



CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

J&J vaccine raises hopes, concerns

1-dose drug strong, but less so against S. African variant

By CARL ZIMMER,
NOAH WELLMAN
AND SHARON LAFRANIERE
The New York Times

Johnson & Johnson, the only major drugmaker developing a single-dose vaccine for COVID, announced Friday that its shot provided strong protection against COVID-19, potentially of-

fering another powerful tool in a desperate race against a worldwide rise in virus mutations. But the results came with a significant cautionary note: The vaccine's efficacy rate dropped from 72% in the United States to 57% in South Africa, where a highly contagious variant is driving most cases. Studies suggest that this variant

also blunts the effectiveness of COVID vaccines made by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Novavax. The variant has spread to at least 31 countries, including the United States, where two cases were documented this week. With these results, Johnson & Johnson became the fifth company supported by the U.S. government to develop an effective

COVID vaccine in less than a year, and the only one that doesn't need two doses — a big advantage when most countries are struggling to get shots in arms more quickly. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was extremely effective in preventing severe cases of COVID — including serious illness caused by the variant, the company said. Though less effective than the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines now authorized in the United States, Johnson & Johnson's is still con-

sidered a strong vaccine by scientists. Annual flu vaccines, for example, are typically 40% to 60% effective. "This is a really great result," said Akiko Iwasaki, immunologist at Yale University. "I hope this vaccine gets approved as soon as possible to reduce disease burden around the world." Johnson & Johnson said it planned to apply for emergency

Turn to **Vaccine, Page 2**

Cheerleader files lawsuit against Northwestern



ERIN HOOLEY/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Hayden Richardson, standing outside her home in Evanston Thursday, is bringing a federal lawsuit against Northwestern University, alleging the school subjected her to sexual harassment and a hostile environment as a member of the cheerleading team.

"This is not the highlight, by any means, of my life or time at Northwestern, but it is certainly the most impactful." — Hayden Richardson

Alleges harassment by drunken fans as officials ignored complaints

By ELYSSA CHERNEY
Chicago Tribune

When Hayden Richardson transferred to Northwestern University for her sophomore year, she hoped that joining the cheerleading team would provide a sense of community and excitement at an unfamiliar school. The team's website and social media pages depicted smiling women, clad in purple and sparkly apparel, tumbling on the sidelines of Big Ten football games. Described as a "noncompetitive cheer team," the program also offered scholarships and covered all travel, equipment and training expenses. But early in her first season, the "dark side" of the program emerged, according to a federal lawsuit Richardson filed Friday against Northwestern. In the 58-page complaint, Richardson details repeated instances where she said she was groped by drunken fans and alumni during university-sanctioned events, alleging the cheer team's head coach required female cheerleaders to "mingle" with powerful donors for the school's financial gain. "It became clear to (Richardson) that the cheerleaders were being presented as sex objects to titillate the men that funded the majority of Northwestern's athletics programs," the lawsuit says. "After all, the happier these men were, the more money the university would receive from them." During these encounters in 2018 and 2019, Richardson alleges that older men touched her breasts and buttocks over her uniform, picked

Turn to **Lawsuit, Page 2**

Food co-ops a new support system

Amid pandemic, provide chance to 'solve problems on a community level'



CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Michael Jehl picks out spinach and kale from the produce section at Dill Pickle Food Co-Op in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood.

By JESSICA VILLAGOMEZ
Chicago Tribune

In a city with a grocery store on almost every block, the bright green lights that frame Dill Pickle Food Co-Op Market & Deli shine on a steady flow of neighbors turned loyal customers. The only operating grocery food cooperative in the city, Logan Square's Dill Pickle is a community-owned store run by its members. While customers say the Dill Pickle is a fixture in the Logan Square food economy, residents around the region — from Rogers Park to Lombard to Woodstock — are in different stages of trying to launch three other food co-ops. "There is an outcry for a different system and way of supporting communities," said Jillian Jason, who is part of an

Turn to **Co-ops, Page 4**



E. JASON WAMBURG/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

MaryAnn Martin and George Ivy distribute sandwiches and hot chocolate to homeless people gathered at Plaza Tenochtitlan on 18th Street in the Pilsen neighborhood on Jan. 4.

Immigrant homeless rely on efforts of community

Needed assistance for stability not supplied by the government

By LAURA RODRIGUEZ
PRESA
Chicago Tribune

One wintry night a few days before Christmas, Juan Diaz saw an old man limping while trying to sell *mazapanes*, a kind of Mexican candy, in front of a taco shop on the West Side of Chicago. Diaz had seen the man before while heading home from work, so he stopped and gave him \$20 so that he could go home early to a homeless encampment under a bridge nearby. "It was very cold," Diaz said.

