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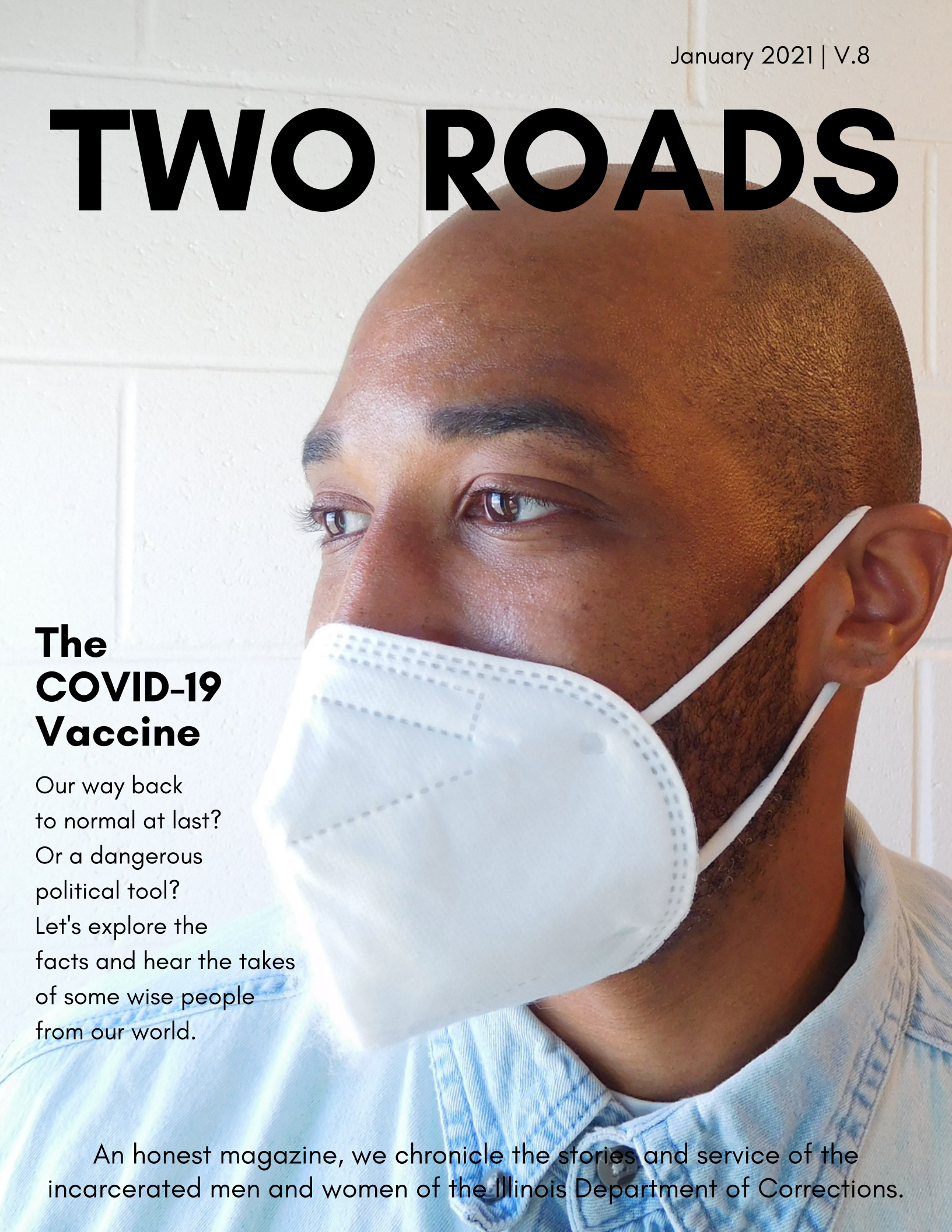
TWO ROADS



The COVID-19 Vaccine

Our way back
to normal at last?
Or a dangerous
political tool?
Let's explore the
facts and hear the takes
of some wise people
from our world.

An honest magazine, we chronicle the stories and service of the incarcerated men and women of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER

JIM ESTES

We will all have an opportunity soon to choose to take the Covid-19 vaccine. Or not. Illinois Department of Corrections Director Rob Jeffreys asked Two Roads to write a magazine that seeks to help all of us understand the myths, risks and truth about the Covid-19 vaccine.

For me, well, I had vaccine concerns of my own. The vaccine's development seemed political and rushed. The specter of RNA's involvement seemed like something I needed to understand. I leaned on my values (as I urge each of you to do, for this choice and all choices) and made my decision.

I've worked hard to know what matters to me and to try and grow awareness of my values so I know the right choice for me when I'm facing a tough decision.

I want to live a life crafted more by my informed choices than by the choices of other people. I want to live a long life with my family and friends, building things, writing, traveling and learning. I want to be outdoors as much as I can. I like to help people. I like to listen to their stories and talk about big ideas with them. I miss hugging people and seeing their faces. I try and use clean, rational thought, historical precedent and evidence to decide things.

Data only tells part of the truth, though, the story we understand about ourselves tells the rest of it. So I put all of these wants, data points and values in my box of thoughts, shook it real good, let it settle and chose to take the vaccine.

A quote powered my decision, really, to choose the vaccine, and to be involved in this project with you. I don't want to make a choice that could hurt someone vulnerable and I want our good lives back. Teddy Roosevelt knew this 120 years ago.

"This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in."
Theodore Roosevelt

EDITOR'S LETTER

RICKY HAMILTON

I want to thank you all for checking back in with us for this special edition of the Two Roads E-Zine. We not only felt it important to share the complexity of thoughts and opinions of men and women all across the IDOC on the upcoming vaccine rollout, but we also want to share some great information from Agency Medical Director, Dr. Steven H. Bowman, IDOC's top doctor.

