



Contact: Zachary Yaksich
Phone: (248) 330-9005
E-mail: info@alanasfoundation.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - DECEMBER 16, 2021

ALANA'S FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES ANNUAL ALANA YAKSICH NATIONAL COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY FLU VACCINATION CHALLENGE WINNERS

Bloomfield Hills, Mich. - The flu vaccine is the number one way to prevent the flu, yet national estimates continue to show overall U.S. vaccination coverage remains flat; as in previous years, less than half of the U.S. population is vaccinated. Last flu season alone, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates up to 61,200 people died from a vaccine preventable disease.

To address low vaccination rates, since the 2014-2015 flu season, Alana's Foundation (AF), a Michigan-based non-profit, has sponsored the Alana Yaksich College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge as a friendly competition between schools to encourage increased flu vaccination rates on college campuses.

Starting with the Michigan competition in 2014, the challenge expanded fall 2017 to include schools from across the nation. Now in its 8th year overall, 21 schools participated from 11 states while battling the ongoing COVID19 pandemic.

It is with great honor that Alana's Foundation announces the winners of the *Alana Yaksich National College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge*: Small School: Valparaiso University - Valparaiso, IN; Medium School: University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, NC; and Large School: University of Wisconsin - Madison, WI.

"We started Alana's Foundation in 2009 after my daughter, Alana, age 5, died from the flu, a vaccine preventable disease", said Zachary Yaksich, founder and Director of AF. "I continue to be amazed how the colleges/universities at the participating institutions have embraced this challenge and really made a difference in the yearly efforts to increase vaccination rates among the vulnerable student population and their community."

The *Alana Yaksich National College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge* ended last week in conjunction with [National Influenza Vaccination Week](#) when the Center for Disease and Prevention (CDC) encourages everyone six months of age and older to get their flu vaccine before the holiday season. In the last three decades, 75 percent of flu seasons peaked between December and February. By getting the flu vaccine now, families will protect themselves and their loved ones against the flu during the holidays and through the duration of the flu season.

"Every flu season is different and unpredictable. The 2019 flu season recorded 195 **pediatric flu** deaths. This is the **highest recorded number pediatric flu deaths** reported during a regular flu season. I urge everyone not to underestimate the impact the virus can have on our health," adds Mr. Yaksich. "There is still plenty of time to benefit from flu vaccination and to help keep your family healthy before flu activity increases or a tragedy hits close to home."

According to the CDC, flu is a contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses that can cause mild to severe illness. Flu activity is on the increase nationally. Since it takes about two weeks after the flu vaccine is administered for the body to build an immunity to the flu, it is important to get vaccinated as soon as possible. There are multiple flu shot options this season, so people should speak with their healthcare provider about which vaccine is best for them.

Flu vaccines are available at many locations including provider offices, pharmacies, and local health departments. To find a location near you, visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/find-vaccine>. To stay up-to-date on flu activity in the US, visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

Alana's Flu Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization founded in memory of Alana Yaksich who died of influenza in 2003. The mission of Alana's Flu Foundation is to educate the public about the importance of yearly influenza vaccinations and in doing so, increase vaccination rates by providing convenient and affordable flu vaccination options as well as provide support for families that have lost a child. Recognition includes the 2012 Michigan Honoree for the Center for Disease Control Childhood Immunization Champion Award, the 2012 Alliance for Immunization in Michigan Outstanding Achievement Award, the 2015 National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit - Immunization Excellence Honorable Mention for the MICHIGAN College/University Flu Vaccination Challenge and the 2016 AIM Bulls-Eye Award. For more information visit www.alanasfoundation.org

#