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Nursing student urges vaccination amid delta surge

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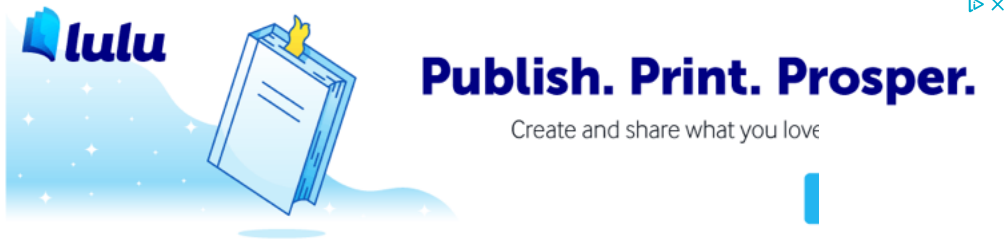


Andi Barefoot, a nursing student at Western Kentucky University, administers a COVID-19 vaccine.

Submitted

Between caring for COVID-19 patients, administering vaccinations, testing for the coronavirus and notifying the infected, local nursing student Andi Barefoot has received a master class in public health.

“I’ve gotten a good grasp on what the pandemic holds,” said Barefoot, who is in her final semester at Western Kentucky University’s nursing program.

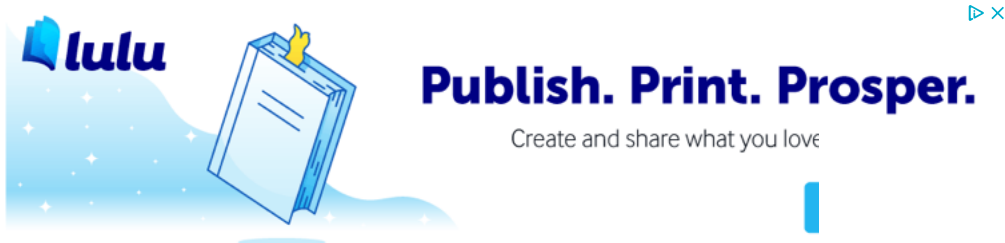


Barefoot knows nurses are needed, but she can't help but feel discouraged by her uphill battle to convince others to get vaccinated.



"It's so frustrating because there's so much misinformation out there. People are just absolutely refusing to look into the truth," she said.

The Bowling Green native has a message for her fellow students, who might fall prey to vaccine mistruths and notions of invincibility because they're young: It's not all about you.



"You're not only helping yourself. You're helping the community that you're in," she said, referencing the strain local hospitals are under.

WKU has urged students, faculty and staff to get vaccinated, but it hasn't required them to get one to study or work on campus.

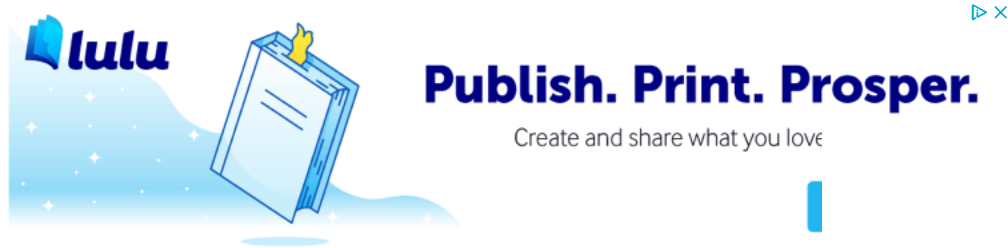
Instead, WKU is hoping to entice students with a vaccine incentive program it recently rolled out, offering them a shot at winning various prizes and scholarships if they participate. Additionally, students who are fully vaccinated and complying with the campus' indoor masking mandate don't have to quarantine if exposed to COVID-19.

“If you were in close contact – but you’re vaccinated – you don’t have to quarantine,” WKU President Timothy Caboni recently told the Daily News.

“If you are a student and if you live within three hours of campus and you test positive, we’re going to ask you to quarantine at home,” Caboni said. “So again, get your vaccine, wear a mask and we’re going to make it through this together.”

WKU spokesman Jace Lux said that, as of Thursday, 5,581 students had completed the vaccination status form. Of those, 5,005 indicated they are vaccinated.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said about 48% of adults between the ages of 18 to 24 are fully vaccinated, though numbers for that age group have spiked recently.



In Kentucky, 307,463 adults between the ages of 18 and 29 had received the vaccine, state officials reported Aug. 30.

Working for Med Center Health four days a week, Barefoot has seen a health care system pushed to its limits. When she encourages others to get the vaccine, Barefoot asks people to consider the potential consequences if they don’t.

“My best recommendation would be to look at what COVID can cause,” she said, noting that she’s seen survivors come into the hospital afterward having experienced embolisms, strokes and other complications post-recovery.

What’s more, the unvaccinated owe it to those who aren’t eligible to receive the vaccine, like young children, she said.

“It’s something that we need to do,” Barefoot said.

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