We share another extensive and candid interview we had with IDOC Director Rob Jeffreys.

I promise we will try to squeeze as much relevant information from our interview as possible. Also, please don't think we've forgotten about providing you all with the rest of our previous interview! He shared sooo much important information concerning his views on current criminal justice reform efforts and the Department's direction that you all simply have to hear. So please stay tuned for future issues.

Out of the million or so times I envisioned my release over the previous 22 years, never once did I picture our world changing to this degree. Like so many others out there, I can't believe the timing of this pandemic—like "why did it have to happen now?"! Throughout all the years, the only factors I figured could possibly hinder my ability to find success and happiness beyond prison would either be poor health, my past, or the continued constraints of my conviction. Yet, now as I am about to be released into a post pandemic world, a new threat to my success has arisen.

As we all know proper preparation helps prevent poor performance. Well, this pandemic has drastically reduced my ability to properly prepare for release. The inability to move freely or gain access to our resource room to do the necessary reentry research or make phone calls to communicate with my support system at the frequent rate I truly need, really hurts my efforts in reentry planning.

Then there's the inability to have in-person visits. Last year my fiancé moved from Texas to this little town of Kewanee simply so she could visit me on a frequent basis so we could fully coordinate our future together.

Yet here we are 9 months later and still no visits while my time gets shorter and shorter by the day. Well for me, the solution to my dilemma appears to be this vaccine.

Personally, I have always been one who has avoided flu vaccinations or anything of the sort. Early last year when talk first started to matriculate about a possible vaccine, I was a hard NO! And that stance was for many of the

same reasons many of you are familiar with; especially, speaking from the standpoint of an African American who is familiar with moments in our nation's history like the Tuskegee experiment.

Yet, at the moment, my "NO" is not as hard as it once was. Actually, it's no longer a "no" at all.

The reason is that at this point I am willing to forgo my misgivings about the vaccine so that I may go about the unhindered business of preparing for my success beyond prison. We all know about the 'get rich or die trying' mindset most of us had on the streets which allowed us to brave the dangers of police, stick-up men and gun shots.

Well, my 'achieve success and live trying' mentality emboldens me to brave any potential dangers which may hinder my success.

There is another benefit to this thought that I can't help but to consider. The fact is that it may be worth it to put aside our own personal feelings about vaccines in order to help protect others who are more susceptible to die from this virus.

So, even if our reasons start off as personal, the effects in the end are beneficial to the whole and allow us to individually do our part.

I ask all of my incarcerated brothers and sisters reading our magazine to look at the COVID-19 vaccination as one simple act you can take to help improve society. For all of those who have other thoughts, I totally respect you and your decision as well.

But before I close, I am sad to say Kewanee LSRC will be losing another great leader in my brother Andre Ruddock, who is about to break the seal in a couple of days. Yet, I am just as happy at the fact that our community and the world overall will be gaining one! Your help in pushing Two Roads and this institution forward has been invaluable and I personally want to thank you for all or your hard work and wish you all the success in the world. Go and be great my brother. To the rest of you reading this, please continue to be safe and never stop preparing for the success that surely awaits you. Peace be unto you all.

Sincerely, Ricky Hamilton

Two Roads Editor-in-Chief

P.S.

Fun fact: Western medicine learned the process of exposing a person to small amounts of a virus to help build up ones immune system from West Africans.

Q & A

WITH
ROB JEFFREYS
DIRECTOR, IDOC

Q & A
WITH
ROB JEFFREYS
DIRECTOR, IDOC

Jim Estes: "Good morning, Director Jeffreys. Thank you for this assignment. Ms. Hess targeted a few writers around the state, so we have their work and another 8 or 10 guys from Kewanee wrote for us and we did a Q&A with Dr. Bowman yesterday."

Director Jeffreys: "Awesome, he's pretty phenomenal, isn't he?"

Jim Estes: "Yeah, we loved him."

Director Jeffreys: "So, you got to understand he's been behind the scenes working with our operations team, and that's who is going to come up with our medical and testing plans and everything that's been thrown at us.
He's been behind the scenes and very instrumental as far as trying to get us in the best situation possible as we respond to this pandemic which is very difficult as those of you who have all have been living through it know."

Ricky Hamilton: "I think we were moved when he told us that he had just started, so we were like, that's a heck of an inauguration to a job when you're the one charged with the health of everyone in the IDOC and a pandemic hits right as you start!"

Jim Estes: "He had an interesting insight though, I mean obviously the pandemic is regrettable, but he thought the silver lining for him was that he could see where our Health system needed to be stronger because of the stress the virus put on our system. And so he felt he felt he learned a lot last year. He'd gained insights that without something stressful like the pandemic he might never have known."

Director Jeffreys: "I can expand on that for our whole agency, it put us in a sense of urgency so we were able to do some things because of COVID. Look at our population reduction. We're down to 28,000 offenders. That's from 39,000 plus back in March. COVID has afforded us an opportunity to be more efficient and more focused on some of the initiatives that we are trying to get off. And that's what it's all about. Unfortunately, you have to go through some of these things, like Dr.Bowman putting his silver lining on all of this, so we're able to do some things. More importantly, it brought us back to a sense of humanity. It wasn't an "us against them" type thing. It was all of us trying to respond together, collectively. As we try to combat this virus.

Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose, but we still fight every day."

Ricky Hamilton: "That's great. I see we are on the right track because you just tackled my first question, "What is the biggest thing the Department has learned thus far from the pandemic? Would you say that what you just identified would be the biggest thing? "

Director Jeffreys: "It's a combination of things. First and foremost, I learned how vulnerable our agency was, as relates to operational efficiencies, short staffing, our ability to get people out, our ability to provide social distancing for the population; all these were objectives we had to come up with as we tackled this virus. And it brought us all together, and it made us focused. And it opened up communications like we probably never had before, because we all had to pay attention and listen to each other.
The population and my staff came up with the best course of action to try to address the things that were before us. And like I said, this was an agency that was on a journey to excellence, but it took a detour in some mud.
But we're still on that same journey. We are still going to accomplish the things we set out to accomplish. The pandemic has forced us to be laser-focused because now we're up against a sense of urgency to get a lot of things done, because if we don't get them done, then there's the catastrophic event of people losing their lives.
So this put us on a laser-focused approach on how we want to do criminal justice reform. We have not lost focus on that, at all."

