

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **GVSU Anthropology Team Creates COVID-19 Community Messages** *GVSU ANTHROPOLOGY USES RESEARCH INSIGHTS TO CREATE COVID-19 VACCINE MESSAGES FOR THE COMMUNITY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VACCINATE WEST MICHIGAN*

**Grand Rapids, Mich., August 10, 2021** – Grand Valley State University’s Anthropology Department, in partnership with Vaccinate West Michigan, recently created a series of graphics promoting COVID-19 vaccine awareness and reasons for vaccination, including decreasing variants, reducing number of quarantines, and protecting those who cannot get a vaccine, such as young children.

The graphics result from insights learned through an ethnographic study comprised of open-ended interviews with adults in West Michigan who are vaccine-hesitant, as well as those who were originally hesitant but changed their mind. Principal investigator Kristin Hedges, PhD, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Grand Valley State University, has been leading the study and guiding undergraduate research assistants; Maggie Wilson, anthropology student; and Donovan Fustero-Lopez, graphic design student.

Better understanding of perspectives, concerns and factors influencing vaccine confidence, creates better messaging to answer questions and concerns from the public.

“Vaccination campaigns have always been a project of public cooperation. A vaccine can only be as effective as the public willingness to participate and community access to the resource. Anthropologists have been studying the range of vaccine hesitancy for decades. One of the large focal points that has come out of the research are the multiple influencing factors that impact a person’s perspectives and acceptance of vaccines,” says Hedges.

“We’re still in a pandemic and people are still suffering because of it,” says Dr. Adam London, Director of the Kent County Health Department. “Vaccines are the best and safest tool to end this crisis. We desperately need those who are eligible to get their vaccines, especially in light of school resuming in the next month. Don’t wait. Don’t put it off.”

“Protecting the public’s health is a job that is too big for any single organization,” commented Marcia Mansaray, Deputy Health Officer in Ottawa County, “and even more so in a pandemic. When health care, non-profit, academic and public health organizations collaborate and share their expertise, much more can be accomplished and the end result means more to their communities.”

Several Vaccinate West Michigan collaborating organizations will be sharing the graphics on their social media sites during the week of August 9 to encourage vaccination, especially with increasing delta variant cases and the approaching new school year.

Graphics are available for anyone to use and share. [Visit Vaccinate West Michigan to download the graphics](#), available in English and Spanish.

Interviews are still ongoing with members of the community. Graphics will continue to be added to the collection. The study is also expanding to include a quantitative survey on vaccine perspectives in collaboration with the Kent County Health Department and other community partners.

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Vaccinate West Michigan is a collaborative of local health departments, health systems, pharmacies, colleges and universities, and more – who have partnered together with the common goal to meet the diverse needs of our communities and share COVID-19 vaccine facts, data and clinics.

Vaccinate West Michigan Collaborators:

Kent County Health Department Allegan Health Department Barry-Eaton District Health Department Berrien County Health Department District Health Department #10 Ionia County Health Department Mid-Michigan District Health Department Muskegon County – Public Health Ottawa County Department of Public Health Mercy Health Metro Health – University of Michigan Health Spectrum Health Holland Hospital Spectrum Health Lakeland North Ottawa Community Hospital Michigan Health & Hospital Association Answer Health Cherry Health CVS Pharmacy Kent County Emergency Medical Services Meijer SpartanNash We Are For Children Calvin University Grand Valley State University Michigan State University College of Human Medicine