

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



Contacts: Dawn Prosser  
Director of Communications  
dawnp@scdiocese.org  
(712) 233-7573

Tom Chapman  
Executive Director  
Iowa Catholic Conference  
515-243-6256  
Tom@iowacatholicconference.org

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1821 Jackson Street † PO Box 3379 † Sioux City, IA 51104  
(712) 255-7933 † [www.scdiocese.org](http://www.scdiocese.org)

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PRESS RELEASE

**IOWA CATHOLIC DIOCESES ENCOURAGE IOWANS TO GET VACCINATED FOR  
COVID-19  
WITH VIDEO STORIES FROM FELLOW IOWANS**

The Iowa Catholic Conference and the four Catholic Dioceses of Iowa recently launched a video campaign across Iowa to help encourage the use of the COVID-19 vaccine. Made possible in part by The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Catholic Cares Coalition and by the Iowa Department of Public Health, the campaign features Iowans from across the state sharing their reasoning for supporting the vaccine.

Daniel and Ellen Rosmann, farmers from near Harlan Iowa, along with their parents, Ron and Maria Rosmann and brother, David Rosmann and his wife Becky, recently went on camera to tell their vaccination story. The family farms together on nearly 700 acres, raising organic crops, livestock, hogs and egg-layers. Daniel and Ellen share the story of losing their uncle, Father John Vakulskas to COVID in late 2020 and why they believe in the vaccine.

Ryan Burchett, small business owner from Davenport shares his story of why he feels strongly about the vaccine as just one way to protect the employees, family, customers and friends of The Mississippi River Distilling Company. The company was started by Ryan and his brother, Garret, in Le Claire, Iowa and has faced the many challenges during the pandemic that all restaurants and bars and small businesses have faced. Like many locally owned distilleries in Iowa, Mississippi River Distilling Company turned to producing hand sanitizer during the pandemic as a way to help the small communities of Iowa and to keep the company actively in production.

These are just two of the video stories in the campaign. Other Iowans featured include Alondra Melendez, a college student from Storm Lake, Iowa, and Dawn Suksai, a Laotian factory worker also of Storm Lake who shared her story with her 10-year-old Grandson, Ethan by her side. The videos will roll out during November and December across Iowa.

Iowa currently ranks 25th in residents fully vaccinated as compared to the rest of the United States, with the percentage of rural Iowa residents lagging behind those in Iowa's urban areas. Iowa Catholics are slightly above the average when compared to other segments, yet some Catholics still struggle with the decision. The bishops

of Iowa stand behind this communications effort as another way to guide and counsel Iowa Catholics, issuing the following statement.

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Since the development of COVID-19 vaccines to combat the coronavirus pandemic, nearly 60% of Iowans have received the vaccine. The faithful of the Catholic Church are receiving the vaccine in larger numbers than any other denomination. Despite its effectiveness, many in the general population are hesitant to receive the vaccine.

We restate that vaccination has been proven to be the most effective way to fight the virus, that continues to affect and kill so many. In communion with Pope Francis, we remind the faithful that the common good of public health should take precedence over any moral reservation about receiving the vaccines; they will not be effective if people do not use them.

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Kent E. Ferris, O.F.S., Social Action & Catholic Charities director in the Diocese of Davenport, spearheaded the campaign. Ferris said, “For those who still have questions about whether or not getting the vaccine will make a difference, we want people to know that their friends and neighbors across Iowa believe in the vaccine. There are many people ready and willing to talk with those who are struggling to make a decision about whether to be vaccinated. It’s worth our efforts to join the conversation across our state.”

**For more information:** <https://iowacatholicconference.org/getvaccinated>

Also visit:

<https://dbqarch.org/covid-19-vaccination-info>

<https://www.davenportdiocese.org/covid-vaccine>

<https://www.dmdiocese.org/resources/worship/coronavirus>

<https://www.scdiocese.org/covid-updates>

***About Iowa Catholic Conference:***

*The Iowa Catholic Conference is the official public policy voice of the Catholic bishops in Iowa. Under their direction, we advocate for the common good and promote public policies that respect the life and dignity of every human person. We provide resources for Catholics to assist them in forming their conscience and fulfilling their obligation to participate in the political life of our society.*

**Cutlines:**

*Father Brent Lingle, pastor of Storm Lake St. Mary Parish, offers his vaccination story in English and Spanish. Media students from Buena Vista University assisted with the camerawork.*

*Dawn Suksai and her grandson, Ethan Phakonekham, shared their vaccination message. Suksai also provided a message in Lao. Media students from Buena Vista University assisted with the camerawork.*