Jim Estes: "As Ricky and I were conceiving how we would put this magazine together and what our message would be, we were reminded of your consistent message that the residents and family members and staff are all stake holders in getting this prison experiment right. I know we've all battled constantly 'us versus them' cultural schisms between staff and inmates, but this is another silver-lining from Covid. It's become this great equalizer, and we realize staff are just as likely to get it as inmates. It reminds us all of our central humanity and vulnerability. If we are going to beat Covid, it's going to take all of us."

Director Jeffreys: "Covid does not discriminate."

Jim Estes: "No. "

Ricky Hamilton: "Yes, the one thing I've noticed is the team building. For those who are in the fight know, this virus has pulled people together."

Director Jeffreys: "Yes, it's all about the humanity this virus exposes us to. No matter, staff or inmate, we'll go through the same symptoms, same quarantine periods, and same isolation protocols. There is no different formula except those restrictions inside the walls of this facility. Yes, we had some staff that went through some tough times too. The other point is we have a lot of sick/elderly people incarcerated and we thought when Stateville's numbers went up, that it was the pinnacle of the exposure risk. When it started getting into other facilities and exposure reached the wrong

population/age groups we became worried because those types of individuals would not be able to handle the virus and the research has shown it. We have a lot of people incarcerated that are elderly, I have the numbers; we have over 6,000 people over 54 years old and approximately 170 people 75 years or older. The death from the virus hit this population significantly. Covid currently represents 10% of the fatalities between the ages of 50-65 years old for the incarcerated population."

Ricky Hamilton: "Ok, pertaining to those numbers, when the vaccine roll-out begins will there be a targeted effort for a certain portion of the population to receive it? How will the roll-out begin?"

Director Jeffreys: "Yes, we spoke extensively about this matter. Essentially, the roll-out will be based on the volume of vaccines we receive. If we get a set number of vaccines below the total staff and population number then we will have to stratify and prioritize according to age, risk and where people are working at. But if we have enough at the same time we will vaccinate everyone at the same time. That's the ideal plan that we want and that's the plan were working with right now."

Ricky Hamilton: "And that's good because you went into another one of my questions."

Director Jeffreys: "Oh, I already know you, man!"

(Chorus of laughter)

Ricky Hamilton: "So, when we spoke to Dr. Bowman, he mentioned the importance of the agency not wanting to receive a number of vaccines and have a large number of the population refuse to take it. How do we ensure the number you receive matches the willingness of inmates/staff to take it?"

Director Jeffreys: "Good question and we do plan on doing a number of things. Also, I want to say you guys play a major role by helping to educate everybody. –I'm going to take the vaccine and I might even come on over to Kewanee and take it there."

Jim Estes: "That would be great."

Director Jeffreys: "Again, I'm going to take it. We will educate the staff and population of all the intricacies related to the approved vaccine options. I've been in touch with advocacy groups coordinating help with vaccine education. So, I'm meeting with those folks on Friday, the John Howard Association, the Equipped for Equality and Westside Justice Center, and all those folks. We're meeting Friday on how we'll get information out to the population. The more we educate, I believe the more people will be receptive to receiving the vaccine.

Everybody was skeptical when the vaccine first rolled out and how it rolled out, so that led to distrust.

I have older folks in my family who were very hesitant at first, and it took a scolding from me on a couple calls to, you know, my mother and my grandmother. My grandmother is 99 years of age and I will be

real quick with this story because I'll get choked up a little bit.
She's 99 years of age and still has all of her wits about her and she is my hero!
She just got her first shot about two weeks ago and she couldn't wait to get it because she's in assisted living and she hasn't been able to touch anybody since last March. When we go visit her we have to sit outside and do a window visit since March of last year.
So, it was taking a toll on her so she couldn't wait to take her shot and she took her first shot and her next shot will be next week.
So, I'm looking at it like, I am taking it for her. I will never be able to put my arms around her if I'm not vaccinated so that's my personal feeling about this whole thing."

Jim Estes: "Thank you for your story. We've found that when we share our writer's stories the person reading becomes them and then we understand, we understand empathetically to a greater level than we would have if we were being lectured about a point.
So, when the writer or speaker tells us a story we get to become them. We got to become you and this helped us understand."

Ricky Hamilton: "Well, that's exactly what happened to me as you were telling your story. When you were telling that story, do you know what you made me think of? You reminded me of someone visiting their family in prison. and it had me thinking,- okay we can target our own family members. If we let them know that in order for us to be able to visit or continue our relationship and get to that sense of normalcy, this is the answer, vaccination."

Director Jeffreys: "Perfect. Stay on that topic right there because we need to push this narrative with some of the folks who are on the phone with their family and encourage them to encourage their family members to take it. 'Cause you know that skepticism is just as much out in the community... of our community as it is inside. So we have to educate people on the outside, because they are just as hesitant. We need to be stewards of the message for the outside community as well."

THE COVID-19 VACCINE

DR. STEVEN H. BOWMAN
AGENCY MEDICAL DIRECTOR, IDOC

We interviewed Dr. Bowman on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. He is the IDOC's Agency Medical Director, and, as such, oversees our Covid-19 mitigation, testing and vaccine plans. We had a great conversation and we'll share some high points from our Q &A session, but first let's look at the facts he provided us, organized by bullet points.

