

## Your Best Defense Against The Flu: Vaccination

(NAPSA)—Despite warnings from health officials, many Americans are still not aware of the flu as a potentially life-threatening disease, according to a recent survey by Kiwanis International, a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time. Nearly half of the 1,052 Americans polled in the survey do not think the flu is dangerous, and the majority of them (65 percent) are not planning to be vaccinated. Of those not seeking a flu shot, the most popular reason is that they do not want to get sick from the shot—a common myth that health and service organizations aim to discredit.

The survey also found that 63 percent of respondents think washing their hands is the best way to protect against the flu, while only 25 percent think the flu shot is most effective. In reality, getting vaccinated early is the most effective way to help prevent the spread of flu—which is why Kiwanis, together with Novartis Vaccines, has launched a nationwide program to promote flu education and vaccination. “THRIVE” (Tackling Health Risk of Influenza with Vaccination & Education) aims to help protect those at high risk from complications of the flu virus by increasing the number of people who get vaccinated.

“We hope that through education and encouragement, Americans will be empowered to take action against this contagious infection,” said Nelson Tucker, president of Kiwanis Interna-



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tional. “By spreading the word about the importance of vaccination, Kiwanis hopes to foster healthier future generations.”

While many may think the flu is simply a bad cold, it is actually a potentially serious disease that can be fatal for those at high risk. In fact, each year in the U.S., more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 people die from flu. In the 2003-2004 flu season, more children died from flu complications than from the chicken pox, whooping cough and measles combined. Because of this increased risk for children, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its guidelines to recommend that all children ages 6 months to 5 years get vaccinated against the flu.

Flu season can begin as early as October and extend through May, often peaking in January or February. To find a flu vaccination clinic near you, visit [flucliniclocator.org](http://flucliniclocator.org).