

PREPARE STL

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT EARLY MAY UPDATE

I. PrepareSTL Purpose & Overview

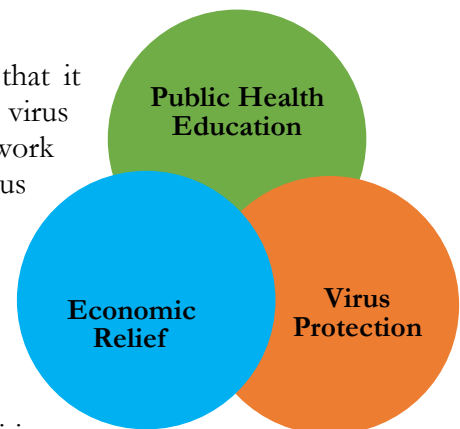
The City of St. Louis and St. Louis County Health Departments, together with the St. Louis Regional Health Commission (RHC), St. Louis Integrated Health Network (IHN), St. Louis Community Health Worker Coalition, Alive and Well Communities and the St. Louis Mental Health Board (MHB) have joined forces to undertake a unified communications and outreach campaign geared toward the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. This campaign, called PrepareSTL, provides vital information and resources to disproportionately impacted community members (specifically African Americans, People of Color and low-to-moderate income residents living in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County), that helps them to stop the spread of the coronavirus and survive its adverse social and economic impacts.

II. Community Outreach Campaign and Results (April 9 – May 3, 2020)

Street Canvassing

The cornerstone of PrepareSTL's community outreach campaign has been its street canvassing initiative. Conventional canvassing involves the systemic initiation of direct contact with individuals around issues and topics of interest. PrepareSTL's canvassing is distinct because it employs the public presence aspect of conventional canvassing while maintaining the social distancing necessitated by the current public health crisis. Trained volunteers, who reflect, live and work in the communities being canvassed, post public health information in high traffic community hotspots that are located in areas with high rates of COVID-19 infection. While at these hotspots, they also give personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to employees that contain surgical masks, mask instruction cards, paper bags for decontamination, alcohol wipes and PrepareSTL flyers. Canvassers, many of whom experience the same hardships as those they engage during their canvasses, receive \$360 Visa gift cards in appreciation for their service.

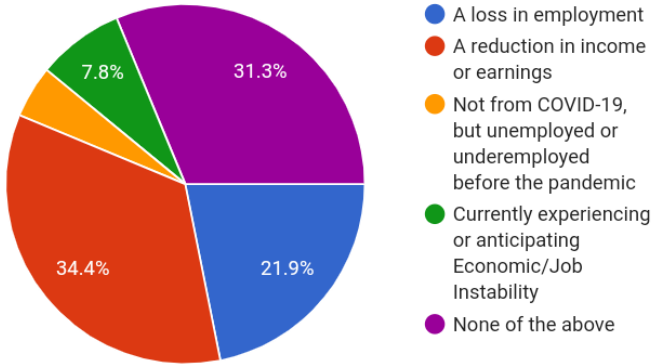
What makes PrepareSTL's canvassing model so impactful is that it combines three crucial elements: public health education, virus protection and economic relief. These campaign components work together to: 1) elevate public awareness of both the coronavirus and the social and medical resources that can help people to survive; 2) protect the lives of non-medical essential workers who interface with the public daily, often without access to PPE or strict workplace enforcement of public health protocols; and 3) provide financial assistance to canvassers who are themselves made vulnerable by economic insecurity, structural inequalities and racial disparities. What emerges is a triple bottom line of positive impacts that simultaneously advances heightened public awareness, community protection, and income support.



