In The Matter Of:
DeKalb County Virtual Town Hall Meeting

Coronavirus / COVID-19
April 9, 2020

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Min-U-Script®
DeKalb County Virtual Town Hall Meeting
Concerning Coronavirus and COVID-19

April 9, 2020
6:30 p.m.

From the Manuel Maloof Auditorium
Decatur, Georgia
APPEARANCES AT THE MALOOF CENTER:

Mr. Michael Thurmond, CEO DeKalb County

Mr. Frank Ski, Moderator

Ms. La’Keitha Carlos, Chief of Staff, DeKalb County

Dr. S. Elizabeth Ford, DeKalb County Board of Health

Dr. Anastasia Brown Alvarado, MD, Viewpoint Health and Family Ties Inc.

Dr. Demaree L. Trammel, MD, DeKalb Community Service Board

APPEARING VIA ZOOM:

Dr. David Ross, ScD, president and CEO of The Task Force for Global Health

Dr. Patrick O'Carroll, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACMI, The Task Force for Global Health, Health Systems Strengthening Sector

APPEARANCES ON VIDEOS SHOWN:

Mr. Jack Lumpkin, Director, DeKalb County Public Safety

Mr. Jeff Parker, General Manager and CEO, MARTA

Ms. Diamond Lewis, Moderator and presenter

Ms. Liane Levetan, Former CEO, DeKalb County Government

Mr. Larry Johnson, DeKalb County Commissioner
(Town Hall began at 6:30 p.m. with a video
feature displaying photographs from the DeKalb
community and the sound of Andra Day's Rise Up
audio.)

(Time noted 6:36, start of Town Hall.)

CEO THURMOND: Good evening. I'm Michael
Thurmond, the CEO of the DeKalb County, and I'm
honored and privileged to welcome you to a COVID-19
Task Force Town Hall, which is hosted by our DeKalb
County COVID-19 Strategic Task Force.

I'm proud to stand here today as the
elected representative of the 750,000 residents and
citizens of our great county. Yes, we will rise up
together to confront this insidious enemy that has
come into our neighborhoods and to our homes and to
our county, that's invaded our great nation, and
that's causing pain and sorrow all across the face
of this earth.

But I am convinced beyond all reasonable
doubt that as we rise up together there is no
challenge too great, no mountain too tall, no valley
too deep as we rise up together, our first
responders, and our hospitals, and our medical
clinics, and our waiting rooms, our sanitation
workers, our police officers, firemen, all of the
men and women rising together because we know that
united there is no challenge too strong, no problem
too complex, no wall too tall that we cannot climb.
There is nothing that we cannot do as Americans
united together.

So, please, as we distance ourselves, let
us grow closer in our commitment and our love for
one another; as we distance ourselves, as we must,
let us come closer as a county, as a people, as a
world. Let us rise up together north DeKalb and
south DeKalb, Black, White, Red and Brown,
Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, true believers,
agnostic and the atheist rising together to face
this challenge that is no respecter of person or
position or political affiliation, no respecter of
socioeconomic status, no respecter of sexual
orientation, let us rise up together and face the
challenge, to overcome the challenge.

So, once again, my fellow DeKalb County
residents, my fellow Georgians, and those who are
tuning in from around our nation, and even around
the world, welcome as we rise up together.

I'm honored to have been given the
opportunity to appoint a DeKalb County COVID-19 Task
Force, and this town hall meeting is hosted by them.
This Task Force was formed in response to a public health and economic emergency that is spreading across our county, our state and our nation. And the goal of DeKalb’s Task Force is to provide professional, technical and strategic counsel during this critical time.

It is important to note that we have brought together the very best and brightest that our county has to offer, and this Task Force will include leading medical professionals, who you will hear from this evening; scientists; Mr. Steve Bradshaw, the presiding officer of our Board of Commissioners as well as two other commissioners; representative of DeKalb School District including Acting Superintendent Ms. Ramona Tyson; the DeKalb House and Senate delegations; DeKalb’s public safety leaders, business and civic leaders because this is a two-pronged crisis. One is health, but we're also in the midst of an economic crisis.

As we heard just today, 6.6 million more Americans were placed and forced out of work. And most importantly this Task Force will include human service professionals. So I'm happy to represent them. I'm happy to represent Commissioner Steve Bradshaw, the presiding officer, and our Board of
Commissioners, and I'm proud to say that I represent
the best county not just in the state of Georgia but
in America because we are rising up together.
And now I have the -- and I would like to
allow you to learn more about our COVID Task Force.
And you will see in the following video that these
are men and women of distinction, of merit,
dedication, and commitment to our community. So
please meet the members of DeKalb County's COVID-19
Strategic Task Force.

(Video playing.)

(Narrator voice): DeKalb County's
COVID-19 Strategic Task Force is up and running
helping steer the county safely through this fast
moving pandemic driven by science and medical
expertise, the Task Force brings together
professional, technical, and strategic minds to
counsel on ways to best protect the health, safety
and economic wellbeing of DeKalb's more than 750,000
residents.

(On video) CEO THURMOND: We have some of
the most talented and dedicated public servants in
our county already committed to serve and support
and lend their talent to this effort.

(Video narrator) Formed by DeKalb CEO
Michael Thurmond on March 23rd through executive order the COVID-19 Task Force held its inaugural meeting virtually via teleconference April 1st. The Task Force is comprised of local experts, business and civic leaders as well as top medical professionals.

(On video) DR. S. ELIZABETH FORD: We're trying to identify ways that we can manage this pandemic but also keep folks safe.

(On video) ANN HANLON: I'm so proud of the team that's been assembled here and the hard work we're doing.

(Video narrator) The Task Force also consists of three members of the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners including the Board's presiding officer, representatives of the DeKalb County School District, the DeKalb House and Senate delegations and DeKalb Public Safety leaders.

JACK LUMPKIN: Through our public safety today we have more folks on the street than what it was this time last year.

MARTA'S JEFF PARKER: We will continue to make sure that we fully understand the recommendation of the public health and continue to work with our jurisdictional partners like DeKalb
County.

CHIEF JUDGE ASHA JACKSON: We don't want our citizens to be afraid to access justice, but we're not requiring the burden of them coming to the courthouse to receive justice.

(Video narrator) These experts are helping provide practical apolitical advice on many aspects of the County's response to the pandemic, including how to safely continue essential County services, how to cope with the emotional and physical challenges of isolation, how we can protect ourselves, our families and so much more.

FORMER CEO LIANE LEVETAN: We have an enemy that we know it's around, but we can't touch it. And I want to again thank you, Michael Thurmond, for what you continue to show, leadership.

(On video) CEO THURMOND: This is not an event. This is a journey. This is a critical step in DeKalb County's effort to respond in an appropriate way.

(Video narrator) For additional information on the ongoing lifesaving actions of DeKalb County governments' and the COVID-19 Task Force visit DeKalb Countyga.gov/coronavirus.

(Video portion concludes.)
CEO THURMOND: And I would personally like to thank the men and women who responded in a very affirmative and enthusiastic way to the call to serve on our COVID-19 Task Force. I appreciate and acknowledge your commitment. And I share with those throughout our county that these men and women will be at the forefront of developing the strategies and policies from a health perspective as well as an economic development perspective as we respond, as we rise, and as we get DeKalb not only healthy, but also back to work in the near future.

And now I would like to introduce our host for this evening, and it's a true pleasure for me to stand here and introduce a man who I have admired and who is a long-time friend and an amazing, amazing community servant and leader.

Our moderator this evening is none other than Mr. Frank Ski, a nationally renowned radio and television personality, motivational speaker, disc jockey, journalist, producer, as well as a philanthropist working to help children, and most importantly, and I know this from my own personal experience, most importantly he is a devoted father.

He's also, as we know him as, the host of the V-103 Morning Show with Frank Ski. And he's
worked in radio and music and acting for more than 30 years. In 2002 the Honorable Reverend Jesse Jackson presented Frank Ski with the Distinguished Journalist of the Year award on behalf of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition. Mr. Frank Ski founded the Frank Ski Kids Foundation to provide financial assistance in low income youth and youth serving agencies to expand opportunities for young people throughout not just the metro Atlanta but throughout the state and throughout our nation. Hundreds, and I repeat hundreds, of young people have benefited from the positive opportunities that the foundation provides each year.

And although philanthropy is his life work, Frank takes time to enjoy some healthy indulgences as well. His personal interests include SCUBA diving, deep sea fishing, international traveling and wine collecting. I have been to some wine tastings at his house, and we'll talk about that off camera.

But once again, Frank Ski, we are honored for you to be with us this evening. We thank you for your service, and we welcome you to the Maloof Center, the Maloof Building, to the heart of our government, and we thank you once again. Mr. Frank
Ski.