Major Benefits

• Vaccination will help protect you from getting infected with COVID-19 and experiencing the life threatening complications from COVID-19 infection
• Vaccination is a safer way to build immunity to COVID than contracting it.
• If more people are immune to COVID, it makes it harder for the virus to spread in our communities. This is what is known as herd immunity.

Major Risks

• There is a small risk of allergic reactions in individuals who have had previous allergic reactions to vaccines or vaccine components.
• Not everyone has side effects, but some may experience mild, short term side effects similar to those following influenza vaccination. These may include:

- Injection Site Pain, Swelling, or Redness.
- Tender/Swollen Lymph Nodes in same arm as injection
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle or Joint Pain
- Fever and/or Chills
- Nausea and/or Vomiting An important point to remember, is that the risk for the shot are far less than the risk for serious complications from COVID-19.

Q & A

WITH
DR. STEVEN H. BOWMAN
AGENCY MEDICAL DIRECTOR, IDOC

Ricky Hamilton- "When do you expect the rollout?"

Dr. Bowman- "Illinois Public Health, the CDC, the ACIP and vaccine availability determine when we roll-out the vaccine, but we are preparing for our roll-out in two weeks."

Ricky Hamilton- "Are staff and residents getting the vaccine at the same time?"

Dr. Bowman- "Yes. Both staff and residents are considered group 1B. 1B consists of vulnerable people, essential employees, people in correctional settings... You have the same right to accept/refuse the vaccine as staff and will be provided the same education. We're on a full court press for staff and residents."

Ricky Hamilton- "How will we know if it's safe for visits to resume?

Dr. Bowman- "We need environmental integrity. This is a joint decision to make with operations. The facility and regional positivity rates will determine our return to normalcy.

Jim Estes- "I understand the vaccines are valuable, and we don't want to waste them. Are there plans to do a survey to get an accurate number of how many people will take the vaccine?

Dr. Bowman- "Yes. We don't want to waste any vaccines. We'll lead with slide shows, brochures, your magazine and then a survey before we provide our vaccine number to the Illinois Department of Public Health."

Ricky Hamilton- "As an African-American man I have skepticism of vaccines, given the Tuskegee Institute experiments and other medical abuses inflicted on us through history. Can you speak to others like me that share that distrust?

Dr. Bowman- "When we address vaccine skepticism, our nation has a relationship problem with abuse of vaccines upon the African-American population. I'm an African-American man, and I can tell you that these are good, protective vaccines.
Covid-19 has very bad outcomes-organ failure and death. The virus has waylaid our nation and we recognize the stress for individuals living in our correctional environment. But there is hope. We all need to follow these 4 steps:
1.) Wash your hands
2.) Wear a mask
3.) Isolate, 6' or more
4.) Get vaccinated
The vaccine is a critical step to help us get to the endpoint. I'm getting mine."

MY THOUGHTS

ANDRE RUDDOCK

"After 27 years of incarceration, I will be released on MSR January 25th, 2021.

As you can imagine, I've longed for this date for a lifetime. Of course, I'm experiencing all of the normal anxieties that result from being away from the real world for so long. I've been excited about seeing my family again, and meeting nieces, nephews, and cousins who weren't born when I left the world. Then 2020 ushered in the worst pandemic our generation has ever experienced. Being released in a raging pandemic has added a level of stress that I could not have predicted or prepared for. To add insult to injury, I have pre-existing medical issues that will certainly cause life-threating complications if I'm infected with COVID-19.

Human nature drives me to want to see my family and friends, and to interact with the children in a normal way, but it's human nature that allows the virus to rage across the world. Already family and friends are preparing to greet me upon my release, and while I'm eager to meet them, I'm terrified that I will be at the mercy of our collective human nature, regardless of the precautions I take.

The only way to truly be safe is to get out and stay away from the very support system I need. How realistic is that? So, the way I see it, I have to find a balance between the two extremes. Emotions will be too high for me to actually hide from the world.

So my plan is to use PPE, stay mindful of of washing my hands and not touching my face, and do whatever social distancing is realistically possible. After that, it's in God's hands. When I was told I could get the vaccine here, I was completely game for it. It was an answer to my prayer.

I know a lot of people are skeptical of taking vaccines, but history is crystal clear on the question of whether or not the science behind vaccines is trustworthy. I trust the science, and I'd rather take my chances with the vaccine than without it. The horrible part for me is that my release date may preclude me from getting the shot. I'm hoping the fact I will still be in IDOC's custody on parole keeps me in line to get the vaccine."

TRUST THE SCIENCE

TRAVER JOHNSON, KEWANEE, LSRC

“There is a pestilence which threatens to destroy the very nature of our society; it has robbed us of the ones we hold dear, and it is showing no signs of relenting from the torment it wreaks on our lives. I’m talking of course about politics. Everything today seems to be politicized, including the COVID-19 vaccine. Coronavirus, however, is not partisan; it has no preference, and the only way to end this scourge is by working together. I believe no one understands the severity of this situation better than the incarcerated men and women of the world. In the U.S. alone 38 of the top 40 institutions to experience massive outbreaks have been prisons (the others 2 were at the White House). This means it is incumbent on us to save society from itself – what irony. I understand there is concern from some, but I want to assure you that the vaccine is safe.

First, popular opinion suggests that the vaccine was developed in 9 months. The truth is: scientists used a version of the SARS vaccine, which has been developed over the last 13 years, to create the coronavirus vaccine. Second, the test group has exhibited almost no side effects from the vaccine, save minor flu-like symptoms for a couple of days. This vaccine does not contain the coronavirus. Science has progressed in such a way that one no longer need be injected by a version of the virus they wish to be immunized from. Furthermore, there is absolutely no evidence linking vaccine use to any irrevocable health issues.

