



UMB News

CEC Registers Neighbors for COVID-19 Vaccine

April 13, 2021 | By [Jena Frick](#)

On Wednesday April 7, Caprese Wilson was working her regular job as a construction worker in the Poppleton neighborhood of West Baltimore. Just as she was taking off her hard hat for a break, a group of women wearing colorful scrubs and carrying clipboards rounded the corner and asked if she would like to get signed up for the COVID-19 vaccine.

After weeks of trying to get an appointment at one of the mass vaccination clinics, Wilson was overjoyed to be able to talk to a live person and get an appointment for the vaccine.

"This is so great!" she said after confirming her vaccine appointment. "It has been so difficult finding a time slot and they came right up to me on my lunch break and just handed one to me. This is something that everybody needs."

Wilson has seen first-hand how essential the vaccine is to fight the pandemic. Early this year, her father had nearly died after being diagnosed with the COVID-19.

"This vaccine is so important for everyone to protect not only themselves, but everybody else around," she said. "Not just essential workers or older people, but everybody. People need to stay safe because it is not a joke."

The group of women who signed Wilson up for her vaccination appointment are all students at the [University of Maryland School of Nursing](#) (UMSON). Led by **Kelly Doran, PhD, RN**, an associate professor at UMSON, this group of students has been working with members of the [University of Maryland, Baltimore's](#) (UMB) [Community Engagement Center](#) (CEC) to canvass the surrounding neighborhoods and get every Baltimore community member they meet an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine.

"We're finding that it's not that people in West Baltimore don't want to get vaccinated, it's that the process of getting signed up is confusing," says Doran, who is also the director of Health and Wellness at UMB's CEC. "There are multiple websites you can sign up on, some people don't have internet access, they don't know what number to call, or they just need somebody to sit with them and answer their question. I think it's really important to make that human connection to help people get vaccinated so we can keep everybody safe."

Using tablets and a mobile hotspot, the nursing students are able to directly sign community members up for an appointment at the UMB vaccination clinic in UMB's SMC Campus Center. The appointments can be scheduled for as early as the next day. This also provides an opportunity for community members to get one-on-one time with a healthcare professional so they can ask questions and learn more about the vaccine.



Maddie Boyes, RN (right), and Hayley Carper, RN (center), two students at the University of Maryland School of Nursing, help William Lipmann, a West Baltimore community member, get registered for a vaccine appointment.

“There’s no better way to reach people than contact with a living and breathing human,” says **Nneka Mitchell, RN**, one of the UMSO students. “They know that we’re part of the university community, so they know that we’re giving them good information and that establishes trust, which can’t always be done through other means.”

This group of nursing students has been walking through the community

every Wednesday for the last four weeks. In addition to their efforts, there are several other canvassing groups made up of faculty and staff from the CEC and volunteer community members, who are hitting the pavement to get neighbors a vaccination appointment. So far, they have collectively signed up nearly 150 people from all over West Baltimore.

“This is amazing having these guys out here doing something for us,” said William Lipmann after he signed up both himself and his elderly mother for vaccination appointment. “They’re out here trying to make sure that we save our own lives because a lot of us have just given up.”

The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. **Hayley Carper, RN**, one of the UMSO students, says that their efforts out in the community have spread through word of mouth. They have even had neighbors flagging them down to ask them about the vaccine.

“We have people seeing us on the street, and pull their cars over to talk to us,” she says. “There was one time when we walked over to somebody and started getting them registered and then we turned around and there’s a line of five other cars behind them waiting to get signed up for the vaccine.”

Carper has been working in a long-term care facility since the start of the pandemic and the canvassing effort has brought her a huge sense of relief.

“I was working in the darkest of dark when COVID started,” she says. “I was dealing with a lot of deaths and sickness. Employees were sick, managers were sick, and patients were sick and dying every day. Now, that this vaccine is really rolling out and more and more people are getting vaccinated, it feels like there truly is light at the end of the tunnel.”

In addition to signing neighbors up for vaccination appointments, the nursing students are also handing out bags of supplies that include a face mask, hand sanitizer, and an information packet about COVID-19 and the vaccine.

“This makes me feel really proud to be a nurse,” says Doran. “I’m really proud to be part of UMB where people are really working to continue to help serve the community and serve the neighbors close to our university.”

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