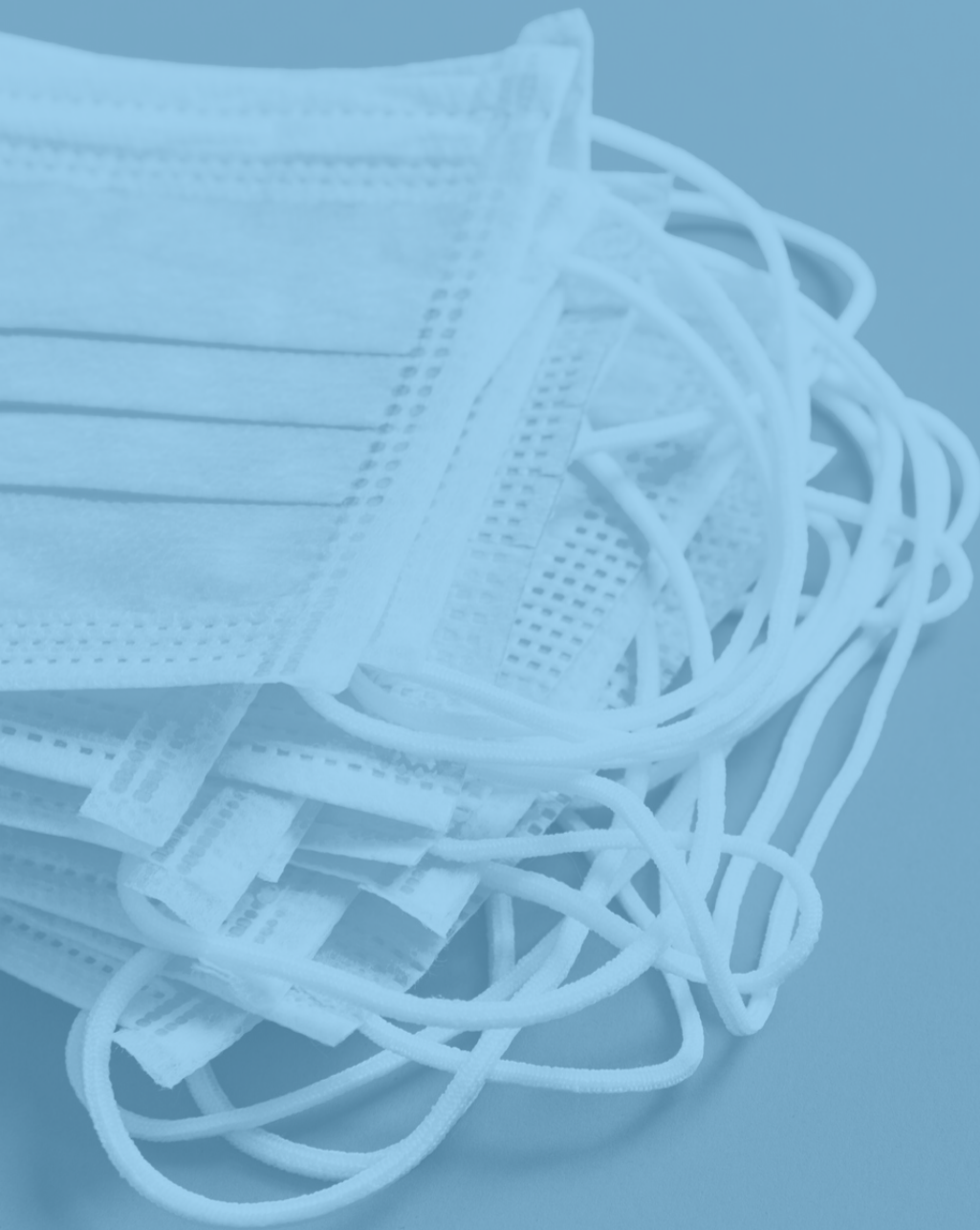
A syringe is shown drawing vaccine from a vial. The vial has a label that reads "VACCINE", "covid - 19", and "sars cov - 2". The background is a dark, blurred image of a world map.

WHY — AND HOW — I CHOSE TO GET VACCINATED

STORIES FROM THE RHODE ISLAND ORGANIZING PROJECT



The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the deep inequities in our nation's health system and the critical importance of affordable health coverage. The devastating impact of COVID-19 is part of a larger pattern of longstanding unjust and discriminatory barriers to health care and economic security for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), older adults, immigrants, low-income people, rural communities and people with disabilities.

To address barriers to care and improve vaccine confidence, COVID-19 vaccines need to be equitably distributed to reach people where and when it is most convenient for them. People should be engaged in the communities where they live, work and worship to protect everyone in the community. The more people see friends, family and others getting vaccinated with no ill effects, the more confidence people will have in the vaccine.

