic will lead to full recovery in the months ahead.



*Kent County Administrator Wayman Britt among thousands of county residents to get the vaccine*



*Martha Rodriguez braves “the jab” administered by KCHD public health nurse Ofirbel DeLeon at the Hispanic Center*