FRANK SKI: Good evening everyone that's listening tonight. We truly hope that you are enlightened and informed as we continue our evening. Now, new to this tonight is you the residents of DeKalb County and others will be able to ask questions. All you have to do to ask a question, we'll give you the number that you need to call coming up in just a little bit. You can also go to DeKalb CountyGA.gov/coronavirus. We will also be taking your questions there.

Participating tonight in our virtual town hall, Dr. S. Elizabeth Ford, the District Director and Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County Board of Health since 2005; Dr. David Ross, the president and CEO of the Task Force for Global Health; Dr. Anastasia Brown Alvarado, a board certified adult and child and adolescent child psychiatrist at Viewpoint Health; Dr. Patrick O'Carroll, the head of the Health System Strengthening system of the Task Force for Global Health; also Dr. Demaree Trammel, a psychiatry specialist with DeKalb serving the board. Dr. Trammel graduated from Duke University.

You will also learn this evening how you can protect the mental health of your children,
which is one thing we haven't really spoken about
too much. How do you cope with not being allowed to
visit your sick or dying family members? How can we
inform past this COVID-19 for what's coming up in
the future? What medications and supplies should
you have on hand this evening? And certain racial
and demographic groups that are less susceptible to
contracting the virus.

Very interesting is here in DeKalb we were
the first to come up with the numbers that the
nation is now speaking on. And I say that again.
We were the first to identify the disparity between
African-Americans overwhelmingly being more
susceptible not only to catching the virus, but
dying from the virus.

So without further adieu, we begin.
Tonight I would like to introduce to you all tonight
Dr. Elizabeth S. Ford. Yes.

DR. FORD: Good evening.

FRANK SKI: Would you like to make some
comments this evening?

DR. FORD: Sure. I apologize. So I just
sort of want to provide an update on the current
scenario as it relates to COVID in Georgia and in
DeKalb County specifically.
Since last we spoke a few weeks ago we are now over 10,000 cases in Georgia, 379 of which have died. DeKalb on Saturday was 709 cases. Now we're up to 742 cases just in our county alone. So I would imagine before next week we'll hit the 1,000 mark just in DeKalb alone. We have 12 deaths.

And we'll talk a little bit later, I am sure, about the racial disparities we collected in terms of the disparities between Black and White in this county. This remains an ongoing issue.

I think that we will continue to see numbers climb. I'm delighted that we now have a statewide shelter in place order that allows us to better control motion of people so that we can be more aggressive about the social distancing and physical distancing recommendations so that we can stop the spread of this virus.

FRANK SKI: All right. Thank you very much. Also Dr. David Ross is joining us via Zoom this evening. Dr. Ross.

DR. ROSS: Hi, can you hear me?

FRANK SKI: Yes, we can.

DR. ROSS: Okay. Great. Well, thank you for having me participate on this panel and on the Task Force. I want to thank our county CEO Michael
Thurmond for having the foresight and courage to put this together, to have the foresight and courage to have imposed a lockdown, I think the first county in the state, and as such is leading.

I also want to thank Dr. Ford for all that you have been doing. You are deserving of an enormous bonus. I will just say that. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do. And thank all of your staff, the Public Health, DeKalb Board of Health, staff are just amazing, and going far above and beyond what could be expected, and all the citizens of DeKalb should be pleased.

I'll just say one thing about our work at the Task Force for Global Health. We work in over 150 countries, and as such we are attuned to the spread of this virus across the globe. And it is a fact that while we learn a lot working around the world we can always try to bring what we learn globally back to help local public health. And as we learn from others, we will try to bring those lessons back to DeKalb.

But I also want to point out that all that we are learning in DeKalb County are lessons that we will be able to teach and pass on to the countries that we work with around the world. So those of you
in county government, county services, the work you're doing, we hope to learn from you and learn what has worked, what could be done differently, and pass those lessons on to the rest of the world. So you actually are part of a global effort to contain this disease, and ultimately eliminate it. Thank you.

FRANK SKI: Thank you very much. Right now we're going to be introduced to Dr. Anastasia Brown Alvarado, a board certified adult child and adolescent child psychiatrist.

DR. ALVARADO BROWN: Thank you, and good evening. Thank you, Mr. Thurmond, for the invitation to participate on this panel.

As a psychiatrist, my focus is on our mental and emotional health, so although we're aware of the impacts that COVID-19 has on our physical health with our daily existence having changed right before our eyes, we've had to adapt to a new normal, and that impacts our mental and emotional health.

We're managing grief and loss and disappointments and economic instability and just uncertainty. And with all of these stressors, we have to consider our mental health as we are in such uncertain times.
So you may experience anxiety or worry or depression or frustration with everything going on around us. You might see it in yourself, you might see it in your loved ones, your spouse, your children.

And these are normal emotions for us to experience during a stressful situation. But while we're taking precautionary measures such as the hand washing, the physical distancing that we must do in order to flatten the curve with this virus, we also need to take measures to protect our mental and our emotional health as well.

And so when I'm talking with my patients, I'm still seeing patients via telemedicine, which is a platform we're all having to get used to with doing things electronically and through the web, I remind them that it's okay to feel how you're feeling right now, and give yourself some time to make adjustments to our new normal.

While we're practicing physical distancing, we still can remain socially connected. We're still in this together. So we can use social media. We can use the phone. We can text. So we can practice physical distance and still be socially connected. We can incorporate routine and schedule
so that we still feel like we have control over some
aspects of our lives so that we have some normalcy
to everything that we do.
And that can include taking care of our
physical health as well. So getting outside
exercising, keeping active, watching our nutritional
intake. And practicing self-care. So just
developing a self-care routine just once a day to
incorporate something that just kind of indulges us
a little bit.
Avoiding hearing too much. So we're
going a lot of information, new information every
day, but sometimes there is a little overexposure
that happens with individuals, and that can promote
anxiety as well. So I always recommend
disconnecting if you need to, and just giving
yourself a break from all of the news that's out
there.
And then, lastly, if you need it, if you
notice that, you know, you have had prolonged or
severe, you know, mental health or emotional health
symptoms that you're experiencing seek help. We're
still out here, we're still seeing patients, we're
available to you, and we want to be there for you.
FRANK SKI: All right. Thank you very
much. Also this evening, I do want to give you-all
the number if you would like to call in with your
questions. The number is 404-371-2400. That's
404-371-2400.

Now via Zoom we have Dr. Patrick
O'Carroll, the head of the Health System
Strengthening sector of the Task Force for Global
Health. Dr. O'Carroll.

DR. O'CARROLL: Good evening. Thank you.
It's an honor to be on the Task Force.
I think I guess I'd like to reflect on
some of the comments I have already heard starting
with CEO Thurmond telling us that we should rise up
together. He's exactly right. And also Dr. Ford's
comments that we're approaching 1,000 cases in
DeKalb County.

It's worth knowing that this is a
challenge to all of humanity. Across the United
States it's not 1,000 cases. It's over 432,000
cases as of today. Almost 15,000 deaths. Across
the whole world it's greater than 1.5 million cases
and almost 90,000 deaths across the whole planet.
So we're truly looking at a planetary threat.
But at the end of the day we have to do
what CEO Thurmond says. We have to take this
community by community, and each community,
including ours, has to find a way to rise up
together.

And unlike some threats we face, sometimes
war, sometimes other pestilence and disasters, this
is actually a challenge that calls on each of us to
contribute to the solution.

So while there is enormous pain, and an
enormous burden to be shared economically, as well
as medically, over the next few months and in the
past few weeks, it's also true that each of us has
an opportunity to protect our families, to protect
ourselves, and also to be part of protecting our
community and stopping this epidemic in its tracks.

So that is different from many of the
epidemics I worked on in the past.

FRANK SKI: Also this evening we have
Dr. Demaree Trammel, a board certified psychiatrist
with a combined seven years of practice at the
DeKalb Community Service Board.

DR. TRAMMEL: Good evening. I would also
like to thank you for this opportunity, CEO
Thurmond. Thank you, Frank Ski, and other panelists
this evening.

As Dr. Alvarado indicated, as we are all
trying to make sure that we're keeping ourselves
safe from infection, we are also mindful, or need to
be mindful, that this, this coronavirus is causing a
lot of anxiety and fear in the general population.
Most of us have some moments when we're thinking,
you know, did I wash my hands? Did I touch
something? So it is normal, and it's natural to
have some fear and some worry.

But fear, and worry, also is a survival
mechanism. It tells us that we need to take
precautions, that maybe we need to change our
behaviors. So not all fear and worry is necessarily
bad.

So we do want to try to focus on what we
can do. Certainly in this pandemic that we are in,
we feel helpless in many cases. We feel like we
have a loss of control. Many of us are suffering
financially. We may have issues with childcare.
Just trying to get a mask or toilet paper nowadays.

But there are things that we can do
besides, you know, washing hands, our hands, using
masks. We want to do the things that are helpful
and healthy for us really all the time, but
particularly now.

