



Covid-19 Vaccinations Continue

Georgia Tech is continuing to vaccinate individuals eligible under the 1A+ phase, as designated by the Georgia Department of Public Health. If you were notified of eligibility and have not made an appointment, visit health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/vaccine to make an appointment today.

From Vaccine Skeptic to Believer

Area Maintenance Manager Marlon Ellis Shares Why He Got the Covid-19 Vaccine

CATHY BRIM
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Marlon Ellis, area maintenance manager for The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design, maintains one of the most interesting buildings on Georgia Tech's campus. The Kendeda Building features regenerative heating and cooling systems, compostable toilets, and

see **ELLIS**, page 2

Fauci to Receive Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage

BLAIR MEEKS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, one of the nation's leading infectious disease experts and a steadfast voice of science, facts, and medical

best practice during one of the most significant public health challenges in U.S. history, is this year's recipient of the Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage.

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Anthony S. Fauci

2021 Ivan Allen Prize for Social Courage

Monday, March 15 • 3 p.m.

Watch online at ivanallenprize.gatech.edu/allenprize2021

3 p.m.: Virtual award presentation and remarks

Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Rochelle P. Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Walensky



del Rio

4 p.m.: In-person panel discussion

Carlos del Rio, Distinguished Professor of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Emory University School of Medicine and executive associate dean for Emory at Grady Health System

Pinar Keskinocak, William W. George Chair and professor in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering

Joshua Weitz, Patton Professor and director of the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Quantitative Biosciences

Ann Cramer (moderator), senior consultant with Coxe Curry & Associates



Keskinocak



Weitz



Cramer

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a rooftop garden — all of which demand a thorough understanding of very complex operating requirements. Ellis says that research and continuing education have become part of the daily routine that allows him to successfully execute his job responsibilities. It's this same quest for knowledge that has helped Ellis understand the benefits of the Covid-19 vaccine.

In late January, Ellis received notification from Georgia Tech that he was eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine. Hesitant and skeptical at first, he ignored the email. He was surprised at how quickly the vaccine was available on campus, and his experience with Covid-19 was limited to a co-worker who tested positive and experienced only minor symptoms. He admits that as a Black man, born and raised in Alabama, he felt a deep mistrust of the government and its public health initiatives. This mistrust stemmed from his knowledge of the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment research study and the subsequent abuse of Black men over a 40-year period. Ellis also felt the chaotic and divided political climate had clouded information surrounding the science behind the vaccine.

Ellis knew he should do his research and find out more. He needed to hear from those he trusted so he did what he does every day at Georgia Tech — he educated himself. Fortunately, his church, the Providence Missionary Baptist Church in southwest Atlanta, was offering a virtual forum about the vaccine.

The forum was moderated by Pastor Damon Williams, a frequent lecturer in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Georgia Tech. The panel included three doctors — a pediatrician, an oncologist, and a general surgeon — who carefully explained the medical facts surrounding the vaccine to help

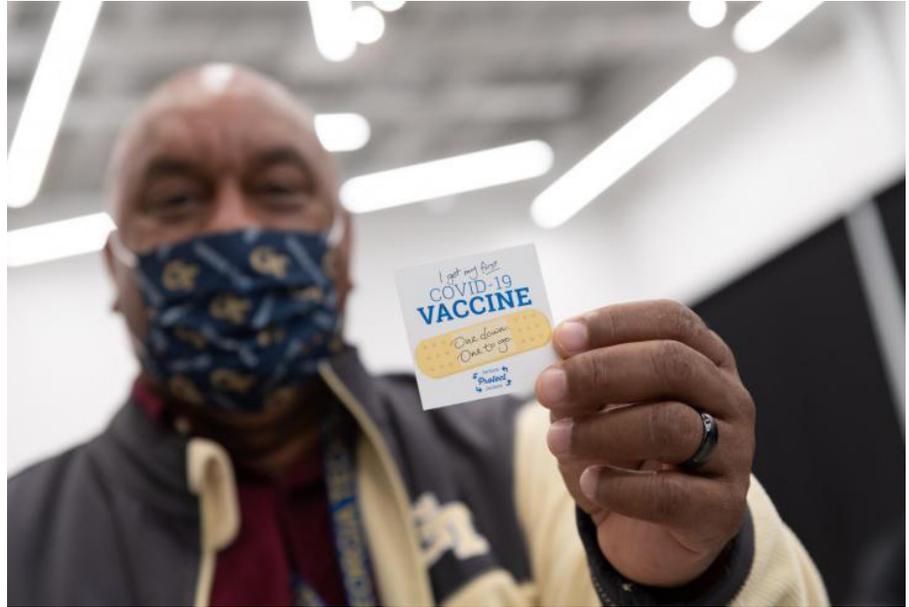


Photo courtesy of Marlon Ellis

Marlon Ellis is pictured after getting his first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at the Exhibition Hall on campus. Vaccinations are ongoing for those eligible under Phase 1A+, and Phase 1B is expected to include all Georgia Tech employees.