In fact, the value of PrepareSTL’s financial assistance has been confirmed by a survey of canvassers which revealed that 64% of those who responded had experienced a loss in employment, reduction in earnings and economic instability as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This number grew to nearly 70% when taking into account canvassers who were unemployed or underemployed, though not as a result of COVID-19. See the pie chart below for more details.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced:

64 responses



Street Canvassing Results

Between April 11 and May 3, PrepareSTL’s community outreach and engagement team conducted four large street canvasses and two smaller, hotspot specific, canvasses. One-hundred and five community volunteers successfully visited 529 community hotspots in 20 zip codes over the course of three weeks. Targeted zip codes included high poverty, high infection areas in both St. Louis City and County:

■ 63101	■ 63102	■ 63103	■ 63104	■ 63106
■ 63107	■ 63108	■ 63110	■ 63112	■ 63113
■ 63115	■ 63120	■ 63121	■ 63130	■ 63133
■ 63136	■ 63137	■ 63138	■ 63147	■ 63034

Local businesses that have remained open within these areas during shelter in place restrictions and that have heavy foot traffic and high visibility were designated as community hotspots.¹ Because of their importance, canvassers took laminated posters (and sometimes sandwich boards) to these locations as a means of elevating public awareness of the virus and critical community resources. They also distributed PPE kits to any personnel that they encountered. Hotspots have included:

■ Grocery Stores	■ Gas Stations	■ Beauty Supplies
■ Convenience Stores	■ Pharmacies	■ Health Centers
■ Laundromats	■ Liquor Stores	■ Check Cashing Stores
■ Schools		

¹ Hotspots were identified through a partnership with St. Louis University sociologist Dr. Chris Prener.

The first two canvasses focused heavily on North St. Louis City and County. The third canvas extended to additional North County zip codes and some South St. Louis City areas of interest. The fourth canvas targeted hotspots within South St. Louis City as well as turfs that remained in the region’s northern communities. Two smaller canvasses were also conducted that focused on St. Louis Public Schools’ (SLPS’) food distribution sites as well as Federally Qualified Health Centers and testing sites. Future canvasses will include early childhood education centers and hotspots that serve the region’s immigrant, refugee and New American communities.



Initial Insights

While data from the first four rounds of canvasses is still being analyzed, initial insights from debriefings with canvassers have been both revealing and troubling. Repeatedly, canvassers found that:

<p>1. Many community members lack awareness of COVID-19’s severity and adverse impacts. They also do not trust and/or are not listening to conventional communications channels that are responsible for disseminating virus information.</p>	<p>2. A preponderance of community members lacks knowledge of what to do to stop the spread of the virus. They also are not aware of the medical and social resources available to help them during this crisis.</p>
<p>3. A number of businesses, including large chain establishments and small “mom and pop” operations are not protecting their employees (who are most often low wage workers grateful to be employed) or the public. They do not have and/or are not providing masks and gloves to their staffs.</p>	<p>4. Enforcement of crowd control and social distancing practices within store settings is inconsistent at best and non-existent in many locations. 5. In general, community members do not know how to properly use PPE, even if they have access to it.</p>
<p>6. Most businesses were grateful to receive any information on the virus, public health mitigation efforts and social service supports. Their employees were also excited about the PPE kits that they were given and requested more.</p>	<p>7. PPE remains largely inaccessible and unaffordable (profiteering is taking place with some locations selling surgical masks for \$10 each) for those most impacted by the virus.</p>

Community Based PPE Giveaways

In addition to canvassing, PrepareSTL has organized giveaways of PPE, specifically surgical masks and gloves, for vulnerable community members. The campaign has partnered with The T (founded by trauma surgeon and community activist Dr. Laurie Punch), the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, BJC (Christian Hospital Northeast and Barnes Jewish Hospital), Mercy Hospital St. Louis, the Regional Business Council, Missouri Faith Voices, Christ The King Church, North City leaders, community donors and its health department sponsors to offer basic protection to **community**

members at high risk of infection with low access to protection. These include low and moderate income individuals and families in need of food supports and non-medical essential workers who volunteers encounter during canvassing.

PPE Giveaway Results

To date, the community outreach and engagement team has assembled and distributed nearly 11,000 PrepareSTL PPE kits.² These kits have been given to people who have participated in the Urban League’s food and toiletries drives in North St. Louis City and County as well as in East St. Louis. They have also been distributed via the North City aldermen’s food drive thru in O’Fallon Park. Thus far, the campaign has given away:

■ 16,000 Surgical Masks	■ 11,000 Pairs of Gloves	■ 3,000 Hand Soaps
■ 10,725 Paper Bags for Decontamination	■ 10,725 PPE Instruction Cards	■ 10,725 PrepareSTL Flyers ■ 7,725 Alcohol Wipes

Note: All of the bags, soaps, and wipes were provided by Dr. Punch at The T along with most of the instruction cards and many of the gloves.