If ever there were a time for the use of
social media, this is the time. So make use of our
ability to call friends and family, to use texts.
We can do videoconferencing. Because one of the
cornerstone is that our social or physical distancing
can also lead to isolation, and isolation is
certainly something that leads to depression,
despair. So we want to be able to make sure that we
are staying socially connected even when we are
practicing physical distancing.

As Dr. Alvarado indicated, if we find that
we're having difficulty sleeping, concentrating,
just not being able to attend to our daily
activities, not being able to work or do homework,
then that is a time to try to seek some assistance
from a professional, while also, hopefully, relying
on our friends and family members and clergy for
support.

So as we have said, I think, a few times,
we will get through this. This is something that is
scary, but it is temporary. And with our measures
that we are taking to keep ourselves healthy and
getting support from others when we need it, we'll
get through this and this will pass.

FRANK SKI: Let me start with the first
question with you, Doctor. This morning we were
asking the question what on the radio, what are people suffering from the most? And the biggest thing was single people being alone, that they had never experienced the type of loneliness that they were having. Even Gayle King spoke about it on national television, that normally she's busy. She has a lot of friends outside, and it's okay, she comes home to decompress, and it's fine when she comes home and she's alone. But now that she's been at her house alone so long, and people are calling in that they have been there so long by themselves, there is a different type of psyche that's going on. Can you address that?

DR. TRAMMEL: That is a unique challenge for the single person. I would say also particularly in the elderly, many of whom may be widowed. That is when we definitely do want to use technology, use whatever means that we have to try to connect to those who may be at a distance, but also are sources of support.

We do want to take care of ourselves, make sure that we're sleeping; hopefully not turning to drugs and alcohol for comfort.

Exercise is just great for our mental health and overall wellbeing. So that's something
that also I would emphasize as being important. And
we are allowed to go out and take a walk. We just
have to maintain our distance. But being out in
nature, being able to enjoy some of the things
outside that, you know, can give us peace.

FRANK SKI: Okay. Dr. Ford, let me ask
you this we've been asking in all of our counties
for people to practice social distancing, not to be
in large groups together. But as I travel around
through the county and Atlanta metro, I see a lot of
African-Americans aren't really paying attention to
that message as they should. When you go into
certain places you still see business as normal as
if they almost don't believe it yet.

How are you addressing that?

DR. FORD: So let me just say this. So we
get the COVID numbers twice a day. So I get them in
the morning, and they come again at 7:00
o'clock p.m.

So I just got today's new numbers. So
from this morning to tonight the state is up
219 cases from this morning. DeKalb is up 67 cases
from this morning.

So if that's not reason enough for
everybody to be staying in the house, I'm not sure
what else we need to share.

In terms of people of color, when COVID first came out I heard all kinds of different stories, and I am sure you've heard them, too, that this is not a Black person's disease, you know, we were immune somehow because it started in China and then was in Europe.

None of that is true.

And when we talk about these numbers, when I'm telling you almost 11,000 cases, that's cases that have been tested. That's not including the people who are just isolating at home, or who may be symptomatic and just haven't had an actual test.

So our numbers are probably double or triple those numbers. So when we say that you need to stay in the house, that means every single body.

Now, there is some extenuating factors with folks, and we understand that. Everybody doesn't have the luxury of the job that allows you to shelter in place because some folks have to get out and go to work every day.

And so in recognizing that, this is why we have masks. This is why we ask people to put your mask on when you leave the house. Make sure you wash your hands. Make sure you distance yourself
socially.

If you are going to work, you should be going to work in an environment where you can still stay away from other people.

But this rumor that Black folks are not getting this disease is absolutely inaccurate. And we'll give you some specifics on that.

FRANK SKI: All right. Let me go back to Zoom and speak with Dr. David Ross. There was a question. And the question is: Is it possible for a person to prepare your body to lessen the effects of the illness if you contract the coronavirus.

DR. ROSS: Okay. Can you hear me?

So I am not the medical expert (audio difficulty) to answer your question. But from all of the evidence that I have seen, the answer is no in the sense that there aren't supplements or other things that you can take to prevent you from becoming infected.

What you can do is be as healthy a person as possible.

(Audio difficulty.)

Are you getting this echo?

Okay, I'm sorry. It's echoing badly in my ear.
But what I would like to say to the audience is that you should -- this is a wake-up call for all of us to be as healthy as possible. Because when you receive -- when you become infected with a respiratory infection like COVID, you -- it challenges your health in many ways. And if you're a smoker, you're at extra high risk. If you're overweight. If you have diabetes. These are risk factors that make it more likely that you will become very ill and possibly succumb to the illness.

Are there supplements, though, that you can take that prevent this? To the best of my knowledge the answer is no. I'd defer that also to the other panelists to see if they would agree with me.

DR. FORD: I think just having a good strong immune system is the best way to prevent most illnesses. And some of these rumors about extra vitamins, no, your overall general health is what determines your ability to overcome the disease if you are unlucky enough to catch it.

So we're just encouraging everybody to stay as healthy as you can, which is why it's important, as Dr. Trammel mentioned, to be outside and get a little bit of exercise.
I think we've been seeing a lot of folks snacking up because they are stuck in the house, and that's not helping the process. So we want people to continue to try to find ways to be active, and be mindful of what you put in your mouth.

FRANK SKI: All right. Let's go to La'Keitha Carlos.

MS. CARLOS: Thank you, Frank.

We have a question from our viewing audience. How can you prevent picking up the virus from surfaces such as takeout containers, pizza boxes, or grocery items?

FRANK SKI: Dr. Ford, would you like to --

DR. FORD: So the data on how long that virus lives on surfaces is still a little inconclusive. The ranges have gone from hours to days. We are recommending pretty aggressive sanitation for everything, sanitizing your counter spaces, anything that you touch, even your car door, your steering wheel. So it's not a bad idea to just drive with a pack of wipes so that you can just clean down surfaces.

I think that most pizza boxes, for example, are probably even sitting out for a while and so are very -- less likely to be infectious.
But I think a good healthy level of precaution is not a bad idea for anything.

FRANK SKI: All right. La'Keitha, we have another question?

MS. CARLOS: This is a question on testing. Where is the testing taking place, and are you able to describe the process?

DR. FORD: So the test site -- well, there are quite -- probably a few test sites throughout the county, but the formal DeKalb County Board of Health test site is in an undisclosed location for reasons to protect the privacy of those folks that are coming for a test. People are still profiling people who are -- they are suspicious of being positive. And so for that reason, we're trying to protect the privacy of folks.

So what we are asking people to do is if you are symptomatic, if you are referred by a physician, you can call our number 404-294-3700 and push option 1.

Your physician can refer you.

You can also be referred. If you are having symptoms and feel like you have been exposed in some way, we will also try to get you tested in that manner.
The test itself is a little invasive. It is what we call a nasopharyngeal swab, which means it goes in your nose and down your throat. But that's the best way to get the best specimen to send to the lab.

I actually know someone who had the nasopharyngeal swab, and they said it's literally three seconds of discomfort and then you're done, and well worth it to have your test.

Right now results -- and that may be a question that comes up later -- results in the county are taking anywhere between -- well, in the state, anywhere between three days and seven days right now, which is also why I don't want people to think that, you know, a negative test today means anything because you may be positive a few days later.

We have some testing opportunities coming toward us that will allow us to do rapid testing and we will be able to get our results in a half-hour, which will definitely be a game changer. And we will be able to expand the testing capacity, because when we were here the last time that was one of the frustrations is that we had such a limited number of tests available we cannot test everyone that wants
to be tested. And so we had specific priority
groups, for example, our first responders, who would
be number one on the list to be tested, and our
healthcare workers.

Once we have more test kits available,
then we'll be able to expand those folks that are
tested, and will be -- we would publish the number
at that point, and anyone could come and make an
appointment.

FRANK SKI: All right.

DR. FORD: And we'll be expanding our
testing site to a northern site as well starting on
Monday.

FRANK SKI: All right. Want to remind you
again the number to call in with your questions
404-371-2400. Let's go to a video question.

(Video question playing.) Hi, I'm Rachel
Hennigan. I live in Decatur. And I'm curious about
what the county is doing to help parents support
their children's mental health during the crisis.

FRANK SKI: Dr. Alvarado, would you like
to take that one?

DR. ALVARADO: So far as children's mental
health, it starts at home. So far as parents are
concerned just watching your children's behavior,
noticing if there is difficulty with their sleep, or
they have been moodier, or more irritable or the
like.

So if you start to notice behavioral
changes, sleep changes, or just, you know,
frustration, anxiety, they seem to be very tense or
on edge all of the time, it starts at home just
noticing their behavior.

The second is is sitting down and talking
to them and finding out well, what is it that's
going on, what kind of questions that you have.

I find a lot from my patients that they
have not had a sit-down discussion with their
parents about COVID-19. They know their life has
changed, but they don't understand what's going on
with the virus. And just like us adults, kids want
answers to questions.

