

Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department



Web: health.hamiltontn.org

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

September 4, 2020

Health Department, Community Foundation COVID-19 Testing at African-American Churches

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN – Since early June, the Hamilton County Health Department, with a grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, has made free COVID-19 testing accessible to vulnerable populations in Hamilton County. Central to this effort was a partnership with predominately African-American churches who offered their parking lots and congregations to host the drive-through and walk-up testing sites.

The sites rotated among the partner churches every Saturday and Sunday between June 6th and August 30th. A total of 7,244 people were tested through the sites.

“We want to thank the African-American church leaders and congregations for stepping up in this vital and historic effort,” said Health Department Director of Community Health Services Bill Ulmer, “We also thank the Community Foundation for the financial support, all volunteers and staff, and of course, the community for showing up to be tested to help us slow the spread of this virus.”

The grant-funded effort was successful in reaching [vulnerable populations](#) that historically show negative disease outcomes in Hamilton County.

According to [US Census Bureau data \(2019\)](#), blacks make up 19.3% of Hamilton County’s population, Hispanics or Latinos 6.0%, other 4.7%, and whites 75.9%.

In contrast, data from the church testing sites showed that blacks accounted for 44.8% of the total number of tests performed, Hispanics or Latinos 5.8%, other races 10.0%, and whites 45.0%.

In sum, this shows that African American residents were tested at more than twice their population rate.

Out of 7,244 tests, 562 came back positive, which is a 7.8% positivity rate.

The identification of positive cases allow Health Department investigators to trace contacts and quarantine those who might have come into contact with the virus, thus slowing the spread of the virus in our community.

It should be noted that the data in this release pertains to the grant-funded effort only and not to the Health Department’s regular COVID testing sites.

The Health Department and Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga would like to thank the following churches (shown alphabetically):

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- Faith Family Chattanooga Church, 37407
- Faith Temple Baptist Church, 37403
- Greater Tucker Baptist Church, 37411
- Hawkinsville Missionary Baptist Church, 37421
- Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, 37416
- New Hope Baptist Church, 37411
- Olivet Baptist Church, 37403
- Orchard Knob Missionary Baptist Church, 37404
- Stoney Point Baptist Church, 37379
- Union Hill Baptist Church, 37406
- The Village Church, 37406

“It’s truly been amazing to witness this level of collaboration and unity during this pandemic,” said Community Foundation’s Vice President of Community Investment Dwayne Marshall, “Together, we have prevented illness and saved lives, and demonstrated how the faith-based community plays a crucial role in serving our community.”

Although the Community Foundation grant-funded initiative has ended, free Health Department COVID-19 testing continues seven days a week, 7AM-11:30AM, at the Alstom Plant, 1125 Riverfront Parkway, 37402. The Health Department will continue to offer free testing as long as there is need.

For more information about COVID-19 or free Health Department testing, call the hotline at (423) 209-8383, or visit these Health Department resources:

- Website: <http://health.hamiltontn.org/>
- English Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonTNHealthDept/>
- Spanish Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN/>
- Subscribe to the English mailing list: <https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/j6u3e5>
- Subscribe to the Spanish mailing list: <https://landing.mailerlite.com/webforms/landing/h4c2i4>
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