Lastly, the efficacy of the vaccine has been demonstrated by America’s foremost disease specialists, Dr. Faucci (NIIHA), Dr. Redfield (CDC) and Dr. Hahn (FDA), and our most prominent leaders, President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris. These are leaders who have dedicated their lives to civil service.

I implore you, do not give in to irrational conspiracy theories. Trust the science. We are living in a time none of us have experienced. We can only come out of this together.”

TORRANCE BARD

KEWANEE LSRC

“Hi. women and men currently incarcerated in this difficult time. My prayers go out to everybody. The reason why I would be willing to accept the vaccine is because of the scientific studies behind RNA in the vaccine. RNA is a protein that assists your immune system in making the antibodies needed to Fight COVID-19. In 2014, I was diagnosed with hypertension, one of the underlying medical conditions that causes severe complications when infected with COVID. In all truthfulness, I want my body’s immune system to be either prepared or immune to the virus when I have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Being able to see my fiancée again on visits and feel a sense of normalcy is a goal for me. Optimistically, we can unite as a community and reach it. Have a blessed day to all.”

WALTER BROWN

KEWANEE LSRC

“Trust in your choice...or is it in vaccine we trust? Well, why should we take it? Which one will we get injected with? Isn’t it our decision, our choice concerning which one we want? Will we be treated any differently if we chose not to accept it? But wait, can our decision to accept or reject the vaccine mean life or death for OURSELVES, our family, and our friends?
Wow, this choice carries too much weight to make a snap decision. So, to everyone, I suggest that you ask the questions, research your findings, and stand by the facts. We must start this journey from a truth...a truth that our lives matter, and the choices we make will have consequences. I will be taking the vaccine!"

STEPHEN KNIGHTEN

KEWANEE LSRC

“I am certainly willing to take the vaccine if we, as a population, are able to resume movement and normal activities. The stress of being locked down is overwhelming, and I’m willing to be vaccinated for the greater good of the population and my own health.”

STEVAN NEWMAN

KEWANEE LSRC

"There are a couple reasons why I'm willing to receive the vaccine. The first and foremost being that my release date is closing in, and I'm really looking forward to seeing my OG. She is up in age, and understanding how COVID 19 can have detrimental effects on the elderly, I don't want to jeopardize my OG's health—in any way, with any unnecessary risk(s) of exposure. The second reason why I'm open to taking the vaccine is because I refuse to be held hostage by my fear, and more so, my DISTRUST, as a black man, of government handled vaccinations, even though, historically, such distrust is justifiable in the black community. I would like to believe that, in this day and age, times have changed. The fact this is less likely to be some sort of nefarious experimentation and, is in fact, a CURE to a virus that has run rampant, destroying countless lives from all backgrounds, has put any of my remaining doubts and/or discomfort at ease. I encourage us all to get vaccinated and bring an end to this devastating virus for good."

THEODORE TEAGUE

KEWANEE LSRC

"So, I sincerely advise you all to get vaccinated, as I will. This antidote was put out by high tech scientists that are very skilled in medicine. The vaccine is here and available. Please get vaccinated so we can begin to live a normal life without this fear hanging over us all. Peace."

NICK WORLEY

KEWANEE LSRC

““The question I ask myself is what’s more deadly, the corona virus or the vaccine? I also view the mask wearing and vaccine as a whole. The whole is us as a unit, as a society working together and agreeing on the smartest and safest way to overcome the pandemic. We spend way too much time finding ways to disagree with one another at the expense of our physical well-being. So for me it’s simple, I am definitely going to take the vaccine.”

THE VOICE OF REASON

MAURICE MONTGOMERY

Hello, I am THE VOICE OF REASON and I want to talk to you about the importance of taking the Covid-19 vaccination, but before I do I'd like you to hear from both Covid-19 and the Vaccine.

Hello, I AM COVID-19, you all know me as the virus that has killed over 400,000 people in the United States and infected so many I lost count, I don't want to toot my own horn here but you have to admit I'm doing a better job than the murder rates in all 50 States, I'm the man, and you know what? I'm looking to kill more if you all let me. I'm a pulmonary virus that loves the alveoli bundles in your lungs, meaning I restrict your breathing and make you aspirate from your own saliva. I trick your immune system into fighting something else while I raise your temperature, causing havoc in your body.
I don't plan on going anywhere, because as long as you all are afraid of the things that protect you from me, I'll continue to kill you. So, keep up the good work and keep being afraid of the things that protect you from me. I will see you soon!

Hello, I AM THE VACCINE. I know many of you are skeptical about me, but truth be told I am a genetically engineered RNA protein from the virus's DNA; meaning I am information genetically programed from the origins altered to be the reverse effect to teach your immune system how to identify Covid-19 and block it from reproducing and infecting healthy cells. Many people have already taken me, so in order for me to win I need your help beating that clown that spoke before me. We can't let it win, because it could plague us for decades, killing more as it grows stronger.

Well, now as the VOICE OF REASON, I need to speak to you now. I know many of you doubt the vaccine, let me explain to you what doubt is: doubt is fear, and fear is the collapse of the imagination and the collapse of the imagination is systemic failure. Please do not fail yourself and your family.

AMANUEL WADE

GRAHAM CC

"When it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine, there are several reasons why I will take it. It provides protection from reoccurring infection and protects those around me who may come into contact with me, such as: family, friends, other prisoners, etc. But ultimately it will provide a sense of security and comfort knowing my probability of life-long health in respect to COVID-19 is to a large degree secured. "

VINCENT TREVISIO

HENRY HILL CC

“COVID-19 has forever changed our lives in numerous ways, but having the vaccine on the horizon is a great hope for everyone. All Americans should be taking all of the proper precautions to be as safe as possible during this time, but that just isn’t the case. Unfortunately, you cannot rely on people to make the best decisions possible, day in and day out. Some people are negligent and pose a risk to not only my health, but others as well. We live in a small community with people packed closely. This poses a threat to spread COVID and could cause an outbreak. These are the two most important reasons why I believe getting the vaccination is in the best interest of everyone, but there are more.