So there are resources. You can go to the
CDC's website, CDC.gov. You can actually go to PBS
Kids. You can go to the American Academy of Child
and Adolescent Psychiatry and find resources to help
talk to your children about the virus, what it
means, and why it's impacted their lives.

And then if you want to look on a more
local level, DeKalb County, as every county across
the state of Georgia, has a local mental health
center. So you can always go and find or contact
your local mental health center if you feel like
you're not able to manage their symptoms, or manage
what's going on with them.

As Dr. Trammel works at DeKalb County
Community Service Board, which is DeKalb County's
Mental Health Center, I work for the Gwinnett,
Rockdale and Newton Mental Health Center, which is
Viewpoint Health, and there is a mental health
center across the state in each county. So you can
go there as far as resources are concerned.

FRANK SKI: All right. Thank you very
much. Let's go back to Dr. O'Carroll, who is
joining us by Zoom. Dr. O'Carroll, Regional Health
Administrator for the U. S. Department of Health and
Human Services. Why are we seeing -- if you can
answer the question, why are we seeing the disparity
between the numbers for African-Americans versus
others?

DR. O'CARROLL: That's a very important
question, and it's one, as you know, (audio
difficulty.) There it goes again, I hope you can
hear me all right.

It's only recently come to light, as you
indicate, some of that data coming right here from DeKalb County.

There is some reasons we can anticipate. It's generally true that people who are of limited income, they have less access to healthcare, they have less access to good quality food, less access to the ability to exercise in safe neighborhoods, and a variety of things that lead to conditions that put us at risk.

But I would hasten to say that there is a great deal of need for research into this area now to really understand what these factors are and how it plays into it.

I suspect a great deal of it has to do with preexisting conditions, not only conditions in the person but in their community, and in their social determinants of what makes us healthy or unhealthy.

And the truth is we've known about these things for a long time in public health, and have called on our society to do better, but this pandemic is really bringing it out for everyone to see, that not everyone in this country has equal access to health for a variety of reasons. And I think this is an area that will be a very important
thing to research.

FRANK SKI: And Dr. O'Carroll, before you go, another question. Some people are speculating that as the temperature heats up here in Georgia, the DeKalb, Atlanta metro, that we'll see less cases.

Has there been any research on that, on the temperature and the effects of the virus?

May not have heard me.

DR. ROSS: I lost my audio again.

DR. O'CARROLL: Yeah, me too.

FRANK SKI: Dr. Ford, have you heard anything about that?

DR. FORD: I have not. You know, I think that was part of when they were saying that it wasn't prevalent in Black countries, in African countries, that was a temperature-related issue.

But now we see this globally. So I'm not sure there's a connection. That would be great if that were true.

FRANK SKI: For -- and we've got to ask this question because we're getting it a lot -- for people who fall in the category of essential services that are coming in contact with a lot of people during the day, what should their routine be
when they come back home going back into their families? Anyone?

DR. FORD: Well, the Board of Health specifically has a very strong policy because part of my responsibility is not only to protect the community, but to protect my staff.

And so we have just really consolidated services, for one thing. We have very limited services being provided right now, primarily WIC and other critical services.

What happens is in order to be even allowed entry into a Public Health building, you are screened at the door for temperature. We take your -- infrared thermometer to make sure you are not febrile. If you have a fever, you are turned away. If you have any symptoms, you are turned away. And that includes staff and clients.

We are making sure that all staff are provided with protective equipment, PPE, so that they have gowns, masks. All our clients are offered masks.

The testing site where we're actually collecting specimens have a whole armor on to make sure they are safe. So we're trying to make sure that folks that are essential at least are protected
when at all possible.

   We're trying to allow people to telework
if they have the type of job that lends itself to
that kind of function. And then if you don't, we're
trying to make sure that while you're in the
building that you are practicing appropriate
physical distancing, even if you do have to be here.

FRANK SKI: So my question was more in
line to let's take, for instance, the average worker
that works at a grocery store --

   DR. FORD: Okay.

   FRANK SKI: -- during the day, and there
is hundreds of people coming into the grocery store.
What is the process, you know, that they are asking
for when they go home. Is there a process that they
should do before they come back in contact with
their family?

   DR. FORD: Okay. I gotcha.

So, you know, keeping track of my hospital
colleagues and the types of things that they're
doing, some of them are actually disrobing in the
garage pretty much before they walk in the house, or
definitely -- first of all, you should never be
leaving in your work clothes from the hospital
situation anyway.
But if you are being exposed, you should make sure that you try to have a clean set of whatever clothing you're going to wear into the house.

Make sure that before you hug your kids and all those types of things, before you make contact with folks who have not -- who have been in the house all day that you pretty much, if you can't shower at least do a great hand scrub before you touch anybody or anything in the house.

FRANK SKI: Okay. Social distancing. Some people are having a hard time dealing with the social distancing part.

They social distance, but then when they get back home into their nucleus one of the biggest things that has started to come up -- and I'd like to ask each of you this question -- that started to come up is there are a lot of couples now that are realizing that they don't do well together for that long of a period of time. They are saying that a lot of lawyers are getting calls for separations because people are in the house far too long than they expected.

I know it's kind of chuckling, but we read a big article yesterday that's saying the amount of
divorce proceedings and filings will go up.

What can people do in their only to remain
sane and to deal better with each other? What would
your suggestions be?

DR. TRAMMEL: I would say that one of the
things that they can do is to try to carve out a
private space and a private time as much as possible
in the home. You know, perhaps there can be an
agreement, you know, "from this set of time to
another time I'd like to have the living room, I'd
just like to watch my program, perhaps you can watch
in the bedroom."

So keeping still a sense of personal
space. That's another reason why getting out,
getting outside can also be helpful.

And when you consider that, you know, even
under the best of circumstances when families are
together a lot we can get on each other's nerves, so
now in a setting in which there is heightened
concern, worry, even agitation, that makes it all
the more likely that people can let their emotions
get away with -- from them.

And as you indicated, yes, unfortunately,
this is a situation that can breed more domestic
violence apparently. And in general when people are
together in the home for a long time, there is a higher risk of domestic violence.

And what's difficult about that is that the victim is also holed up with their abuser. So it's going to be important that we also have resources for those who are experiencing domestic violence particularly at this time.

But, yes, it's -- it becomes a challenge.

FRANK SKI: All right.

CEO THURMOND: Frank, could I --

FRANK SKI: Yes, sir.

CEO THURMOND: As relayed at the County level, our State Court Solicitor, Solicitor Donna Coleman-Stribling, has implemented a strategy with the support of the commissioners and myself called Not in my DeKalb.

Also our Chief Judge of the Magistrate Court Beryl Anderson, they have all put together resources to help potential not just people, victims of abuse, but potential abusers You're Not Alone.

And please access these local services, as well as with the DeKalb County Police Department. We have a group of men and women in the department who does nothing but focus their attention on helping to protect and prevent abuse in our homes.
One thing I want to followup on, Frank, if you will, is it unusual for spouses to feel stressed and anxiety at this point? You said something earlier about fear and anxiety, that's normal. So is this a normal response to this very traumatic set of circumstances we're living with as it relates to spouses and husbands and wives and others in a home?

DR. ALVARADO BROWN: I mean, absolutely. I mean, it's a natural human response to respond to a stressful situation with a heightened sense of anxiety. I mean, it's kind of our natural instinct kicking in, so -- but we're, unfortunately, we're kind of fighting an unknown something. We can't see it.

So our protective instincts are heightened, stress reaction does start to rise during a stressful situation, but we're, unfortunately, just fighting a virus that we can't see, which I think makes it difficult.

And back to Frank's point from earlier where people are like, oh, they are not taking it seriously because we're fighting something we can't see. If we're fighting something we can see, then it makes sense. It's like, okay, I understand why you're panicked. I understand why you're stressed.
But we're stressed and panicked, but we are still fighting something. We're still having that heightened sense of anxiety.

And you also have to look at the fact that when we're in these contained spaces for longer periods of time, I mean our day-to-day schedules we're usually probably at home with our loved ones for, you know, maybe seven, eight hours, I mean, you know, hours at a time.

We spend many times more time with our coworkers than we do with our loved ones on a general day-to-day. But now we're spending all of our time with our loved ones. And when you have all of that time with one person, whether it's your spouse, or whether it's your children, there is some heightened frustration and irritation or anxiety that can come about.

And like Dr. Trammel says, finding some, you know, niching out some time for yourself to pay attention to you and do some self-care for you is really important.

So that could mean going outside and doing some physical activity. That could mean maybe I just need to -- my house isn't set up that way where I can kind of escape into a space for myself, so
maybe I just go out to the car for a second and take
a breather and give myself 15, 30 minutes, just to
spend time, listen to music, have some time for
myself so I can collect myself and be a better
spouse, a better mother, a better father for my
kids, or for my spouse.

