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LETTERS OPINION

Letters: Contact tracers need Chicagoans' help to slow the spread of COVID-19

CHICAGO TRIBUNE | DEC 03, 2020



The article [**“Contact tracing may not slow virus much: But the data is guiding Illinois health officials’ decisions”**](#) (Nov. 29) includes important information for all as we work to control the spread of COVID-19.

FEEDBACK

As of Tuesday, there were more than 161,745 COVID-19 cases in Chicago — more than the population of Rockford. More than 3,480 people have died from COVID-19 in Chicago; that’s roughly the number of students who attend Whitney Young Magnet and Little Village Lawndale high schools combined.

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As we strive to stem the transmission of this dreaded disease, working closely with community-based organizations and local leaders in the hardest-hit communities is critical. To that end, the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership and the Chicago Department of Public Health joined forces to create the Chicago COVID Contact Tracing Corps.

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The Workforce Partnership tapped 31 community-based organizations in the city's high economic hardship areas to hire the contact tracers who make up the corps. To date, nearly 600 community members have been hired and trained. Roughly half of those who have completed the rigorous training have begun tracing — a cornerstone of stopping the spread of infectious disease. The corps' work is complementing what city public health officials have been doing since March.

The community groups hired men and women who live in the areas they serve and who reflect the rich diversity of our city and the communities hardest hit by the pandemic. These tracers have the cultural and linguistic competence to connect and communicate with contacts.

Successful tracing means reaching those people who have been exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. If a resident receives a call from (312) 742-6843, he or she is being contacted by a member of the corps. Speaking with the tracer protects us all.

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We encourage readers to pick up the phone if they receive a call. Lives are depending on it.

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— *Karin M. Norington-Reaves, CEO, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, and Dr. Allison Arwady, commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health*

Use of mobile health clinics

I suggest that mobile health clinics could be a valuable part of a strategy to make a COVID-19 vaccine accessible to as many people as possible, especially in

underserved rural areas. Such facilities have already been shown to be effective in other contexts such as delivering health care to homeless people and helping provide medical and social services to at-risk mothers and children.

In fact, if Bill Gates, Jack Dorsey and other well-meaning billionaires are sincere in wanting to do all they can to assist in this crisis, they might do well to partner with the government in investing in, and equipping, a fleet of buses to serve as mobile health clinics for delivering vaccinations to rural communities in the U.S. They could also spur investments in clinics in underserved urban settings. The benefits could be immeasurable.

— *David G. Whiteis, Chicago*

Witnessing acts of grace

These past months have demonstrated to me what good people Americans really are. The word I most associate with these difficult months is “gracious,” something I have felt and witnessed.

As a senior citizen who uses a cane, I remember the young man who tried to help me get an electric cart going at Lowe’s, a couple who without my asking threw out the garbage from my lunch and the couple who surprised me by paying for my lunch. Acts of grace.

FEEDBACK

And I was too happy to help people in the grocery store and drugstore and make gift baskets for two of my neighbors who offered to go shopping for me.

These acts demonstrates that most Americans are generous, cooperative and brave.

— *Judy Arkes, Chicago*

Reminding us of the light

At a time when so many are full of fear, exhaustion and sadness, Barbara Mahany's op-ed was a light in itself ("[Even in December's darkness, we can each find light,](#)" Dec. 1).

Thank you to Mahany for reminding us that the darkness of winter can provide comfort and joy.

— *Claudia Laupmanis, Chicago*

Anniversary of tragic fire

Tuesday was the 62nd anniversary of the Our Lady of the Angels School fire that killed 92 students and three teachers. It was a day that shook my faith and the faith of many others in both our church and civic leaders, but not in the love and mercy of our Lord.

— *Joseph J. Hrnecirik, Westmont*

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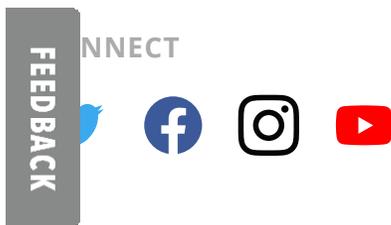
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