The man, Enrique Rodriguez, 60, couldn't thank him enough. It was more than what he earns in days, he told Diaz. So he bought some tacos and used the rest to buy more *mazapanes* to sell the next day.

Since then, the two have become friends, and on Christmas Day, Diaz gave the man a gift. "It was the only one I got," Rodriguez said in Spanish while sitting under a bus shelter to get out of the cold. "He's been a blessing in my life." Rodriguez is one of about 1,500 Chicagoans who spend their nights in encampments and parks and under bridges, living outdoors year-round.

Turn to **Relief, Page 4**

CPS, teachers still in reopening talks

With the looming threat of a teachers strike, Chicago Public Schools officials and the teachers union extended negotiations into Friday evening as they tried to reach an agreement to reopen schools Monday, when tens of thousands of students are scheduled to return for the first time since March. **ChicagoLand, Page 3**

Biden on the 'cost of inaction'

President Joe Biden warned Friday of a steep and growing "cost of inaction" on his \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief plan as the White House searched for "creative" ways to win public support for a package that is getting a cold shoulder from Senate Republicans. **Nation & World, Page 5**

Brad Biggs: On the Bears

One option the Houston Texans have now that quarterback Deshaun Watson officially has requested a trade: shop for the best offer. That's where the Bears come in: GM Ryan Pace and coach Matt Nagy have a final shot to solve the organization's seven-decade issue. **Chicago Sports**



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Co-ops

Continued from Page 1

effort to start a co-op in Rogers Park. "It's a different model of business. Instead of focusing on the growth, a co-op is tailored on the community and focused on supporting people."

Interest in these kinds of operations increases in turbulent times, experts say. Shopping habits are evolving as residents deal with quarantine boredom, and the desire for fancy cheeses and small-batch microbrews.

The pandemic has also benefited some of these small, locally sourced co-ops that can react more nimbly to interruptions in the food supply.

The Dill Pickle is packed with aisles of bulk pasta, freshly milled flour and specialized produce like black garlic. Most products are organic, and vegan options range widely from bakery goods to prepared meals.

On a recent weekday evening, Mark Weitekamp, of Arcadia Terrace, strolled to the bakery supply aisle during his monthly shopping trip. Weitekamp and his son started baking and making bread in the early months of quarantine.

"I have more time to do this type of stuff since I have more time at home," he said. This week, the father-son pair were going to try a new muffin recipe. Weitekamp needed lavender extract.

"I like the idea of buying organic stuff here rather than a chain store to go out of my way to shop here," he said. "It's local and you're supporting local people."



Cashier Gareth Nibarore works at Dill Pickle Food Co-Op in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood on Jan. 8.

CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Filling a need

As COVID-19 shutdowns closed bars and restaurants last spring, food cooperatives became an option for small retailers in the Midwest.

Philip Shoemaker, manager of local vendor relationships at the Dill Pickle, said he works with more than 70 Midwest-based vendors.

He largely depended on the close relationships he'd built with vendors through weekly farmers market visits when the pandemic created droughts in food production, like meat plants that were shut down because of worker infections.

"It is like a creative ecosystem of vendors," he said. "Some of these businesses have one to two people that run the entire company. We buy direct, there is no middleman, which is better for producers."

In late March, the co-op began offering distributors

and shoppers creative options. Dry products like pasta and coffee used in restaurant service were sold in bulk. Wine typically poured by the glass was now sold by the bottle at retail.

"Distributors are struggling," Shoemaker said. "The beer world makes tons of kegs for on tap service, and almost all brewers have quit filling kegs and have had to make smaller batches that they are canning."

Shoemaker joked that the store sells more bottled beer from Hopewell Brewing Company than the brewery, located just next door.

Solving problems on a community level

According to C.E. Pugh, CEO of the National Co-op Grocers, a business services cooperative for retail food co-ops in the United States, co-op ownership comes as a

result of uncertain times and changing values in shopping habits.

"We can only take so much in this country of saying 'me, me, me.' We are realizing now more than ever that people should take care of one another," he said. "These are periods that are good for cooperative development because people get together and solve problems on a community level."

The National Co-op Grocers represents 147 food co-ops, including five in Illinois. More than 90% of members are natural and organic stores, Pugh said.

As neighborhoods see retail closures because of the pandemic, some communities in the city and across the suburbs are seeking to open their own locally sourced food shops.

"People can see the value of local ownership," Pugh said. "This is a locally owned alternative to publicly traded company. They support local products and

vendors, which is fundamental to the core of those businesses."

