



NEWS RELEASE

Leading The Way

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DSG Teammate Uses His Skills To Help Curb Covid

The frustration was all too familiar when Ty Garside was searching for a vaccine appointment for his mother. As an elderly and high-risk person, she needed hers as soon as possible.

None could be found. They chased appointments by jumping from one website to another and made numerous phone calls, but always ended up where they began. Frustration built as the ability to keep the family safe felt just out of reach.

So, the principal software engineer for DICK'S came together with like-minded people and did something about it.

And the winner is...

Ty was part of the Covaxx team that won the **Pittsburgh Civic Hackathon** Jan. 31. His group created the website, **www.ineedashot.org**, which allows individuals to enter basic information into a database that will alert them when a vaccine appointment in their area becomes available. The website can effectively curb the constant online searches in hopes of finding an appointment. Some of the common barriers to vaccination, such as seniors being unfamiliar with technology or a lack of consistent access to the internet, have been alleviated. The site that was born from frustration, now reduces the stress that many have felt.

Ty, in the bottom left corner, and his team worked virtually during the Hackathon, adding another degree of difficulty to the project.

The site was created in a whirlwind weekend in which Ty estimated he put in the equivalent of three normal

working days. He built the framework of the backend and performed most of the engineering. The site was the brainchild of Matt Clark, a freelance developer, and the group also included engineer and researcher Ben Towne, PNC Financial Services Group Vice President Kate Byrne and Ty. The team came from different backgrounds, but their common goal of fighting COVID by streamlining the vaccination process bonded them.

"It was a very rewarding experience and fun to collaborate with people who had the same frustrations," said Ty. "I think the judges were looking at it as an important issue and that a project like this needs to exist."

Since winning the Hackathon, Covaxx has become the non-profit group Tech Serving Society. Anyone interested in helping can **click here** to find out more about volunteering or providing a donation.

Technology is so often associated with the future and changing the game. The website certainly does that, but what is especially appealing to Ty is that it can also help us go back in time and recreate the world as we previously knew it.

"My passion comes from the toll this is taking on our relationships, our mental health and the physical harm," Ty said. "I just wanted to make sure we can roll out this vaccine as fast as we can. We all want to get back to normal."

Helping in other ways

Ty waves to cars as they exit a recent vaccination clinic at the CSC.

Ty and his sibling, who is also a DICK'S teammate, have been volunteering at the CSC vaccine clinics as another way to ensure the community is able to get vaccinated. Ty has directed traffic flow into and out of the lot and greeted patients as they flock to the CSC, which has made immense contributions to the state's vaccination efforts since March by hosting numerous clinics and follow-ups that have resulted in thousands of people getting vaccinated.

There is still work to be done, but at the same time there is light at the end of the tunnel. Ty is looking forward to gathering with friends, seeing the nephews he hasn't hugged in a year and catching a Penguins hockey game in person. Ty has put in the work to better the world around him as best he can. He has a vast skill set that has been on display, but he is not about showing off or basking in the spotlight.

"This isn't about flexing or anything like that," he said. "It's about working together and sharing compassion for the community."

Ty's story even has a happy ending: He was able to secure a shot for his mother, who is now fully vaccinated.