    And it's helpful to everyone in the house,
honestly, because when we each give ourselves
individual time it helps with when we do come back
together and have maybe some structured family time
where we can get to know each other better, and get
to really spend quality time with each other.

    That also is something I recommend like,
hey, set scheduled time where you guys can actually
a family activity, movie night, game nights, things
like that where you're actually coming together and
enjoying each other's company and not just sitting
around.

    FRANK SKI:  All right. Let's go to
another question. La'Keitha Carlos.

    MS. CARLOS:  Okay. What would lead --
this is a question for our doctors, perhaps Dr. Ross
or Dr. Ford. What would lead to a recurrence of
COVID-19 in the fall or later?

    DR. FORD:  You know, this is a novel
virus, and so we're still learning so much about
this disease, and so I don't know what would cause
that. There has been talk about that. I'm dreading
that because I am sure by the time the fall gets
here we will just be recovering from what's going on
right now, and I'm not sure whether the community
can sustain another bout of this.

So we're hoping that natural immunity
starts kicking in, or better yet, that a vaccine
gets developed so that if we do have another up peak
-- first of all, it would be a very different virus
because, you know, everything mutates. So I hope
that that's not an option. I hope that we at least
get a year before we start to see this resurface.

FRANK SKI: You were speaking on that, and
I got this question the other day. In the beginning
they were saying this is similar to the flu. But
what we've seen is the aggressiveness when someone
gets it is different than the flu. So it's kind of
-- is it the same? Or it's different? Because with
the -- we're seeing people that are getting it and
five days later they're dying.

DR. FORD: Yeah, this is very different
from the flu. First of all, it's novel. So it's
brand new. So not a single person on earth had
immunity to this before it came out. So that means
everybody is susceptible, and, you know, different
immune systems respond differently.

   And so what we're seeing is, you know,
some very healthy people are coming in that hospital
and not coming out. And so that's not what we're
used to seeing. We have thousands of flu deaths
eyery year in the United States alone. But those
are usually pretty high-risk populations.

   And so to see a disease that seems to be
coming all across, you know, the different age
groups, although we still have groups that are more
susceptible, I think that's what's kind of thrown
everybody is that these aren't the usual group of
people that we would expect to get sick. And so
this makes this very different from the flu. And
the flu has a vaccine, even if it's not 100%
effective, it does provide some coverage. We have
nothing to defend ourselves against this.

   FRANK SKI: La'Keitha, another question?

   MS. CARLOS: So we spoke earlier about the
identification that African-Americans have been
contracting the virus at a higher rate than others.
But we haven't talked about why those rates of
infection are higher, and why is the death count
higher in the African-American community.

DR. FORD: So I'm going to give you the numbers that we had. So, much to my surprise when we -- when I asked about this over the weekend we did not have racial datas collected for all cases.

Interestingly enough, the only racial data we had were on the cases that we were actually investigating. So, in other words, if you were just positive, the form that is being collected did not ask your racial background.

And so what we're pulling from DeKalb were the cases that we ourselves directly investigated. So out of the 700-some-odd cases, we only had 125 individuals who identified any type of race.

So of those 125, 24 were White, 92 were African-American, and nine were Other, which breaks down to 74% Black, 7% Other, and then the rest Caucasian.

Among deaths it was 1-to-4 of White to Black. So for every one White death, there were four people of African-American descent that died.

Why is that? There is a number of different reasons. We -- it's already been discussed at some level about our increased rates of chronic disease, certainly, and chronic diseases do
impact your immune system. But I think that's too simple.

I think that we know, studies have shown, that people of color are treated differently when they come to a doctor. That's fact. And so when you have symptoms of something that may look like the flu, you may not get the same level of direct, you know, attention to say, okay, well, maybe this is a little something extra. They may say, well, you know, you just kind of stay home and try to manage this.

And what we have found with COVID is it goes from 0 to 60. So if you -- if you're one of those that stayed home and all of a sudden your symptoms ramp up, you may not make it to the hospital in time. That's number one.

Number two is the fact that -- and people say this jokingly, but I got it because I have a son. A Black man can't walk out of the house with a mask on his face, you know, in every setting and feel okay about that. And so that's a whole 'nother situation.

I mean, people are forming masks from -- everybody doesn't have a surgical mask, and so if you tie a bandanna around your face in certain
neighborhoods, that might be so not well received.

Also, there are folks that don't have the luxury, as I said before, of sheltering in place. If you're the breadwinner, you have to go out and earn a living. And so every time you leave your house and come back in your house, unless you are disrobing, like I said, you're exposing your family to the outside. And so that happens every single day. There's a -- so there is a lot of different factors that are contributing to why we're seeing the increase in numbers.

Also, when we had limited tests, you had to be referred by your primary care physician in order to even receive a test. Everybody doesn't have a primary care physician. Everybody doesn't even have insurance. And so what happens to the people that aren't insured that are symptomatic? How -- where were they supposed to go to get a test?

And we already know that we're overrepresented, and when I say "we", I mean people of color in terms of not having insurance in the nation.

So it's not just a, Well, we all have chronic diseases and that's -- our immune systems are weaker. There are a whole lot of other outside
factors that are contributing to this disparity.

FRANK SKI: All right. Let's go to another video question.

(Video question playing.) Hi, this is Tammy Weiser. I was wondering why some people got more sick than other people when they get the COVID?

FRANK SKI: All right. Do we have Dr. O'Carroll available maybe to answer via Zoom?

DR. O'CARROLL: Unfortunately, we don't know a great deal about this disease, and we're learning every day.

Let me share some things with you to put this in perspective. According to the CDC as many as one in four people who get infected won't have any symptoms at all.

And this is one of the reasons it's very challenging to control this disease if when people are walking around and they feel perfectly healthy, they imagine they couldn't possibly infect anyone else, and some of these people may be spreading infection without even knowing it.

And that's what's behind CDC's most recent suggestion that when you go into a supermarket or you go into a pharmacy, which you should do only when you need to, you should wear some kind of
facial covering. It's really not to protect you. It's to protect everybody else in case you're spreading the disease. Of course, if everyone else is wearing that, then they are protecting you from if they have the disease.

So quite a number of people who get this will have either no symptoms, or very minimal symptoms and it will just resolve.

And then there is a small subset of people who will start to feel poorly, and about seven or eight days later they'll start to get worse, and they'll get a heaviness in the chest or a little difficulty breathing. And as Dr. Ford said, it could then suddenly accelerate.

Why does that happen in some people and not others? We don't know the answer to that. Many times you could point to a chronic underlying condition, but there are some people with chronic conditions who recover just fine.

So I'm afraid there is still a great deal we have to learn about why certain individuals have this response to COVID, and others have no symptoms whatsoever.

FRANK SKI: La'Keitha Carlos, another question?
MS. CARLOS: So we have a question from Facebook. A lot of parents are spending lot of time with small children who may not be able to communicate their mental and emotional needs in the same way that older children can. And so the question is, is there any advice on recognizing anxiety in small children, and how can you deal with that?

DR. ALVARADO BROWN: Yes. So from the oldest to the youngest of us, yes, anxiety can manifest, you know, and it -- it's a lot of times for children because of a lack of routine, a lack of schedule, changes in their schedule or routine, or actually picking up on anxiety from their parent.

So the first thing that I talk to parents about is monitoring your own anxiety and your own worry, and kind of getting that in check before, you know, being around your kids, or saying certain things that might trigger your children, or just kind of noticing your behavioral changes as well. And if you need to address that with someone, please do that.

As far as specifically things in young children who may not be very verbal, we look at things in play. So what are they doing as they're
playing, because they're still going to be doing those things.

So if you notice that there is a change and they're becoming more aggressive in their play, with their siblings, or even with you or with anyone else in the home, if you notice that they are more tearful, or they just seem to have a behavioral change as far as like more irritability. So not just a general irritability you might see if they're sleepy or they're hungry, but it's something that's more sustained or prolonged.

So you're noticing like day after day they're very cranky for hours at a time, or they're -- they have become more aggressive whenever they are playing, or whenever we're doing things, or all of a sudden, you know, they are hitting or doing things that they wouldn't do before.

If you notice their sleep pattern has changed, they are waking up in the middle of the night and they were not. They are wanting to -- I mean, a lot of kids do want to get into the bed with their parents if they're afraid or they're scared, but you notice that they are getting up and they're talking about nightmares or scary dreams, or they are crying in their sleep, things like that. So
just be mindful of little behavioral changes.

FRANK SKI: CEO Thurmond.

CEO THURMOND: And this is for our two psychiatrists who are here. What would you recommend or suggest for public policy officials like myself and my colleagues? There's been clear and concise direction about executive orders, shelter in place, stay in your home, physical distancing. What are some of the things we could do at a public policy level to address some of the emotional and psychological damage that's being done that might mitigate some of the challenges that you-all have suggested from a public policy perspective?