church members understand that the vaccine is safe. They dispelled many misconceptions and revealed that one of the scientists at the forefront of the Moderna vaccine research, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, is a Black woman, a research fellow, and a scientific lead at the National Institutes of Health. They emphasized that the vaccine clinical trials did include people from many races and ethnicities and were thus deemed safe for this segment of the population. Ellis also felt reassured after hearing that this mRNA type of vaccine delivery had been used in previous virus trials and was not entirely new. The forum ended by focusing on the fact that the vaccine helps in preventing you from contracting the coronavirus infection as well as keeping you from becoming severely ill if you do contract Covid-19. In addition, it may help protect others you come in contact with, including friends and family. It became clear that vaccination is key to ending the Covid-19 pandemic.

After the forum, Ellis had a much better understanding of the safety and necessity of getting the vaccine. He thought about his new baby granddaughter and how this could protect her as well. With information directly from respected medical professionals and encouragement from trusted individuals, he changed his mind and signed up for the vaccine. He received his first dose on Jan. 27 at the Stamps Health Services vaccine clinic and said, "The nurse who administered my vaccine was so helpful, and she made sure that I would be safe during the process." He said he experienced no side effects from the Pfizer vaccine that day and is due for his second dose shortly.

Ellis calls himself a "free spirit" and said, for him, the worst aspect of the pandemic has been living as somewhat of a recluse. "I prefer being out and being social. I love people and enjoy being around others."

For Ellis, getting the vaccine was the first step toward doing that again.



The Whistle
WORK AND LIFE AT GEORGIA TECH

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Book Drive, Reading Day to Encourage Literacy

From now until March 19, members of the Georgia Tech community are encouraged to donate books to the Ramblin' Reading Day book drive. Buzz Buddies, a new student organization that builds mentorship programs between Georgia Tech students and those in nearby public schools, is partnering with Boyd Elementary School in Atlanta to deliver books for its students and encourage literacy.

The book drive will culminate in Ramblin' Reading Day, where members of Buzz Buddies will be interacting with Boyd students throughout the day.

Learn more and view the Ramblin' Reading Day wishlist at gov.gatech.edu/rrd.



PRIZE, from page 1

An annual award from Georgia Tech, the Ivan Allen Jr. Prize honors individuals who have stood up for moral principles at the risk of their careers and livelihoods. As a trusted expert in the fight against Covid-19, Fauci embodies these attributes. He faced public criticism and was subjected to enormous pressure in response to his public messages. Despite these challenges, Fauci has continued to deliver his clear and unwavering assessment of the facts and science and provide critical advice to guide the nation and world.

“Dr. Fauci’s resolve in the face of extraordinary threats to our public health here at home and abroad make him the clear choice for Georgia Tech’s Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage,” said Georgia Tech’s President Ángel Cabrera. “As an institution of higher learning committed to bettering the human condition through our motto of Progress and Service, there could be no better person suited to receive this honor than a man who has unflinchingly relied on science and facts in the face of tremendous public and political pressure.”

Because the prize is awarded by Georgia Tech to honor those who show courage in seeking social change at risk to their careers, livelihoods, and even their lives, it is named for

former Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., a graduate of Georgia Tech, who at great personal and political risk was the only southern white elected official to testify before Congress in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The prize will be presented to Fauci virtually on Monday, March 15.

A noted expert in scientific circles the world over, Fauci became a household name as he sought to deliver to millions of people information about how to protect each other from the highly transmissible virus that causes Covid-19. Along with other top public health leaders, Fauci pressed Americans to wear masks, avoid crowds, maintain physical distance from people who don’t live with them, and wash their hands often. Fauci also bluntly warned the nation that the pandemic would result in catastrophic loss of life.

