

The Huntsville Times

A new county services center almost ready. A4

THE COVID-19 VACCINE

Vaccine skepticism lurks in Tuskegee



Nurse Marianne Williams administers a COVID-19 vaccine to a woman as a coworker looks on at the county health department in Tuskegee on Jan. 25. The clinic has yet to reach its maximum capacity for immunizing people in the mostly Black city, the site of the infamous “Tuskegee syphilis study,” that ended in 1972. Jay Reeves, Associated Press

Many in city have relatives who were subjected to unethical government experimentation during the ‘Tuskegee syphilis study’

Jay Reeves Associated Press

Lucenia Dunn spent the early days of the coronavirus pandemic encouraging people to wear masks and keep a safe distance from each other in Tuskegee, a mostly Black city where the government once used unsuspecting African American men as guinea pigs in a study of a sexually transmitted disease.

Now, the onetime mayor of the town immortalized as the home of the infamous “Tuskegee syphilis study” is wary of getting inoculated against COVID-19. Among other things, she’s suspicious of the government promoting a vaccine that was developed in record time when it can’t seem to conduct adequate virus testing or consistently provide quality rural health care.

“I’m not doing this vaccine right now. That doesn’t mean I’m never going to do it. But I know enough to withhold getting it until we see all that is involved,” said Dunn, who is Black.

The coronavirus immunization campaign is off to a shaky start in Tuskegee and other parts of Macon County. Area leaders point to a resistance among residents spurred by a distrust of government promises and decades of failed health programs. Many people in this city of 8,500 have relatives who were subjected to unethical government experimentation during the syphilis study.

“It does have an impact on decisions. Being in this community, growing up in this community, I would be very untruthful if I didn’t say that,” said Frank Lee, emergency management director in Macon County. Lee is Black.

Health experts have stressed both the vaccines’ safety and efficacy. They have noted that while the vaccines were developed with record-breaking speed, they were based on decades of prior research. Vaccines used in the U.S. have shown no signs of serious side effects in studies of tens of thousands of people. And with more than 26 million vaccinations administered in the U.S. alone so far, no red flags have been reported.

Tuskegee is not a complete outlier. A recent survey conducted by the communications firm Edelman revealed that as of November, only 59% of people in the U.S. were willing to get vaccinated within a year with just 33% happy to do so as soon as possible.

But skepticism seems to run deeper here. When Alabama and the rest of the South were still segregated by race, government medical workers starting in 1932 withheld treatment for unsuspecting men infected with syphilis in Tuskegee and surrounding Macon County so physicians could track the disease.

SEE TUSKEGEE, A5

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Frank Lee, emergency management director in Macon County

WASHINGTON

GOP legislators push back against gun crackdown

But House speaker’s rules win backing of Democratic Rep. Terri Sewell

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The fallout from the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol is creating a new arena in the battle over gun rights. Democrats, led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California, claim that they’re concerned about a potential “enemy from within” the Congress itself.

This alarms Republican lawmakers who say that gun-possession at the Capitol by members of Congress has never posed problems for anyone. They accuse the Democrats of concocting a controversy where none existed.

“Members have every right — as does every American — to protect themselves and carry a weapon where permitted,” said U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville.

A 1967 regulation exempts members of Congress from a federal law banning firearms on the Capitol grounds. Guns, however, are prohibited from the House floor.

Alabama’s lawmakers, in responses to AL.com, mostly support having the ability to possess a gun, if they wish, to protect themselves in or around the Capitol. SEE GUN CRACKDOWN, A3

CORRECTIONS

Ivey signs 30-year leases for new prisons

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Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed 30-year lease agreements Monday on two new men’s prisons to be built and owned by private developers in Escambia and Elmore counties.

The agreements come after more than two years of planning by the Ivey administration and the Alabama Department of Corrections to build three men’s new prisons. Negotiations continue on the third prison, which will be in Bibb County.

Ivey said the lease agreements are the best way for Alabama to replace its aging prisons. She noted Alabama faces potential consequences from federal courts if it does not improve its prisons. In December, the U.S. Department of Justice sued the state, alleging unconstitutional conditions in men’s prisons.

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Coast TMMAL Production Team Member Job Description

Coast Team Members (TMs) have various duties and responsibilities including, but not limited to machining, conveyance, and assembly of all engine parts and components from raw materials to completed engines. TMs are assigned to specific jobs within the given areas based upon production needs and training. TMs are expected to operate within a set standard of work as a part of a specific process. TMs must exhibit visual and manual dexterity, strictly adhere to all safety protocols, and maintain a standard quality of product output.

This position also requires that TMs rotate shifts every 2 weeks (1st Shift 6am – 2:45pm & 2nd Shift 4:45pm -1:30am). Physical requirements include, but is not limited to standing 8+ hours a shift. Minimum level of education High School Diploma or GED equivalent required..

Job Details:

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- Shift pay of \$0.65/hr.
- 16 Paid holidays, PTO and Bereavement
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