PrepareSTL also gave away PPE kits during its third and fourth street canvasses to employees at the hotspots it was visiting. This was in response to repeated requests for PPE made by essential workers at these locations who decried having no protections. PPE giveaways have now been integrated into the campaign’s standard canvassing practice.

Yard Signs Campaign

PrepareSTL is expanding its efforts to meet the growing need for heightened community awareness and virus protection among its target populations. As part of its expansion, it has launched a yard sign campaign in partnership with Siteman Cancer Center, SLPS, Missouri Faith Voices, St. Louis Clergy Coalition, Metropolitan Congregations United, local childcare centers and municipal leaders. Siteman had 1,000 PrepareSTL yard signs printed that publicize ways to stop the spread of COVID-19 and that promote the campaign’s website. Yard signs are being installed via a special street canvas and through distributions to partnering organizations.



Yard Sign Results

Siteman delivered yard signs at the end of April. The outreach team has been placing these signs in the most impacted zip codes throughout St. Louis City and County with distribution support from various church, community and neighborhood groups. Distribution thus far has included:

■ 35 signs for the St. Louis Board of Aldermen	■ 100 signs for West End, Fountain Park and Lewis Place community groups	■ 240 signs for early childhood education centers throughout St. Louis City and County
■ 100 signs for 24:1 municipalities	■ 54 signs for SLPS food distribution sites	
■ 90 signs for 30 churches	■ 100 signs for canvassers	

² The exact number of kits distributed by May 3, 2020 is 10,725.

III. Next Phase (Mid May – June 30, 2020)

Street Canvassing

PrepareSTL will continue its street canvassing efforts with at least three additional large canvasses focused on yard sign installations, immigrants and childcare centers. While yard signs have been discussed above, the immigrant and childcare canvasses are described in greater detail below.

Immigrant Canvas and Outreach

PrepareSTL has formed an immigrant outreach team that includes Amanda Tello, Alicia Hernández and Juan Narváez who together will conduct street canvassing for immigrants, refugees and new Americans in mid to late May. This team, which is part of the larger campaign team, will focus primarily on:

■ Mexicans and other Spanish speakers	■ Bosnians
■ Vietnamese residents	■ Arabic speakers from the Middle East
■ African diaspora residents who speak Swahili and French	■ Chinese community members

All PrepareSTL collateral has been translated with content adjustments that reflect the different social and medical supports needed for communities facing language and cultural barriers. These materials will be disseminated by canvassers from the abovementioned communities, who will visit at least 140 community hotspots comprised mainly of businesses, churches, apartment complexes and streets. As with earlier canvasses, PPE kits will be distributed to personnel at these locations.

In addition to the upcoming street canvas, team members are forming partnerships with social service providers like the Immigrant Service Provider Network, Bilingual International Assistance Services STL, the Immigrant Housing Project, the International Institute, St. Louis Mutual Aid Society, Casa de Salud and LifeWise STL to share public health information more broadly and to assist in the widespread distribution of PPE. Through partnership, PrepareSTL will distribute thousands of PPE kits containing up to 20,000 surgical masks for immigrant community members who have limited access to these protections.

Early Childhood Education Center Canvas

On May 15 and 16, 2020, PrepareSTL will conduct a street canvas for early childhood education (ECE) centers operating in its target zip codes within St. Louis City and County. This canvas will reach roughly 240 ECE hotspots in advance of the region’s reopening efforts, sharing not only public health information, but also the state’s ECE reopening guidelines. PrepareSTL will provide a printed copy of the state’s handbook to each hotspot as a means of advancing the health and well-being of childcare workers and the families they serve.