By leveraging community-based solutions, the vaccines can get to the people that need them the most. **The following stories are told in people's own, unedited words. They tell the reasons why Rhode Islanders chose to get vaccinated and the ways that they were able to access the vaccine in their communities. They remind us we are healthier when everyone has the opportunity to thrive.**

As a college student, many of us believe we are “invincible” against COVID-19. I witnessed many of my colleague’s battle this virus just as older adult do. As I am in my senior year of nursing school, I was expecting to be immersed in clinical settings, which have been compromised due to the pandemic. Thankfully, I am able to attend some in person, which allowed me to appreciate the role of nurses during these unprecedented times. As a future nurse, I believe it was my duty to set an example for others. Choosing to get the COVID-19 vaccine is a step in the direction of normalcy and to protect not only myself, but others as well. **I chose to be vaccinated for my friends, family, and most importantly, my future patients.**

ALYVIA A.



Rhode Island



My name is Amy. I live in Providence in elderly/disabled housing. When the lockdown began, I already had 2 neighbors affected by the virus. One woman died and another neighbor who had helped care for her became ill, but fully recovered. Weeks later I was quarantined because my partner was exposed to a symptomatic coworker. A dear friend got the virus in November 2020 and died in January.

Only the vaccine could lessen my chance of contracting the virus or spreading it to others.

My neighbors & I were vaccinated at scheduled clinics in our building. I'm grateful for the people who planned & conducted these events.

I counted the days until I got those shots. I don't care for needles but this was too important.

Both shots left me with pain in my arm lasting about a day. A few days after each shot I had flu-like symptoms (body aches, sore throat, headache), which lasted a day or so.

AMY



Providence, RI



My name is Barbara and I live in Providence. I chose vaccination for my son and for me. We were both able to be vaccinated at the same time.

My former residence had a vaccination clinic in the building, due to the large majority of tenants being seniors. The management posted notices on everyone's door; we were asked you to come down no sooner than 5 minutes prior to our vaccination appointment.

The process itself was excellent; the person who vaccinated me was a retired pediatrician. He explained why it was important to hold on to my vaccination card. I didn't have any side effects, my son who is 21 felt tired, other than that, he was fine.

I was actually able to use my vaccination card to gain entry into the DMV to get my ID card. The security guard seemed grateful when I showed him the card. I also presented it when I had my nails done. The manicurist said she felt much more at ease touching me because I shared my vaccination status with her. **Showing my card seems to make people more comfortable in public places, where I'm getting services.**

BARBARA H.



Providence, RI



My name is Barbara and I live in Newport.

Some of my family members became ill with COVID19; it hit my family very hard. I also had friends and family who died from this disease.

I learned from my parents the history of infectious diseases like polio, measles and small pox, how devastating these diseases were, and that vaccines saved lives. I, like them, believe in science. When the vaccines became available, I wanted to be first in line.

The Newport Housing Authority partnered with Caremark/CVS. They came to our building and residents who wished to be vaccinated sat in their apartment doorway as they went door to door. We sat for 15 minutes to make sure no one had any immediate side effects. I applaud Rhonda Mitchell, Exec. Director of housing for setting the vaccination clinic up.

I was very excited about getting the vaccine. I was much more afraid of COVID19 than of the vaccination. I had sore with the first shot and I was a bit tired with a mild headache. After the second shot, I was very tired, with a mild headache and chills. I slept quite a bit for the next few days, after that I was fine.

BARBARA M.



Newport, RI



My name is Barbara Thompson. I live in East Providence, RI.

I recently received the COVID19 vaccine. I did not have too many symptoms after the shot. Nothing really happened.

I was worried about getting the shot after hearing some of the stories about people who had symptoms. I have some health problems and I live by myself, so I was worried. I guess I was overthinking it.

I decided to get the vaccine despite my fears and hesitancy. I followed an old motto my mother used to say. "It is better to be safe than sorry"

I chose what I needed to do rather than what I wanted to do. I decided it was worth risking a headache and chills than being on a ventilator. Getting covid would be 10 times worse.

I would encourage other people to get the vaccine. Hopefully, we all have someone we care for. If not for yourself, do it for them.

Whatever you think of the vaccine, it saves lives. It will give you back your freedom. We will never be safe until everyone gets on board.

BARBARA T.



East Providence, RI



My name is Charlie; here's my vaccination story.

There was nothing special in my decision to be vaccinated. I knew that COVID can be disabling or deadly. **I have one friend who passed away from COVID. I have another friend who is 75 years old, who came through COVID without a scratch. It is impossible for any individual to know which would happen if they came down with COVID, so I got vaccinated to avoid the worst-case scenario.** Now I am able to go out in public without a mask in some places. I still have to wear a mask on the bus and in doctor's offices, but at my spiritual center and in most restaurants, I don't have to worry about wearing a mask. I was actually concerned about sitting in close quarters with people on the bus. I feel more comfortable taking the bus now that I have been vaccinated. It is something I don't have to worry about anymore.