My father is 72 years old;, he's in a high-risk category. Of course, there are others with underlying health conditions. If incarcerated people get the vaccine, we could possibly start visitation sooner than expected, without compromising anyone’s health. All in all, I believe the COVID-19 vaccination will improve the living conditions we are in by preventing a possible outbreak and allowing people to get back to a state of normalcy.”

WILLIE F. FORD

GRAHAM CC

"I would like to receive the COVID vaccine because I have lost a family member, and I don’t like that feeling. I don’t want to see anybody else experience that feeling. I hope that everyone is on board with taking the vaccine, so that we can all remain safe and get back to the way we were living.”

BRANDON GOLDBRICHT

VANDALIA CC

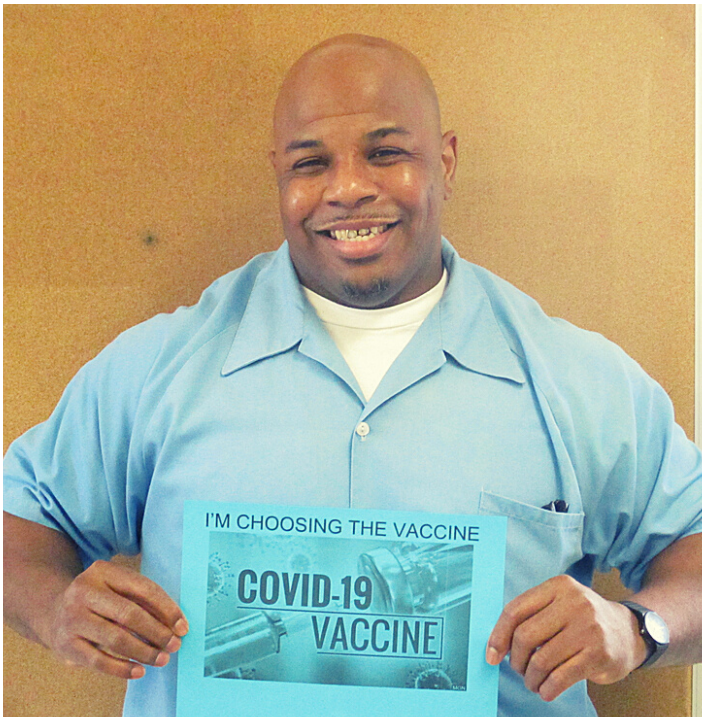
"I would get the vaccine for COVID 19 because I want to protect my family and friends. My father is on 24-hour oxygen with COPD, and I would not take a chance of being around him if I'm not able to get vaccinated. I couldn't live with myself if I knew that I was responsible for him passing away when there is an easy solution ready and available.

I've had COVID-19, and it didn't affect me too greatly – I felt sick for a few days, but I got over it pretty easily. But I know that it's not the same for everyone, because it affects each person differently. One person might have hardly any symptoms, but the person next to them gets COVID and struggle to live through it. I also know that my immunity might not last that long after having it, so I am ready to get the vaccine when it's ready. I would get the vaccine to protect my family and friends, but also to help protect the entire human race. It's the quickest way that I can see getting back to normal and ending the COVID pandemic."

ORNELL WILLIAMS

JACKSONVILLE CC

"I want to receive the vaccine for my own health. I feel like I wouldn't be as emotionally drained and stressed if life were able to go back to a somewhat normal atmosphere. In receiving the vaccine and helping stop the spread of COVID I feel like it would get us back to that normal atmosphere sooner. I would be in hopes of it allowing us to see our families sooner."



KENSLEY HAWKINS

SHAWNEE CC

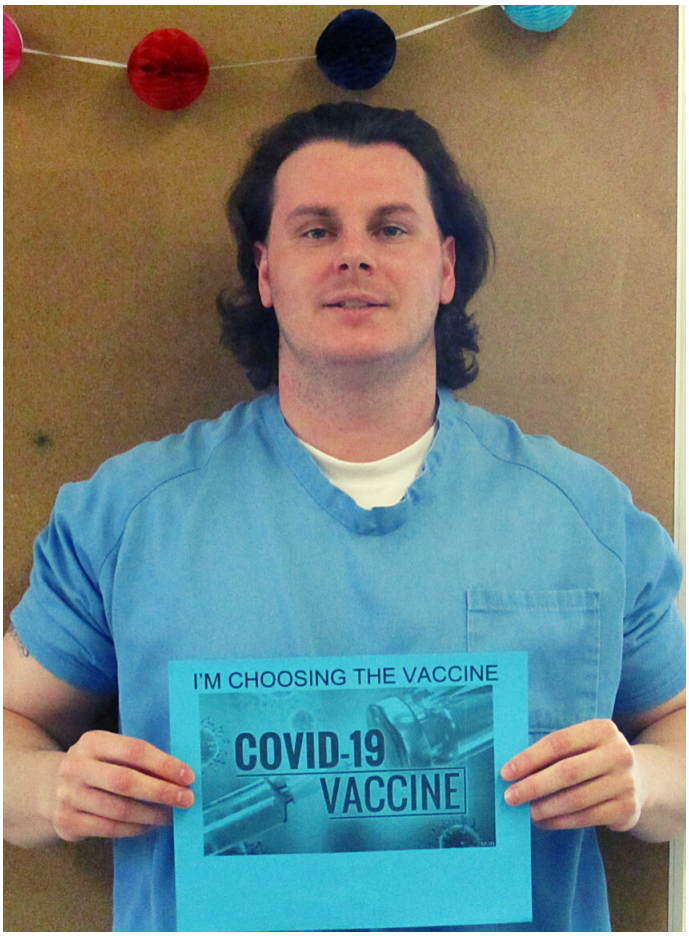
"The COVID pandemic is widespread and decimating our community, due in part to medical science's history of experiments in our community, so, I understand the fear of taking the COVID vaccine. First, there was the Tuskegee experiment of 1930-40; then the eugenics program of 1960-70. Those programs had a deep psychological effect on our psyche where nothing has changed, except that people have become more terrified of today's progress because the "new" continues to look old. We must let go of those old fears and step into the future. I didn't until 25 years ago when I came down with the flu that left me fighting for my life. That was the turning point in my belief that being vaccinated was another experiment.