The campaign is also collaborating with ECE hubs and the COVID-19 Regional Response Team to organize this canvas, obtain and assemble PPE, and engage up to 60 non-working childcare providers as street canvassers. PPE distributions for this canvas will be massive, involving small, medium and large PPE kits that contain up to 22,000 surgical masks, 2,500 KN95s, mask instruction guides, and PrepareSTL posters and flyers. The number of staff and children at the centers will determine the size of the kits that each receives. Additionally, all hotspot will be given yard signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Community Based PPE Giveaways

As the region prepares to reopen and institutions and systems begin to require masks as a condition of service, PPE giveaways to those at high risk of infection with low access to protection will be mission critical for PrepareSTL. Because of this, the campaign intends to distribute nearly 45,000 masks through its outreach efforts to immigrants and ECE providers as mentioned earlier. It also plans to amplify its PPE kit distributions to community-based organizations that provide food, personal care items and basic needs to low income individuals and families.



Operational Integration with The T

PrepareSTL can disseminate at least 5,000 PPE kits per week to community and school groups provided that it has sufficient supply. However, sustaining this level of kit production along with execution of its street canvassing giveaways requires expanded operational capacity. To achieve this capacity, it is integrating its PPE efforts with Dr. Punch's work at The T, combining the processing of community requests, logistics and inventory management, and PPE kit assembly into a single, collaborative effort.



Cloth Mask Campaign

Campaign organizers are aware that if COVID were a race, it would be both a sprint and a marathon. Public health experts have maintained that life is going to be different for the region not just in the immediate term, but also in the foreseeable future. This means that vulnerable community members will need PPE for both now and later as the region braces for additional surges in infections in the summer and fall.

PrepareSTL maintains that reusable cloth masks with filters are a viable option that will provide the level of daily protection that most community members will need to work, live and ride public transit in a reopened state. With backing from public, private and philanthropic sources, the outreach team would like to launch a reusable mask initiative that supplies no-cost cloth masks (with filters) to community members disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 with the principal aim of normalizing daily mask use. The team recognizes that cloth masks with filters offer only limited protection from virus exposure, but this is better than the single layer bandanas that many individuals are likely to default to, which provide significantly less protection. Reusable masks are also a more affordable and accessible option than disposable surgical masks, which for most are still hard to come by in quantities large enough to support daily use.

As part of its cloth mask initiative, PrepareSTL could conduct a massive media and distribution blitz that gets at least 100,000 masks onto the faces of African Americans, people of color and low income individuals. To accomplish this, the campaign would leverage all of its partnerships from its street canvasses, PPE giveaways and yard sign efforts, employing its relationships with healthcare providers, school districts, faith-based associations, municipalities, business groups and community organizations to support widespread distribution, primarily (though not exclusively) in North St. Louis City and County.

Community Partnerships

The success of PrepareSTL’s next phase will depend largely on the strength of its outreach partnerships. To help deliver basic protection to racial and ethnic communities, non-medical essential workers, the unhoused, low income individuals and families and others at grave risk of infection will require that it drastically scales up and accelerates its work. The only way to do this effectively in a short period of time is to collaborate with direct service providers, community groups, and anchor institutions that have mature communication and distribution channels. Among these are school districts, faith groups, health care providers, municipalities *et. al.* that have remained connected to their constituencies during this period of crisis. PrepareSTL will be working with all of these groups, but is currently expanding its efforts with area school districts.

School Outreach

PrepareSTL launched its school outreach efforts with SLPS when it conducted its mini-canvass of the district’s 27 food distribution sites at the beginning of May. The campaign intends to build upon its work with schools by seeking partnerships with all of the North County school districts that operate within its target zip codes, including:

■ Hazelwood School District	■ University City School District
■ Jennings School District	■ Riverview Gardens School District
■ Ferguson-Florissant School District	■ Normandy School District

With each of these districts, PrepareSTL is in the process of requesting that its collateral materials be posted onto their electronic and social media platforms. It is also preparing to give PPE kits to all of the families that receive meals from the districts’ weekly food allotments. Additionally, it is willing to install yard signs at food distribution sites (as it did with SLPS) or other high visibility district locations.

The Many Faces of Community Love – PrepareSTL Canvassers & Outreach Team Members