The Food Shed Co-op, which was incorporated in 2014, announced in December it had bought land in Woodstock to build its store. The co-op has more than 700 neighborhood owners from McHenry County and surrounding communities.

"Interest in the Shed has been impressive since the beginning, however the COVID-19 pandemic has generated greater demand as people experienced the reality of supply chain breakdowns caused by the pandemic," the co-op said in a statement.

Not a simple process

Food cooperatives first debuted in the '70s and '80s as the main source of groceries for shoppers looking for natural and organic food products rarely found in a traditional grocery store, Pugh said.

Once other stores began to regularly stock natural and organic products in the 2000s, the co-op continued to be the niche neighborhood grocer.

But opening a food cooperative is not a simple process. "It usually takes a thousand community members to invest and volunteer to try to get it open; it's not like it's a company that just opens a store," Pugh said. "These food co-ops serve their neighborhood so they move slowly and deliberately. It is the communities' resources, not a sole proprietor risking their money."

Kathy Nash, co-founder of Prairie Food Co-op based in Lombard, is hoping to break ground in fall 2022.

She has worked the past six years on fundraising for the store.

"People aren't familiar with a cooperative business, and it's a hard idea to sell," she said. "It's not a business making anyone millions. It exists to meet the needs of the community rather than make a group of individuals a lot of money."

Jason, the board president of Wild Onion, a food cooperative hoping to open in Rogers Park, echoed the difficulties in organizing grassroots grocery stores.

Wild Onion has been organizing since 2012 with backers in Rogers Park, Evanston and Edgewater. Community members buy a share for \$250. The co-op has no outside investors and is led by a leadership team elected by the ownership. There are currently more than 1,600 owners.

As the pandemic changed the retail landscape, the team has struggled to find storefront space, but it is committed to its mission. Once open, co-ops have proved they can be creative and effective at sustaining themselves, Jason said.

"The path is a narrow path for those who make products in small batches trying to enter a retail market," Jason said. "In some ways the pandemic brought us closer to the community. We don't want to walk down the street and see these big-box retailers that we don't have a connection to, we don't want a shopping experience that doesn't meet our values when we are trying to nourish ourselves in this time."

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Rely

Continued from Page 1

While every one of them faces different struggles and each has a singular story, for Latino immigrants who are homeless — unable to speak English and lacking legal documentation — the road to stability can't be found in the usual taxpayer-funded channels, leaving individuals and charities to give them a hand.

Nearly two years ago, Rodriguez had an accident at work that left him disabled. A few months after falling ill while attempting to carry a boiler by himself as he collected scrap metal, he also used all his savings on medical expenses and *sobadores* — masseurs — trying to heal his fractured back.

Because of his immigration status, he didn't qualify for medical help or any other federal program while he recovered.

After selling his old pickup truck to pay the last couple of months of Rodriguez' rent, he found himself sleeping in a city bus shelter.

"One day you can be healthy and successful, the next, you can end up like me," he lamented.

Although he has tried, he hasn't been able to find a way out of homelessness because he is unable to do physical work, Rodriguez said. Instead, he's made a home out of an old blue tarp and raggedy blankets under a bridge on Damen near the Pilsen neighborhood.

He relies on walking his white bike to keep him upright as he goes to Damen and Blue Island avenues in the Heart of Chicago neighborhood, where he collects money in front of Raymond's Tacos. Other times, he sells mazes outside nearby grocery stores.

"When it is too cold, or he can't handle the back pain, he stays under the bridge, sometimes going to sleep hungry."

"I'm ashamed to let anyone know how I ended up," he said. "I hope I can heal and work again to save enough money to go back to Mexico."

Rodriguez said he immigrated alone to the United States from Guanajuato, Mexico, in his early 20s, hoping to build a new life in this country and help out his parents in Mexico.

But his plans failed even after having various factory and restaurant jobs. His parents died and though he has a brother, he lost touch with him after becoming homeless, so he is alone.



Enrique Rodriguez, who is homeless, camps under a bridge on South Damen Avenue near the Stevenson Expressway.

TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

"God had other plans for me, but I'm still faithful," he said. For several years a few other homeless Latino immigrants, some of them residents of the same camp as Rodriguez, have gathered every day in Pilsen's Plaza Tenochtitlan, at 18th Street and Blue Island.

The plaza is named after the eagle that adorns the plaza. That's where many of them feel most at home, said Adolfo Morales, who has lived six years in the same encampment where Rodriguez lives. At least 10 other Mexican immigrants also live there.