“Amid the crisis, Dr. Fauci’s conscientious leadership continues to provide sound guidance, clarity, and hope to our citizens, our communities, and our institutions as we battle Covid-19,” said Kaye Husbands Fealing, dean and Ivan Allen Jr. Chair in the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts. “For his truth, for his exemplary dedication, and his courage, Dr. Fauci is most deserving of this prize.”

As a physician-scientist with the National Institutes of Health, Fauci has served the American public for

more than 50 years. He has been a trusted advisor to seven U.S. presidents and is recognized as one of the world’s leading experts on infectious disease. His work in basic and applied research led to preventions, diagnoses, and treatments in the areas of HIV/AIDS and other immunodeficiency diseases, respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, tuberculosis, and malaria. Since 1984, Fauci has served as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. In 2008, President George W. Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his work on the U.S. government’s emergency relief plan to address the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. He still devotes time to his research of HIV infection and the body’s immune responses to the virus.

For most of 2020, he was a member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force. Fauci is now serving as President Joe Biden’s chief medical advisor and is part of the new administration’s Covid-19 team.

The Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage was first awarded in 2011 and is funded in perpetuity by a grant from the Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation. It provides a stipend of \$100,000 to the awardee or a charitable contribution to a nonprofit in honor of the awardee.

For additional information, visit ivanallenprize.gatech.edu.

Meet Gary McMurray, Principal Research Engineer

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

After earning bachelor's and master's degrees in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech, Gary McMurray interviewed for a number of jobs. Most were in the defense industry, and the job duties were very specific.

"I joke about one job that was to design fuel pumps for the aft section of cargo planes," McMurray recalled. "I asked, 'Well, what if I want to design fuel pumps for the front section?' They said, 'No. That's a different skill set.'"

The job sounded too constraining and unappealing to McMurray, so he continued his job search, interviewing with the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) in 1989. He had been working in robotics, a relatively new field at the time.

"I was looking for something in robotics, and GTRI was trying to get into robotics," he said. "They didn't have anybody working in that field at all, so I was really the first person hired to work in that area. It gave me an opportunity to start from scratch and develop something unique and different. I really enjoyed that."

Three decades later, McMurray still works at GTRI.

"I wear two hats in the organization," he said. He is the division chief for the Intelligent Sustainable Technologies Division, and associate director for the Institute for Robotics and Intelligent Machines (IRIM), working with director Seth Hutchinson.

The Intelligent Sustainable Technologies Division conducts research to improve the human condition through transforming the agricultural and food systems, sustainable use and access to energy and water, and improving workplace safety and pandemic response. IRIM is an umbrella under which robotics researchers, educators, and students from across campus can come together to advance a wide variety of robotics activities at the Institute.



Photo by Allison Carter

Gary McMurray at the Food Processing Technology Building.

"One of the things I enjoy in my role as a division chief is the ability to set the vision and mission," McMurray said. "We're a little bit different from the rest of GTRI because we don't do Department of Defense work. We work a lot with the campus, but we also work with other universities on sustainability projects regarding food or energy. The projects have the potential to make a big impact. I describe it as having one foot on the basic research side and one foot on the applied side. We have master's and Ph.D. students doing cutting-edge basic research, and we're also building systems and applying research and deploying things into the field."

After more than 30 years at GTRI, McMurray still gets excited when a plan comes together.

"The most rewarding part of the work is when you can bring together the basic research and the applied, build a system that does something new and novel, put it into the field and test it, and have somebody come back and say, 'That's really cool. That worked.'"

Away From the Office

McMurray and his wife have two sons — a first-year student at Kennesaw State University and a high school

senior. He recently started playing chess again, which was a passion of his in middle and high school.

"My parents were always afraid I was going to quit school and go play chess professionally," he said. "They were quite worried about that."

But then he got into robotics and work, so chess took a back seat. As his children have grown older, he has gotten back into the game. "Every night I study and play online," he said. "It's always interesting."

He read *The Queen's Gambit*, a book about the game that was made into a Netflix series, and he said it was required reading for chess enthusiasts.

"Chess players are not normal people," he said, laughing. "The game is very obsessive, and you just sit there at the board for hours. My longest game lasted six and a half hours."

McMurray used to play competitively all over the U.S. "One of my goals, maybe when I retire, is to try to reach the rank of international master."

This story has been edited for length. Read the full story and hear McMurray talk about his work at news.gatech.edu.