DR. TRAMMEL: Well, I would say that having resources readily available, and, thankfully, we do have community service boards. We do have hotlines, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

But I think it has to become more the norm that we talk about mental health concerns, as opposed to, you know, when we get to it.

So as we as a state recognize that mental health issues are prominent at baseline, but particularly in times like this, having public service announcements might be helpful. This sort
of forum when experts come together to advise state leaders and local leaders, those things can be helpful. Making, when I say resources, also making available screening tools and opportunities. People need insurance, or if they don't have insurance they need to have a way to have access to mental health services.

You know, not everyone who has a mental health problem is going to have a chronic mental health problem. They may just need assistance for a little while. But having the opportunity to access those services is very important.

FRANK SKI: All right. Let's go, if we can. We have Commissioner Larry Johnson, who is with us via video. Commissioner Johnson.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: Hello, DeKalb County residents. I'm DeKalb County Commissioner Larry Johnson. I'm chairing this year's U. S. Census, and I want to make sure that you're counted in each and every way.

Right now each person in DeKalb is worth about $2,400 if we complete our census. This will give us $1.8 billion for the next ten years. This will help pay for our roads, our bridges, our sidewalks, help us with our children for our school
lunches, help our seniors who may need repairs in
their homes. It's all about making a difference.

Right now we have a 45% response rate. We
have to get that rate up because we want to make
sure that everyone is counted in DeKalb. It only
takes ten minutes, 10 questions. You can do it
online. You have gotten it in the mail. We want to
make sure that you fill it out.

And here's some more information that you
need to make sure that our census and you are
counted. If you don't have the form, you can go to
My2020census.gov, My2020Census.gov, or you can go to
our website that's listed DeKalbcounts2020.org,
DeKalbcounts2020.org. But we need you to fill it
out. Thank you and be safe.

FRANK SKI: Thank you very much,

Commissioner Johnson.

I'd like to introduce a video for you—all
because everyone counts, and like Commissioner
Johnson said we have to make sure we get the funding
needed for our schools, affordable housing, roads,
bridges, and much more.

Diamond Lewis and the DCTV team have put
together this informative video about being counted
in DeKalb.
Video playing.)

(On video) Moderator: The 2020 census is here, and even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic millions of households have already responded. The census counts every person living in the 50 states, District of Columbia and five U.S. territories. A full and accurate count ensures we receive our fair share of funding for new schools, healthcare, transportation, housing, parks and so much more.

(On video) CEO Thurmond: I'm DeKalb County CEO Michael Thurmond, and I want to make sure you are counted in the 2020 census. It's critical for our future. The census determines how key resources and political power are distributed.

Our fair share of more than $650 billion dollars in federal funding is at stake.

(On video) Larry Johnson: Making sure you're counted in the 2020 census is important because your children need this.

(On video) Diamond Lewis: The 2020 census is easy, important, and confidential. You have three options for responding: Online, by phone, and by mail. It's DeKalb's future, and it's in our hands. You can learn more by visiting DeKalbCounts2020.org.
(On Video) CEO Thurmond: Make sure everyone is counted.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON: I challenge you to make sure that your neighbors, your friends and family are all counted.

(On video) Diamond Lewis: Make sure we're all counted in the 2020 census. #countmeindekalb.

(Female and child resident):
#countmeindekalb.

(Male resident):  #countmeindekalb.

(Male and female resident):
#countmeindekalb

(Multiple residents) #countmeindekalb

(End of video.)

FRANK SKI: The census is very important from a financial standpoint. Explain to the citizens of DeKalb what that means, what those numbers mean, and what they equal so that they understand how important it is.

CEO THURMOND: Excellent question, Frank.

It's about -- first it's about dollars and cents. As Commissioner Larry Johnson pointed out, it's about $2,400 per person of the 750,000 residents. That's if our residents and citizens are properly accounted for in the census.
It's also about political power in terms of representation at the federal, state and local level. As was pointed out, and the census, we're in the middle of this pandemic, but this is one thing you can do in the safety of your home, online, fill out the form, as Commissioner Johnson stated, who, by the way, is leading the effort here in DeKalb County. Ms. Delores Crowell sits on the statewide Census Committee. And we are committed to making sure that every DeKalb resident and citizen gets counted. And it's especially important for public education.

As you know, I spent some time working with the DeKalb School District, and every child that presents himself or herself must be given the right to a public education.

You don't have to be a quote, unquote, citizen, or the parent doesn't be, doesn't have to be, in order for that child to be presented and enrolled in our schools. So if we don't count everyone, then we are short in terms of money needed to provide the education and training needed for every child in our community.

FRANK SKI: Let me ask you this. I have a couple of questions for you.
On Tuesday I was delivering food to some senior citizens building. My mother is a senior and lives in a building. And most of the senior citizen buildings have been closed off because of the sensitivity of our older population, but at the same time there is so many things that they are lacking in there.

What has the conversation on the county level been about helping our seniors?

CEO THURMOND: Thank you, Frank. First, let me thank you for your ongoing efforts. Even before COVID, you were out there serving our seniors and supporting them.

Through Damon Scott, who oversees our senior citizens program here in DeKalb County, we are feeding, serving 1,000 seniors every day since the beginning of this pandemic.

Through Meals on Wheels and through our own employees, we are making sure that our most vulnerable population receives the nutrition needed. And that's 3,000 seniors. I said 1,000. Let me get it right now. Mr. Williams corrected me. 3,000 seniors every day. And we're very proud of that. And we deliver meals to homes and we support our Meals on Wheels program.
But let me add one more thing. The two
most vulnerable populations, of course, are seniors
and our children. Working with the DeKalb County
School District we are also at nine rec centers
along with the school district are providing snacks
in the afternoon for children.

And as you know, and as all of the
professionals, when school is open oftentimes the
only really nutritious meal many of our children
receive every day is through the public schools.

And so with school being closed, we've
worked with the DeKalb School District
Superintendent Ramona Tyson, and they have over 30
sites. And we are very, very proud that nine of our
career centers -- Chuck Ellis, who's the Parks
director here, has been very focused and committed
to making sure that we do everything we can to
provide food for our children. Because, you know,
mental health and physical, if you don't have food
it's almost impossible to teach a child in a way and
to train a child in a way that might benefit them
going forward.

FRANK SKI: And the last question, because
you alluded to it as well, is the school. They have
implemented a kind of statewide plan on the testing
that will not be done. I know that some of my older
kids from their school, the whole grading system has
been changed.

The parents that are listening now or
watching right now, what do they have to look
forward to as far as how we're going to deal with
these kids not being in school?

CEO THURMOND: And now I'm wishing
Ms. Tyson was here. They're on spring break. She's
normally here. But let me say, she's done a
phenomenal job.

And what I want -- parents, first of all,
should contact their children's teachers and
principals at the schools of which they're
attending. I know a tremendous amount of investment
has gone into online learning. And, Ms. Tyson, I
talk to her at least once or twice every week, she's
a good friend.

So contact your school, your teacher, your
principal. If you're not satisfied then elevate it
to the regional superintendent, and even to the
superintendent's office at the central office there
on Hugh Howell.

But I believe from what I've read DeKalb
County is very, very invested in making sure that
children are not negatively impacted by the impact of this virus, and the fact that they won't be able to complete the school year.

And one of the things that I was talking to a friend -- and I'm going back, and I'm so glad these two ladies are here, I'm glad the doctors are here -- but I think about the seniors who won't have a senior prom or a graduation.

And how can parents -- and I'm asking -- help, and you know, do what we can. And not just parents, but also relatives and friends? Because that's a special moment in just about every child's life.

So what can we do to help children over this challenge that they are going to face in the next few months with no prom, no graduation?

DR. ALVARADO BROWN: So it's a struggle dealing with disappointments. I think we all are, you know, there is proms, there is dances, there is recitals, there is graduations, there is weddings. There is a lot of different things that have had to be postponed or cancelled because of this pandemic.

And I think our seniors, they're aware of what's going on. It doesn't mean that they don't have hurt feelings, that they are not angry, that
they are not saddened by the fact that they don't
get to have the same type of experience that those
who came before them did, or those that come after
them will.

So the first thing I would say is just
allow them to acknowledge that disappointment, and
allow them to feel what they are feeling as far as
is concerned, yes, we're dealing with a pandemic and
we're dealing with grief and death. But, yes, this
is something that was important to them.

So allow them to feel that, that feeling
because I think sometimes people feel guilty about
feeling disappointed and feeling angry that they had
that loss when we're dealing with such a huge issue.
But it's okay for them to feel that way.

And then after that when moving forward I
recommend finding a way, finding an out-of-box or
creative solution, to being able to still celebrate
them. So just because they are not going to be able
to walk across the stage, or have that moment,
doesn't mean that they still can't be celebrated.

And I've seen some fantastic creative
ideas on social media of parents celebrating their
kids. I've seen a father take his daughter to the
prom, and they had a prom at home where they had

Regency-Brentano, Inc.
dinner and a meal. And he posted the videos on
social media so that their family could be involved
and see her all dressed up with her corsage and her
dress and having a special prom moment with her dad.

