



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor William A. Bell, Sr. Launches Shingles Awareness Month in Birmingham, Alabama at Local Community Event

The event marks the launch of a communications campaign in Alabama, sponsored by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID), to raise awareness about shingles

Birmingham, AL (March 6, 2017) – Mayor William A. Bell, Sr. issued a proclamation today at the Levite Jewish Community Center declaring March as Shingles Awareness Month in Birmingham, Alabama. The proclamation places a critical spotlight on shingles, a viral infection that affects as many as one in three people in the United States in their lifetime. The virus can cause a painful rash and nerve pain that can last for months or even years.

There is a vaccine currently recommended for all adults age 60 years and older that can help prevent shingles, but only 24 percent of those eligible in the U.S. have been vaccinated.

“I have had firsthand experience with family members who had shingles. It can be very painful and dangerous, and it’s important to assess the risks that you have and how you can help prevent it,” said Mayor Bell after he presented the proclamation to Michael D. Hogue, Pharm.D., NFID Board member, and Director and Associate Dean for the Center for Faith and Health at Samford University. “Hopefully we can have this conversation with our family and friends to make them aware that there is a vaccine and that it should be incorporated within their healthcare protocol.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Alabama **ranks 48th nationally** in shingles vaccination rates in the 60 to 64-year age group—a ranking many public health advocates in Alabama are hoping to change.

“Alabama is ranked 48th in shingles vaccination rates, and we want to change that,” said Dr. Hogue. “We are here today to launch a new awareness campaign to inform the public about the tremendous health impact of shingles and learn more about the vaccine that can help prevent shingles. Our message is simple: ‘Why miss out on life’s precious moments when a shingles vaccine can help prevent this painful infection?’”

The event attendees also heard from Samford University pharmacy students who presented information about the vaccine, answered questions and walked participants through a quiz to see if they were eligible for the vaccine.

David B. Hicks, DO, MPH, CTTS, Deputy Health Officer of the Jefferson County Department of Health said that he has treated patients with shingles and explained how extremely painful the disease can be.

“Shingles drastically impacts your quality of life, and the vaccine helps protect your quality of life,” said Dr. Hicks.

Dr. Robert May, a Jefferson County resident who had a severe shingles case over a year and half ago, agreed with Dr. Hicks warning the audience that ‘shingles is something you want to take every precaution to avoid.’ He said that he still has nerve complications on his forehead as a result of the virus.

To take the shingles eligibility quiz and to view the NFID shingles public service announcement, visit <http://www.nfid.org/shingles>

FOR MEDIA: To schedule interviews with any of the speakers, contact Jacqueline Bond at Jbond@burness.com or 301-280-5746.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1973 dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases across the lifespan.

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