Many of them began gathering at the plaza because they are day laborers and get picked up for work there. But more importantly, they feel safe there, Morales said. On any given day at least 20 people gather at the plaza.

Most men at the plaza are Mexican immigrants, some are Central American and the rest are African American, said Morales.

"We all know each other," he said.

It's where they can check up on each other to at least make sure that they're still alive," he said.

The plaza also has turned into a meeting spot because community members and some nonprofit groups go there to distribute food, clothing, and now face masks and hand sanitizer.

Nicolas Hernandez is Morales' friend. They live in the same encampment and let each other know where there might be work or

people distributing food. They and their friend, Andres Cano, who stays in Dvorak Park, all 50 years old, met at the plaza.

"They are part of the community and deserve respect and to be taken care of," said Auld Byron Sigcho-Lopez, 25th, whose ward includes the Pilsen area and Chinatown, where he says encampments have grown in the recent years. "We often dehumanize each other and for some people, the issue of homelessness is something that they ignore, but the reality is that we need to find a sustainable solution for them."

In Chicago, there were more than 1,500 people sleeping in the street, including in encampments, at the time of the latest yearly count of the homeless population. City statistics don't show how many of those who live on the street are Latino immigrants without legal status. Although some in the area said that the number of Latino homeless in Pilsen has decreased in recent years, Sigcho-Lopez said the overall issue of homelessness has worsened because of the pandemic, which has disproportionately hit Black and Latino communities.

Sigcho-Lopez said his ward service office has partnered with the Pilsen Food Pantry, Metropolitan Family Services and other community organizations to try to help some of the homeless population living there, and specifically addressing their undocumented status and language barriers.

"But it's just not enough,"

Sigcho-Lopez said.

Like Hernandez and his friends, most Latino immigrants who live on the street are "past their labor prime," forcing them into a cycle of homelessness despite their desire to overcome it, said Dr. Evelyn Figueroa of the University of Illinois Hospital, who has advocated for homeless people in Chicago for several years and in 2018 founded the Pilsen Food Pantry as part of that work.

Many of the immigrants who live on the street in Pilsen and other Latino neighborhoods came to the U.S. to work for a better life in their youth, but fell into homelessness after becoming ill, fell prey to addiction because of trauma or have mental illness, Figueroa said.

"They come to a place where they are socially isolated, linguistically and culturally isolated, which makes people really high risk for disorders like depression," she said.

Substance abuse is the most common disorder among Latino immigrants who are homeless and their traumas and frequent mental illness make it "extremely difficult to overcome it." Though many government-funded programs and nonprofits offer help for recovery from substance abuse and other medical or mental illness treatment, there are no publicly funded programs that provide housing or long-term resources for immigrants without legal status.

"It is nearly impossible for them to get help from the system and it shouldn't be that way because they are

Obrero Mission, a shelter set up for Spanish-speaking immigrants, closed in 2018 after 30 years. Julie Dworkin, director of policy for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, said there's no shelter or community group that's replaced the mission.

George Ivy understands the tough spot immigrant homeless people are in and before the pandemic, he brought together some of his friends to raise money to buy meals for those who gather at the Pilsen plaza.

Their mission became more urgent when many shelters or churches in the area that provided hot meals closed because of COVID-19, he said.

He also noticed, he said, that most of them were Latino, the rest were African American, "so we had to figure out a way to help them," said Ivy, who is Black.

Ivy at first made a flyer in English advertising free sandwiches, hot chocolate, mittens and hats at the plaza, but realized that many wouldn't understand, so he asked one of them to help him translate the flyers into Spanish. He then passed them out to people on 18th Street and under nearby bridges.

Now twice a month, people begin to gather in the plaza when they notice a small blue car approach. A few days into the new year, they fed nearly 30 people. As MaryAnn Martin passed out sandwiches, Ivy made sure everyone could get at least one sandwich.

As usual, Morales, Hernandez and Cano were there. After they grabbed sandwiches, they sat by the eagle, near where someone had left an assortment of shoes on the ground for anyone who needed them.

"Siempre nos ayudan aquí," said Hernandez as he ate. "They always help us here."

Sitting in the plaza, Hernandez said that he fell into alcohol dependency after a broken relationship a few years ago.

"But I'm trying to leave that behind," he said.

Back in Heart of Chicago, Diaz said he realized that he had often wrongfully stereotyped all homeless until he met Enrique Rodriguez. Diaz said his attitude began to change when he saw Rodriguez used the money Diaz gave him only to buy food and more candy to sell.

For his part, Rodriguez said his "biggest dream is to be able to work again."

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In Pilsen, the San Jose