I've seen those who have celebrated their
seniors by making sure that they are still going to
have banners and signs and things in the yard and
posting, things like that. And you could possibly
have a family caravan of cars go past the house just
to honk and celebrate your senior. It doesn't mean
just because we're physically distant that we are
disconnected. So we can still celebrate.

FRANK SKI: Let's go to a video question.

(Video question playing.) Hi, my name is
Sander Hoffman. And my question is why is it that
younger people are at less of a risk to the
coronavirus?

FRANK SKI: Dr. Ford, is that statement
true, first of all?

DR. FORD: I was going to say I don't even
-- I would not say that's true. And that's part of
the problem we have is that the youth believe that
they are at less risk.

What we said from the start was that they
may be lucky enough to have a milder course, but we
never said that the risk was less.

I think that what we're finding in the young population is that they tend to be more of those asymptomatic carriers that were described earlier, and so they are in some ways our most worrisome group because they are walking around symptom free, but they may be passing the virus on to other individuals that have weaker immune systems. So they are one of the groups we worry most about.

FRANK SKI: All right.

CEO THURMOND: Frank, excuse me.

FRANK SKI: Yes, sir.

CEO THURMOND: I just got a text from our interim school superintendent with an answer to your question.

FRANK SKI: Technology is amazing, isn't it?

CEO THURMOND: So this is from our superintendent Ms. Ramona Tyson in response to Mr. Ski's question.

(Reading) We will release end of year information for all parents on Tuesday April 14th. It will include decisions on grading for pre-K through 12, graduation, end of year dates, final
phase of digital learning, summer learning
opportunities, reimbursements, et cetera.

FRANK SKI: Okay.

CEO THURMOND: And she also said "I'm watching, it's excellent," so.

FRANK SKI: All right. There you go.

Let's go to La'Keitha Carlos with another question.

MS. CARLOS: As far as goes on stocking up on things to prepare you for the quarantine, what medications or supplies should residents have during a quarantine? What should you already have in your home, or as you are going to the grocery store and right now, what should you keep in your home?

FRANK SKI: Toilet paper. No, just kidding.

DR. FORD: No, that's a true thing.

FRANK SKI: Just kidding. Just kidding.

DR. FORD: So if you can find anything in the grocery store right now, I'd be highly impressed.

FRANK SKI: Yes.

DR. FORD: I had a just a plain ol' migraine and could not find acetaminophen to save my life, and it took me three stores before I actually
just found some.

Part of the reason for that is because we've been hearing that NSAIDS are not recommended for treating fevers at this point because it's thought that they decrease the immune response. So what people are doing is cleaning out the Tylenol, and the acetaminophen off the shelves. So if you can find some, keep it.

Good old aspirin still works for fever.

But anything that addresses your aches and pains but doesn't suppress your immune system. Stay -- so I hate to use brand names but just stay away from Ibuprofen, any other types of NSAIDS, if you can, avoid them.

But fever reducers, decongestants are great. We're also in allergy season. So you might want to think about making sure that, you know, the symptoms you might think are COVID may actually just be good ol' pollen. So just stocking up on those kinds of things. I'm always a big fan of vitamin C, orange juice, fluids.

Stay away from the junk food because there is lots of reasons why that's not going to be good for you, or at least in moderation. But mostly just fluids and good healthy fruits and vegetables. I
have seen a lot of people now starting their own
gardens because it's so hard to find fresh produce
right now.

FRANK SKI: All right. I have got another
question for Dr. Carroll via Zoom, Dr. O'Carroll
that is.

In the midst of this pandemic we've heard
so many different versions of how the virus is
transmitted, is it airborne, is six feet of
separation enough? How long does the virus stay in
the air when a person that has it comes past?

DR. O'CARROLL: Those are very good
questions. Let's start with the absolute most basic
thing. You can't get infected with COVID or
coronavirus disease if you're not exposed to the
virus. So start with that.

And how do you avoid being exposed to the
virus? Well, as far as we can tell with the current
epidemiology, the way this is spread is typically
person to person, or person to a surface that we
then touch and accidentally touch our face and
infect ourself in that way.

The idea, the thought is that if somebody
sneezes or coughs and you're within about three feet
of that person, you could very well inhale the
1. droplets that come out that may be too small to see
2. just as you're passing by, that person by. One of
3. the many reasons CDC has suggested people walk
4. around with these cloth masks for a while, just in
5. case you have a cough you didn't see coming as you
6. were passing someone walking around, or you're
7. walking to the grocery store.

They don't stay suspended in the air for a
8. long time. Typically droplets spread diseases. The
9. droplets are too heavy to stay in the air for more
10. than a few seconds and they settle.

So going outside and breathing the air is
11. perfectly fine if you keep six feet distance from
12. people, then you should essentially avoid being
13. contaminated by the virus.

Now, again, when people cough and those
14. droplets settle, they may settle right on the
15. checkout machine at the grocery store or on the
16. handle of the door that they're using to open the
17. door when they cough or sneeze, and then you come by
18. a few minutes later.

And this virus does live for at least a
19. few hours and sometimes up to certain -- up to days
20. on certain surfaces. Apparently it lives on
21. cardboard for a few days, which is why some people,
when they get a package, will set it aside, wash
their hands after putting it in the corner and then
not touching it for a couple of days because the
virus will eventually die, even -- you may never
know whether there was or was not a virus on that,
but better safe than sorry.

So, again, it's nothing mystical about
this. We'll know more as the epidemiology becomes
clearer. But you can't get disease if you're not
exposed to the virus, and if you keep separated from
these folks who may have disease even if they don't
know it by six feet they are very unlikely to infect
you.

And if you get it on your hands, that's
one vehicle for getting infected, which is why hand
washing becomes so important.

FRANK SKI: Thank you.

I have got another question: (Reading
question) I am on the board of a small Decatur
condo complex with 30 residential units. We did
some research about whether or not to allow a maid
service to disinfect the common space, or whether to
allow -- or to inform residents to disinfect it on
their own and practice social distancing. We did
post a sign and ultimately decided to have the
service come in to clean and disinfect. Is this the
right thing to do?

Dr. Ford?

DR. FORD: Well, I think any type of
disinfection is always a great thing to do. You
know, again, though, disinfecting is a moment in
time. So that's something that has to be done
constantly.

So, you know, if you do that, that doesn't
mean you're good for the rest of the season. You
still need to continue this, practice all those
other precautions because people think once you wipe
down a surface, you can just keep touching it. So
it has to be a constant thing.

FRANK SKI: Okay. Let's go to La'Keitha
Carlos again with another question.

MS. CARLOS: There's been a lot of
discussion about people who have been COVID
positive, and recovered from the virus being able to
help those who are later diagnosed as COVID
positive.

So the question is from someone who was
diagnosed in March as COVID positive and was very
sick for 22 days and then later tested negative for
the virus. His question is: Where can I donate
plasma that can be used to help extremely sick COVID-19 patients?

FRANK SKI: Maybe that's a Dr. O'Carroll question, or Dr. Ross.

DR. O'CARROLL: Yeah, I don't actually know the phone number for it, but I do know that the CDC has said that there is no reason to stop donating blood. The donations of blood are critical to our modern healthcare all over the country, they remain critical today.

So donating blood in general whether or not you're post COVID disease positive or not is still something we can do.

I think in this case I would recommend calling the Red Cross or other places where you might normally donate blood and ask them what their procedures are.

I suspect that as the epidemiology and the research changes day-to-day, their policies may also be changing day-to-day. So rather than giving a blanket answer, my recommendation would be first congratulations for thinking of that. That's a wonderful thing to think of. And then I would say reach out to a blood donation center like the Red Cross or some place else that might take blood and
see what their policies are.

MS. CARLOS: So the question on social media has been that it's been posed is because there have been hospitals that have reached out to their communities asking for those who have recovered from the virus to donate to emergency rooms plasma.

Is that a real -- is that a thing, and have studies shown that plasma from patients who have recovered being -- to be helpful? Dr. Ford?

DR. FORD: I hope that's true. You -- one would assume that if you were fortunate enough to recover you would have some antibodies against COVID. So at this point I think what's happening is that as folks become ill, more sicker and sicker we're trying everything.

And so I don't think there is any harm in that. If your plasma will help, if you have antibodies, I think that's -- that's wonderful. That would be something that still needs to be researched, though.

FRANK SKI: All right. Let's go to another video question that was sent in.

(Video question playing.) Hello. Yes, my name is Paula Smith. I'm currently a resident of DeKalb County. And my question is what are you guys
planning on doing in reference to the influx of
people who are looking at becoming homeless because
the landlords are not forgiving rent payments, but
yet we're not able to go back to work? Thank you.
Bye-bye.

FRANK SKI: CEO?