The following year I took the flu vaccination and wasn't sick again until I tested positive for COVID-19 in October 2020; I was fortunate enough not to have a severe reaction or side effect. I don't know how long the antibodies from my bout with COVID will protect me. The COVID symptoms were the same as when I contracted the flu; I don't ever want to be that sick again, so I'm taking the COVID vaccine to further protect myself. I strongly urge you to do the same because we are in a congested environment where we cannot truly isolate or maintain the social distance required. You're a sports fan; you make the call. I did!"

DAKOTA BUCHER

JACKSONVILLE CC

"I would like to receive the vaccine to keep others around us safe and in less fear of contracting the virus from us. I would be in hopes that us receiving the vaccine would allow us to open back up and be able to resume in person visits, in person learning, and other simple pleasures that we are no longer able to have due to the COVID situation. I would hope that receiving the vaccine would allow us to get back to a more normal way of living with a lot less worry of the spread of the virus."



HUSON ELLISON

KEWANEE LSRC

"As-Salaam-Alaikum. My name is Huson Ellison. I am alive, and I'm grateful. Unfortunately, as of January 20, 2021 about 406,000 people in the USA are no longer alive due to covid-19. Among those nearly half a million people are 80 men & women who are incarcerated in IDOC. Very soon we all will have an opportunity not only to help restore some sense of normalcy to our lives, but to save lives as well. Every person has a choice when it comes to getting vaccinated.

I choose to be a part of the solution. Now is the time to be brave. Am I a little spooked? Yes, but I'm going home soon, and I need to protect myself so that the people that I love will be protected from me. Be brave for yourself, your mom, your dad, your children, and your neighbors. Be brave. Get vaccinated. Remember those 80 + men and women who have passed away while in the clink. May GOD bless them and their families and may their memories be a guide and light for us all.

I leave as I came, peace to everyone."

ALTON AGEE

Kewanee LSRC

"To me, personally, taking the vaccine is a no-brainer in order to protect myself and my loved ones –it's my job, my duty! Many people have left this world before the vaccine was a real thin. Looking at the big picture, you can't complain about the outcome of something without having a solution to the issue, this is the way to get what little bit of normalcy we do have back! I can't tell someone else to get the vaccine, but I would, however, tell them if you don't want to take the vaccine for you, do it for the ones you love. You would give your life for them, but will you live for them also?"

As-Salaam-Alaikum.

TOGETHER. EVERYONE. ACHEIVES. MORE.

D'MARLO REED

KEWANEE LSRC

"As I sit back and ponder my thoughts in preparation to answer the question at hand, I reflect over the last year during this pandemic. I've had family members and friends contract this virus; for the most part they have recovered however, others were not as fortunate.

It's very strange and heartfelt to have talked to someone, hearing their voice one day, and then the next day they're gone.

From my experience with this virus, the realization became very clear and evident to me as to why I'm taking the vaccination.

Protecting my health and the well-being of others is the most important factor for my future. I believe taking this vaccine will give me a chance to enjoy the luxuries of life without the worry of infecting my son, a parent of mine that is handicapped or other family members and loved ones, knowing I have made the best decision to help protect them as well.

Many people look askance at the vaccine. I look at the facts and the science. COVID-19 affects people of color and other minority groups at a high rate. We are the mass majority of the deaths and ICU bed holders in the United States, not to mention we are the majority of the population in the Illinois Department of Corrections, where we are sitting ducks waiting to be picked off.

In closing: the quicker we do this together and the more of us that get vaccinated, the sooner we can return to normalcy.

No matter your race, let's put the conspiracy theories aside and be adults taking on the role of responsibility as a TEAM: Together. Everyone. Achieves. More.

WE CAN ONLY COME OUT OF THIS TOGETHER

DOUGLAS TAYLOR

"COVID -19 doesn't care if your Offender # begins with a B or a Y. It doesn't care if you're black, white, brown, or anything in between. COVID could care less about your sexuality, and who or what you identify as. Whether you're Republican or Democrat, this virus wants to kill you. Almost 400,000 lives lost. Mothers, Fathers, aunties, uncles, friends, elderly and children...all of them gone forever. They can never speak to those that love them, and many lost out at a life of experiencing love, a first kiss, watching their loved ones marry, graduate, take their first steps or even speak their first words.

If there is something I could have done to remotely come close to saving just one of those lives, I would have moved heaven and earth to do it. The thing is – for most of us, we don't have to move heaven nor earth; we need to be responsible for ourselves and those around us. If wearing my mask or getting vaccinated has the chance of saving your mother, father, or someone you can't imagine living without, I would do it every minute of my life.

You might not like the person you're responsible for saving; they might not like you much either, but I guarantee you that both of you would be forever grateful if that person saved the life of the most precious person you have in your life that you couldn't live without."

Tammy Englerth

Decatur C.C.

Helen Keller wrote, "Although the world is full of suffering, it's also full of the overcoming of it."
Our world has had enough suffering from Covid-19. Taking the vaccine will finally bring comfort in everyone's lives and help overcome the impact that Covid-19 has had on everyone.
Vaccine=Hope=Saving Lives

Remember, we're all in this together.

Warren Riddle

Sheridan C.C.

