

Riverbend Ministerial Alliance Offers Free COVID_19 Testing To Residents On Wednesday/Saturday

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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ALTON - The Riverbend Ministerial Alliance has begun offering free COVID-19 virus testing to area residents, starting on Wednesday with drive-up testing at Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, and offered more testing on Saturday at Deliverance Temple, located at 1125 East 6th Street, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The free testing was available to all residents.

"We're here on Amelia Street (where Tabernacle Missionary is located), and we're offering free COVID testing," said RBMA president Jason Harrison during an interview on Wednesday. "So right now, people are pulling up behind me, as you probably can see. They're pulling up and getting tested, so as they go through, the testers come out, and they test everyone in the car, and then, you'll get a call back within about three to five days. Also as well, people that are walking, they are able to walk up, and the testers will also test them here onsite. So, as they're doing the COVID testing, I've been calling and encouraging people to get tested, because this is just so important. I tell them like this: You owe it to the people around you, because many times, we might be carriers, and we don't even know it. So this is a great time, a great place to get it done. This is a very disenfranchised area, so people who were not able to get to Wood River, get to some of the testing sites, they've been able to get up here. They've been walking up, and of course, again, we've had people that's been driving up. So this has been just a great time, and a great event."

Testers are dressed in full protective gear, with masks and gloves, and hand sanitizers are available for those who need it. And knowing that people have tested negative for the virus will help bring more confidence to them as well.

"It kind of gives you confidence to know what your situation is," said The Rev. John Buford, the pastor of Tabernacle, "because this is a thing where you never know whether you have it or not. because anywhere you go, a grocery store, a place where you have to go, things you have to do, you could contact it, and not even know it. So this is free to the public, and come out and get tested. And it's good that Madison County is doing this for the people, and this is an area, some times in the city, contact it more, and people are more subject to come down with it. So it's good that Brother Harrison decided that we would have it done in this area, asked if we could do it, and I've been trying to figure out some things that we might be able to do to help out. You always want to do something. We've given contributions and various things, but this is a thing where we could have people physically come and get some help, and I think it's a great thing."

Harrison is very excited and pleased that people are taking advantage of the free testing, and hopes that more will come out to take advantage of the opportunity.

"So now, the people are coming out, and momentum is building up," Harrison said. "People are excited, because now, they get to find out if they're a carrier or not, and you know what? Just give people that peace that they need. So when your allergies act up a little bit later, you know what? My tests already came in, and I'm negative for it. I can go around this person, because I've already been tested, and it came back, and the results are there. And we're going to continue this. We're not going to stop today.

"The great thing about it is, it is free," Harrison said. "You don't have to pay a thing, no insurance needed, you're just going to write your name down, and you will get tested, and you will get a call back. I hope to see you there."



[Charles Thomas also contributed to this story.](#)