CEO THURMOND: Thank you. And let me
acknowledge the work of Chief Judge Asha Jackson who
has issued an executive order on the heels of an
order that was issued by the Chief Justice of our
State Supreme Court Mr. Harold Melton, who is also a
DeKalb County resident, that all evictions have been
frozen for 60 days.

And Chief Jackson has issued an order.
For people who want additional information, call our
311 center so that you can get a copy of Judge
Jackson's order that freezes those evictions because
the last thing the Judge, and she's spoken to this,
want or need, or we need as a county, is for people
being thrown out on the street at this time. So
that's the result of Chief Jackson.

Also Chief Magistrate Judge Beryl Anderson
is also working to protect individuals so that they
can maintain a roof over their head during this
critical time.
FRANK SKI: There's been a lot of questions, CEO, about the homeless population in general. How is the County dealing with that situation amidst this pandemic?

CEO THURMOND: By far our most vulnerable population, no question about it. Mr. Allen Mitchell oversees our effort to assist and support the homeless in DeKalb.

Initially even before the national emergency was declared by President Trump through Mr. Allen's direction and working with our nonprofit partners we provided sanitation packets, too, into the homeless camps and the people on the street to encourage them to be more careful about at least sanitizing their hands and addressing their hygiene.

We've also began to negotiate emergency housing for people who might be positive COVID so that we can get them into a location not just to improve the opportunities for their health, but to limit their interaction with other populations.

We're very proud that DeKalb County has received a $1.7 million grant within the last two weeks that will be used in multiple ways to assist and support whether it's housing, food and shelter, and to work with the Department of Public Health.
If we come into contact with a person who may exhibit signs, flu-like symptoms, they are reported to the Department of Public Health. And Dr. Ford's staff has been very, very conscientious and focused on providing them with as much medical intervention as possible.

FRANK SKI: All right. Let's go to another question. La'Keitha Carlos.

MS. CARLOS: We have a question for Dr. Ross. With all of your experience fighting sicknesses around the world, can you offer any guidance on when will it be a good time to interact with the public again and do less social distancing in the community?

DR. ROSS: That's the $64,000 question everybody asks, everybody wants to know is when will this be over when can I go out?

What we see globally is this disease is spreading everywhere. It has now even reached fairly rural populations in a number of African countries. This is an airborne transmissible virus, and it will continue to spread until there is a vaccine.

I think to -- I think it's best for people to be prepared that this disease may wane in the
summer, and I say "may" because it's not an absolute
fact that it will. It probably will be back with us
in the fall for sure. And it will remain with us
until there is a vaccine and we have a vast majority
of the public vaccinated against it.

So when will you be able to go out? I
think our County Executive and the Governor of the
state will make announcements when they feel that
the data show that the rate of new infections, new
cases, has declined so low that we appear to be
ahead of the transmission.

But it probably also means that when
people go out, even over this summer, I would bet
you're going to see mostly people being recommended
to stay apart, socially distant, to wear masks, to
continue to do sanitizing of their hands and their
surfaces in their houses because this virus has not
gone away.

FRANK SKI: All right. I have another
question for CEO Thurmond. This week end we're into
Holy Week. There's been a lot of discussion and a
lot of debate with people really wanting to go to
church, or stay home. And I know you're very
involved in the church community. What would your
advice be to the members of and the citizens of
DeKalb County?

CEO THURMOND: Well, I have been so proud of our faith leaders who I have had the opportunity to speak with and to pray with, and they pray for me and for our county during this challenging time. Pastor Bryant at New Birth, and Dr. Watley at Saint Philips, and Reverend Flippin and Reverend Dr. Jasper Williams have all rallied together.

And, you know, obviously Easter is just one of the most looked forward, one of the most anticipated of all the celebrations in our church and worship opportunities, but that won't be available to us this year. But, you know, we can still pray. Whatever your faith is, whether it's Christian or Jew or Muslim or Hindu, we still can pray.

And whether we're in church with our -- and what the psychiatrist said, we can still get dressed up Sunday morning if we choose. And many parents, as I thought about what you said, parents, it might be a good idea. I'm not the psychiatrist, but let's get the kids dressed up come Easter morning. Let's take the family photograph. You can still hide the eggs in the front yard, and you can still be thankful for all that we do have. In the
midst of the trials and the tribulations, the death and the sickness, we can thank whoever we pray to for the blessing of the life that we do have.
And so let's not -- because you know, Easter is still Easter. He's still -- and, matter of fact, that message may be more powerful this year than any year ever before, right? Because he did get up. And COVID is a disease, but there is no disease more debilitating than death. And if you can overcome death, you can overcome COVID. So let's all celebrate Easter this year.

FRANK SKI: All right, Pastor Thurmond.
Let's go to La'Keitha Carlos with another question.

MS. CARLOS: This is a question about short-term assistance for those with mental health issues or episodes. In reality, if you have a child or an adult who lives with you that needs mental health assistance, there is no place available for them other than taking them to the hospital. And since we are advising people not to go to the hospital to reduce their level of exposure, is there a place for people to go for short-term assistance with mental health issues?

DR. TRAMMEL: Well, there are community
mental health centers that as Dr. Alvarado said and
at the DeKalb Community Service Board as well, we
are offering telehealth visits. So that is
definitely a resource. It's a matter of calling for
an intake appointment.

I would remind individuals who may work
for a larger company that employee assistance
programs are a resource. NAMI, the National
Alliance on Mental Illness, they have -- the website
is NAMI.org. That is a wonderful resource for
information about mental health issues. They even
have a guidebook for COVID-19. So there are some
online resources as well.

I guess the most important thing is that
there are resources. It's just a matter of -- if
it's even looking online, most of the counties, I
believe all of them, are connected with a Community
Service Board or Community Mental Health Center of
some sort. And those are particularly helpful for
individuals who may or may not have insurance.

So definitely do not get -- give up hope.

There are aids and resources available.

DR. ALVARADO BROWN: And just to
piggyback, the State of Georgia has a crisis line
for those who have mental health needs. The Georgia
Crisis and Access Line is open 24/7. It is staffed by licensed social workers and licensed mental health professionals. That number is 1-800-715-4225. And you can call that number at any time and they will direct you to where you need to go.

CEO THURMOND: Can you repeat the number one more time?

DR. ALVARADO BROWN: Yes. It's 1-800-715-4225.

FRANK SKI: All right. Thank you very much.

And always remember to check in on your family, even though you're inside, make sure you pick up the phone and call your family members.

That concludes our question and answer session for this evening's third COVID-19 Town Hall. I'd like to introduce you again to CEO Michael Thurmond.

CEO THURMOND: Thank you. But, Frank, before you leave I just want to personally thank you for finding time to come and to assist and support us today. But more than that, you've just been an all-star. You have been throughout your career. I remember when you first came down from Baltimore to
Atlanta, and it's been an amazing journey.

FRANK SKI: Thank you.

CEO THURMOND: And we appreciate you so much. You speak to millions of people every day and you save lives, you inform, you empower. And we just appreciate you so much.

FRANK SKI: Thank you so much.

CEO THURMOND: It's only because we're physically distant, but let's give Frank Ski a round of applause.

(Applause.)

FRANK SKI: Thank you.

CEO THURMOND: Thank you, Frank.

And to the Panel, thank you all so much. You all have done a phenomenal job. Thank you for volunteering to come and be with us.

Dr. O'Carroll, Dr. Ross, thank you for your continued dedication, commitment to saving lives and improving the health of our county, state and nation. And Dr. Ross in particular, thank you for being there for me. He's been an amazing resource as I have tried to lead this county in the midst of this unprecedented challenge.

And thank you to the people who made this broadcast possible. This is our third town hall,
virtual town hall. But the people who made it possible are people did not appear on screen tonight, and I want to thank you for coming to the frontline to having worked night and day over the last two weeks to make this possible. Diamond Lewis and her staff, John Matelski and the staff. Quinn, Wallace, in communication and so many other people. The CEO's office. You see Ms. Carlos, but also Zach Williams and Delores Crowell, thank you so much.

    Now, I promised them that this would be the last one for a while, and I may or may not be able to keep that promise. But thank you all so much.

    And thank you to my fellow colleagues at DeKalb County Government. You're doing an amazing job. You really are. And I'm just honored to stand with you at this critical time.

    I want to thank Commissioner Presiding Officer Steve Bradshaw, Board of Commissioners, our House and Senate delegation, the DeKalb Municipal Association, our constitutional officers, judges, thank you all for rallying to this flag at this point in time.

    We are going to rise up together to face, and not just face, but to overcome this challenge
and we will emerge a stronger county, a stronger state and a stronger nation. That's my commitment.

And I wish all of you well. Happy Easter.

For those who are celebrating Passover, I send you my best wishes. To all faiths and religions, peace be with you.

(Town Hall concluded at 8:18 p.m. with the replaying of the opening video feature of photographs from the DeKalb community and the sound of Andra Day's Rise Up playing.)

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