"I would love to take the vaccine because I have high blood pressure and work here. I interact with different officers and inmates everyday, clean halls, wipe phones, door handles and pass out food.
I'd love to show them that it's ok to take the vaccine because a lot of them don't believe in the system with everything that's going on in the news. Please let me show them it's safe, and it's the only way we can get back to normal. Thank you."

Barton Allen

Sheridan C.C.

"I am ready and hopeful for an opportunity to get the vaccine for Covid-19 as soon as possible. My hope is that things here will be safe, and we can get back to normal. I came to Sheridan C.C.
I came to Sheridan in 2019, with the hope to get as much programming and education as possible. Since March, 2020 there has been no programming and no visitation. It's been a year since I've seen my family.
I believe long-term quarantine has affected the mental and physical health of myself and others.
I'm excited by the thought of getting the vaccine before my release, so I can be safely with my family, and re-enter society healthy and prepared for the world as it is now.
As we beat this pandemic, re-entry will be safer for society, offenders and IDOC staff. I hope I can be part of the solution. Thank you."

"WHY CONCERN US WITH MODERNA?"

Why concern us with Moderna?
Is it real like the tolls, or fake like Trump tryna get votes at the polls?
I thought COVID would just go away, but the reporters say another 10,000 died today.
Do I play it safe and watch Fox, thinking everything will be okay?
Do I listen to the pain of the families crying loudly thinking, I'm good I'm asymptomatic?
But I can't hold my baby or eat a dinner at the table with my family.
I can't ask why, it's too late.
Do I take my shot or tempt fate?
Why concern us with Moderna?
Because death could be a breath away.

~ Armand Isaac, Kewanee LSRC

Q & A

with

Warden John Burle

Kewanee LSRC

Two Roads- “Good morning. Will you please share your name and position?”

Warden Burle- "John Burle - Warden."

Two Roads- “Do you plan on taking the vaccine? If so what is your greatest motivation for doing so?”

Warden Burle- "Absolutely. To protect everyone that I may come in contact with. "

Two Roads- “What is the biggest challenge this pandemic has presented for you thus far?”

Warden Burle- "The overall constant change due to the progression of our mitigation efforts surrounding the growing knowledge of the virus. The constant change was at times very difficult for staff and the guys in our population to understand."

Two Roads- “Has this pandemic provided you with any new ideas or things you might want to try from a re-entry center standpoint once things return to normal?"

Warden Burle- "During the pandemic a few of the gentleman in our population have provided some ideas to help gain the opportunity to earn various certifications through peer-led groups. These certifications can be done through a book learning atmosphere and would assist with helping those individuals market themselves to employers upon release. "

Q & A

with

Lieutenant Nathan DeCoster

Kewanee LSRC

Two Roads- “Good morning. Will you please share your name and position?”

Lt. DeCoster- “My name is Nathan DeCoster; I am a Lieutenant for the Department of Corrections here at Kewanee Life Skills Re-entry Center. I’ve worked for the DOC for the previous 20 years; the first 16 were with the juvenile division and the last 4 here.”

Two Roads- "Do you personally plan on taking the vaccine?"

Lt. DeCoster- “Yes I do, in order to ensure that this place continues to run smoothly and so that we can function as we were intended to; where you guys get to move around freely, go to classes and socialize with each other. I will definitely do my part by getting vaccinated to ensure you guys’ health.”

Two Roads- "So you have no worries about the safety of the vaccine?

Lt. DeCoster- “No not really, they have all of the elements or components that make up the vaccine listed on the internet and they are elements used in other medically proven treatments. So no, I'm not worried. When I was in the United States Marines we would always be getting vaccinated for something or other. There were times when we would literally line up and there would be 6 doctors on each side and they would have these vaccination guns and we would go down the line and get shot after shot in the shoulder of each arm, almost like an assembly line. So I’m used to it.”

Q & A

with

Penny Rowan, Educator/Two Roads Editor

Kewanee LSRC

Two Roads- “Good morning. Will you please share your name and position?”

Penny Rowan- "Ms. Rowan, Educator."

Two Roads- “Do you plan on taking the vaccine? If so what is your greatest motivation for doing so?”

Penny Rowan- "I do plan to take the vaccine. I have several areas of motivation for this.

• I have made it this far without getting COVID-19. I’d like to keep it that way.

• My greatest fear with this pandemic is getting somebody sick who cannot fend off the disease. I would feel great remorse if somebody suffered and/or died due to my own carelessness.

• I have family and friends who have been sick with this disease, and I would not look forward to the same illness they’ve experienced. To be fair, I’ve also known quite a few asymptomatic people whom you might never have known had it.

Two Roads- “What is the biggest challenge this pandemic has presented for you thus far?”

Penny Rowan- "1. I have not had the quality family time to which I am accustomed. Holiday gatherings were cancelled, and visits minimized. I miss my family.

2. I miss my students. While I have been visiting the housing units regularly throughout this time, as well as teaching classes by packet, it’s just not the same. I love to teach in person with classroom dynamics and more opportunities for students to ask questions and gain insight. While some information has been shared through this time, I don’t feel like I’ve served my students as extensively as I can in person. I look forward to the day that we can resume our regular programming."

Two Roads- “Has this pandemic provided you with any new ideas or things you might want to try from a re-entry center standpoint once things return to normal?”

Penny Rowan- "We in education have discussed the possibility of some classes continuing to be offered as packet classes, or even some kind of hybrid model, once normal programming resumes. I’m not sure it’s the best plan for all classes, but we have developed about a dozen new classes during this time to try to meet the needs of the inmates. While it won’t be an immediate issue, I also anticipate these hybrid and packet classes might be useful once we are closer to capacity again, and classes are full or harder offer to all who want them."

Two Roads

Kewanee LSRC's Restorative Justice Program

V.8 Vaccine

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