I had a problem with the technology online when I tried to schedule my vaccination appointment, so I called Providence City Hall and they set it up for me. When I got to the vaccination site, they took me right away, even though I got there a few minutes ahead of my appointment time. Each time, I got the vaccine, and then they suggested that I sit down for a few minutes to make sure I was okay. Each time I got my vaccine I felt like playing basketball, because the vaccination site was in a gym. I am just kidding. At my age, I don't play much basketball anymore. After each shot, I was a bit thirsty so I got some juice nearby. I later read that it is a good idea to eat and drink fluids before you get your vaccine. After the first shot, I was particularly tired the following morning, so I slept more than usual. Other than that, I don't remember any side effects.

CHARLIE



Providence, RI



My name is Debra and I live in Providence. I decided to be vaccinated, because I am an older diabetic and understood that the infection rate of COVID19 are 2-3 times higher for me. I learned that if I got COVID19 I most likely would become sicker and possibly might have to be hospitalized. **I learned all I could about COVID19, the vaccines themselves and the side effects. I also knew that I wanted to protect my community and myself. It was an easy decision after that.**

Now that I'm vaccinated I feel more secure and safe knowing that I've done all I can to make sure I stay well. I still wear a mask, wash my hands often and keep my distance from others when I can.

I encourage anyone who has questions about the vaccine to get the answers you need to make a well-informed decision.

DEBRA W.



Providence, RI



My name is Diamond Madsen. I live in Pawtucket, RI.

I was nervous about getting the vaccine because I have asthma. I decided to get it because I did not want to get COVID and be intubated.

I did not have too many side effects from the vaccine. I had a sore arm and a headache.

I had my Covid vaccine at Mathewson Street Church in Providence. I would not have done it if it were anywhere else. Kevin from the church called me and told me that he had a spot for me.

I wish we had more places like the church. Everyone was so warm to people. They made it comfortable for everyone. It did not matter your walk of life. They were right there with people when they took their shot.

I hope everyone gets their covid shot. We all need to wear our masks and stay safe.

DIAMOND



Pawtucket, RI



Although I have always believed in science, I did quite a bit of research on both the coronavirus and the vaccines. **It was clear to me as a woman of color that COVID19 was a far greater risk to my health than any vaccine being offered in the U.S. I have now been fully vaccinated.**

It was difficult to get through the technology to make the appointment. However, the vaccination site was easy to get to and the process itself was quick and professional. The side effects were mild (body aches and tiredness). The sense of relief I felt after receiving my second shot was overwhelming.

People of color are dying of COVID19 at twice the rate of White Americans. We are three times as likely to be hospitalized due to COVID 19. Yet our vaccination rates are half that of White Americans.

Talk about being vaccinated with your family and friends, it could save their life.

MARJORIE W.



Woonsocket, RI



My name is Sherman Pines. I just recently spent time in a nursing facility. During that stay, I was asked by one of the staff if I wanted to take the covid-19 vaccine and I answered yes. However, before I was to take it I was released. **I wanted to take the shot because of underlying medical conditions and I was fearful of catching covid-19. It just so happened returning home to my senior housing complex, I received a notice saying that the covid-19 vaccine would be administered where I live.** I signed up for the on-site vaccination clinic in my building. I'm happy that I was able to take that vaccine and I have received both doses.

SHERMAN P.



Rhode Island



My name is Toren, I'm 16 and I was vaccinated AFTER having COVID19.

COVID19 affects everyone differently I didn't get that sick. The quarantine was worse than the symptoms because I had to separate from my family. **The reason why I decided to be vaccinated is to protect not only myself but also those around me. I also wanted to be part of defeating the corona virus.**

The vaccination experience was faster than a doctor's appointment. The staff at the center was extremely professional and efficient. I was in and out in less than 30 minutes. The anticipation was much worse than the experience, which was great. I got a lollipop!

After the first vaccination, I had no symptoms at all. After the second shot, the only side effect was some tiredness.

TOREN



Rhode Island



I was nervous about getting the COVID 19 vaccine, but I did some research. I also received a lot of information from Marjorie Waters at the RI Organizing Project and the Providence Community Health Center.

I told my granddaughter **with my history of heart aches and other health issues I was better off getting the vaccine. If I get COVID, it will not be as bad because I received the vaccine.**

I did not have any serious side effects from the vaccine. I was very tired the first day and my arm was a bit sore but that was about it.

I received my shot at the Mathewson Street Church in Providence. It was fast. I was in and out. Many homeless people came because Kevin and Scott at the church helped sign people up. The homeless trust them. The homeless and the formerly homeless do not like to sign up on the phone or computer. Personal contact is the best way to sign them up for the vac.

WENDY



Providence, RI



THANK YOU

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