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## **Kent County Hosting COVID-19 Vaccine Pop-Up Clinics in Honor of Juneteenth**

*Clinics reaching communities with lower vaccination rates*

**GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (June 16, 2021)** – The Kent County Board of Commissioners is announcing several pop-up vaccination clinics in honor of the Juneteenth Holiday and to take further steps to end the grip of the pandemic on the African American community. We celebrate Juneteenth but we also pause to recognize the lives that have been lost in the last year and encourage our community to get the shot.

Juneteenth is an annual celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. It marks the day – June 19, 1865 – that a Union General issued an order announcing the end of the war and freeing enslaved African Americans in Texas. The order was signed in Galveston one day after the Union Army arrived in the western most Confederate state, two months after the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, and two and a half years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

“Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic put many Juneteenth celebrations on hold,” said Kent County Chief Inclusion Officer Teresa Branson. “As we return to community celebrations, we are reminded that African Americans have suffered significant outcomes from the pandemic and that many of our community leaders are still working hard to drive down racial disparities in COVID-19 and increase vaccination rates.”

In Kent County, Black youth, and young adults ages 16-49 have lower vaccine rates than other racial or ethnic groups. Data also shows vaccine disparities in urban areas of the county that are occupied more heavily by African Americans. These disparities remind us that social, economic and environmental inequities result in adverse health outcomes and we will continue to work collaboratively to eliminate disparities and increase access to vaccinations across Kent County.

“We hope that people who are not familiar with the history of Juneteenth will take time to learn about this day and why it is so important,” said Kent County Board of Commissioners Chair Mandy Bolter. “On this day of hope, healing and restoration, we want to make the COVID-19 vaccine readily available to community members who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. There is still a lot of work ahead of us, but getting the vaccine is a great start to getting us all back to normal.”

The Kent County Health Department will offer free vaccinations at three separate events:

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**Date:** June 17

**Time:** 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**Location:** Kent County Health Department South Clinic · 4700 Kalamazoo Ave. SE · Kentwood, MI 49508

**Details:** No appointment needed; walk-ins welcome

**Date:** June 18

**Time:** Noon – 2 p.m.

**Location:** Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church Parking Lot · 514 Eastern SE · Grand Rapids, MI · 49507

**Details:** No appointment needed; walk-ins welcome

**Date:** June 19

**Time:** 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**Location:** Dickenson Buffer Park · 1635 Willard SE · Grand Rapids, MI · 49507

**Details:** No appointment needed; walk-ins welcome

Currently, the Pfizer vaccine is the only one approved for anyone 12 years and older and will be available at all three clinics. Residents ages 12-15 years old must have a parent or guardian present. Residents ages 16-17 years old may present a permission note from a parent or guardian but must have a driver aged 18 years or older present.

In addition to the vaccine, masks and hand sanitizer will be available free of charge at each clinic location.

“We hope our unvaccinated community members will come to our clinics, get vaccinated, and help protect themselves, their loved ones, friends, and neighbors,” concluded Chair Bolter.

Information about the COVID-19 vaccine can be found at <https://vaccinatewestmi.com/>.

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