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## Improv Theater Takes a Shot at Proving Vaccine Knowledge

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In recent years, communities have adopted countless creative ways to spread awareness about vaccines, from celebrity endorsements to cash incentives and more. But one Atlanta-based nonprofit is taking center stage on the matter.

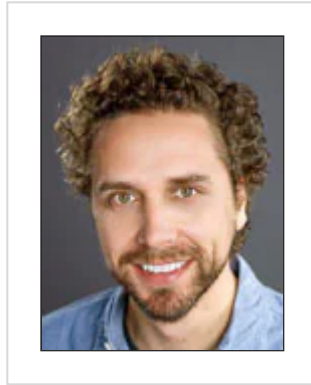
Since 1995, [Dad's Garage](#), a comedy and improv theater, has been putting on award-winning plays that reel in about 30,000 folks each year. Now they're using their platform to talk to their community about the COVID-19 vaccine.



In this style of the show, a community health expert will share their stories with the audience, and then performers respond to them by making new improvised scenes.

The newest project of these veterans of improv comedy involves a series of improv shows in partnership with local health officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to get out a pro-vaccine message. The shows are led by a "community champion," such as a doctor or a healthcare worker, who shares their life experience and work in public health. The improvisers go on to use those stories as fuel for their improv scenes. They hope to create a show that's funny and light while also instilling the importance of getting vaccinated.

"A community champion is someone who's active in that community who can use their experience and knowledge to help support the well-being of the community," Tim Stoltenberg, Dad's Garage artistic director, told *Medscape Medical News*. "[By] being a part of that community, they understand barriers or issues with engagement and can speak better to those which will help create a connection within the community."



Tim Stoltenberg, artistic director for Dad's Garage.

Audrey Arona, MD, teamed up with Dad's Garage to provide insight about vaccines for their shows. Arona is the CEO and district health director of public health for three counties in Georgia — Gwinnett, Newton, and Rockdale. A board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist, she practiced medicine for 30 years prior to taking over as health director.

Arona told *Medscape Medical News* that with many mitigation measures being rolled back in low-transmission communities, there is a possibility that messages about the importance of COVID-19 vaccination "will take a back seat."

"By working with a performing arts group like Dad's Garage, we're able to bring awareness and conversation to their audience," she said. "In this context, it's exciting to be gathering again, ie, people being able to do an improv show together, but it's also important to remind individuals that COVID-19 vaccination remains the best form of protection."

The show's creators hope the show will boost the message by mixing comedy and serious subject matter for an experience that lets their audience laugh and learn.

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