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**Vaccine campaign shares stories of Utahns affected by COVID; 1,274 cases reported Tuesday**

By Ashley Imlay, KSL.com |

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SALT LAKE CITY — Like many, Shelly Wenzbauer became frustrated throughout the pandemic as schools and businesses shut down.

But when her husband got diagnosed with leukemia last December, "that changed our world," said Wenzbauer, a high school biology teacher.

Her voice broke Tuesday as she described the struggles her family has faced since then.

"We both had the vaccine, and in my husband's particular type of leukemia, it is the very white blood cells that would make the vaccine effective. And so it really didn't work for him — it was completely ineffective," Wenzbauer explained, speaking to reporters at the Salt Lake County Government Center on Tuesday, as leaders announced the launch of a new campaign aimed at encouraging more residents to get vaccinated.

Wenzbauer's husband is in the hospital now, receiving a bone marrow transplant. While "things are looking really good," the teacher begged for the community's help to save him.

"Because right now, he has zero white blood cells," she said. "His official count right now is zero, and that means he just can't fight this off, and there really is no medicine or artificial help he can receive to overcome this loss he has in his own immune system. And wearing masks and getting vaccinated as a community is the only thing that really is going to keep him safe."

As a school teacher, Wenzbauer needs to be in the classroom with students each day. She would love to encourage them to get the vaccine, wear masks, "and to help keep our community safe," she said, noting that it's not just her husband who faces serious risk from the coronavirus pandemic.

Wenzbauer is one of several Utahns who share their stories in Salt Lake County's new "The Truth About COVID" campaign. The ads that will run on TV, billboards, the local transit system, Connected TV, digital banners and social media feature a variety of local people who have been affected in some way by the pandemic, including health care workers, people experiencing "long-COVID," teachers and members of at-risk communities.

"The politics associated with this pandemic have obscured the scientific facts and the human impact that COVID has had on our families, our friends and our communities," said Dr. Angela Dunn, executive director at the Salt Lake County Health Department.

The campaign, she said, shares first-person perspectives "from Utahns just like us," whose lives have been impacted by COVID-19.

Dunn said leaders want unvaccinated Utahns to learn from these firsthand experiences "before it's too late."

"I'm broken-hearted that we continue to have the health risk in our community and the challenges that our community is facing now," Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson said.

People who haven't been personally impacted may be able to "ignore" it, but many impacted have faced "significant" losses, Wilson said.

Hospitals are now "underwater" with traditional cases and a higher rate of COVID-19 patients than this time last year, she said.

"And, sadly, 85% of people who died from COVID from Jan. 1 through Sept. 10 were unvaccinated, so that's 299 unvaccinated individuals who passed away during that time frame," Wilson said.

County leaders are not suggesting restaurants and other businesses close again, but they instead urge vaccination for the unvaccinated and mask wearing around others, as well as state and local policies that promote those measures.

"So with that, we really want to both educate and inspire people to step up; and people who may be hesitant, we really felt that some of the real-world stories of COVID's impact were important to tell," Wilson said.

She said her greatest concern now is preserving hospital capacity, and she fears lives will be lost due to accidents or other "unknowns" as health care workers aren't able to respond as quickly as they usually do.

**New Utah data**

The Utah Department of Health confirmed 1,274 new coronavirus cases on Tuesday, as well as 13 new coronavirus deaths.

School-age children account for 290 of the latest cases — 143 cases were among children ages 5-10, 72 cases were 11-13, and 75 were 14-17.

The rolling seven-day average for new cases stands at 1,626 per day, and the average percent positivity rate of people who are tested is 12.9%.

On Tuesday, 581 patients were hospitalized with the disease in Utah — an increase of 19 from the previous day's report. Referral intensive care units that can treat the most serious patients are 90.9% full; overall ICU use stand at 90.5%; and non-ICUs are 58.8% full, health department data shows.

Health care workers administered another 6,133 vaccine doses since Monday's report, bringing total vaccinations given in Utah to 3,349,378.

In the last 28 days, unvaccinated Utahns have faced 5.1 times greater risk of dying from COVID-19, 6.8 times greater risk of being hospitalized due to COVID-19, and 5.9 times greater risk of testing positive for COVID-19 than vaccinated people, the Utah Department of Health said in a statement. Since Feb. 1, the same group has experienced 5.1 times greater risk of dying from COVID-19, 5.2 times greater risk of being hospitalized due to COVID-19, and 4.4 times greater risk of testing positive for COVID-19 than vaccinated people.

So far, the state has confirmed 13,582 breakthrough cases in people who have been fully vaccinated as of more than two weeks ago. Of those breakthrough cases, 721 required hospitalization and 76 died. To date, breakthrough cases account for about 2.8% of the state's total cases since the start of the pandemic, 3.4% of the state's hospitalizations and 2.8% of deaths.

**QUESTIONS:**

* **Using evidence from this text, explain why Salt Lake County has initiated a COVDI-19 vaccination campaign.**
* **Using evidence from this text, explain how the COVID-19 vaccination can help contain the spread of the disease.**
* **Why has COVID-19 became a political hot button?**