

Hartford and health officials going door-to-door Saturday with COVID vaccines: ‘We’ve made the public health and health care available.’

By Ed Stannard

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On Saturday, residents of Hartford neighborhoods will see medical caregivers and UConn Health students in white coats knocking on doors and offering the COVID-19 vaccine.

Dr. Bruce Gould, medical director for the city of Hartford, said the effort, going on for more than a year, breaks down the barriers people have to getting their shots — which may be as simple as not being able to get time off from work or being bed-ridden — and challenges the internal attitudes many have toward those who haven’t gotten vaccinated, Gould said.

That, and actually getting the COVID vaccine into more residents’ arms, has another benefit too.

“What we’re doing is actually bringing it to the neighborhood, and the reaction we’ve gotten has been really heartwarming from my standpoint, though, because everybody says, ‘Oh my God, I’m going to be knocking on doors, cold knocking,’” Gould said.

At the [last canvass in August](#), city Department of Health and Human Services, Harriott Home Health Services and the Hispanic Health Council and [Connecticut Area Health Education Center Network](#) joined volunteers from UConn’s medical, dental, pharmacy, and nursing students and residents in training.

The students are allowed to give the shots if there is a licensed practitioner in their field present, so pharmacy students will be joined by retired UConn pharmacy professor Jill Fitzgerald, Gould said. According to AHEC director Petra Clark-Dufner, 26 students from UConn Health’s professional schools and six preceptors will canvass the city’s North End and South End.

While the goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible, giving out information and relieving anxieties is also important, Gould said.

“It’s a win-win-win. How many wins out there?” he said. “It’s a win if we give one shot the whole morning. It’s a win even if we don’t. But we’ve talked to people. We’ve made the public health and health care available. But we’ve also answered their questions and maybe brought them a little closer to their willingness perhaps to get vaccinated.”

The number the group greets and vaccinates is “the luck of the draw,” Gould said, whether five or 30. Sometimes we start doing homes and as we’re rounding the corner on Maple Ave. or Barber Street or whatever it might be to go up the next block. We get stopped” and 15 minutes have passed.

Then someone else asks, “Hey, what are you doing? They say, Oh, God, I need my booster.’ And by the time we take a breath two, three hours have passed and we haven’t moved from that street which is fine.”

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