

# Utilizing Peer Teen Advocates and Social Media to Increase HPV Vaccination Awareness in Urban Settings

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## Background:

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States with a significant burden of health related costs.<sup>1</sup>

HPV infection is recognized as one of the leading causes of infection-related malignancy.<sup>1</sup>

HPV vaccine is the most effective means to reduce the prevalence of HPV infection.<sup>2</sup>

HPV vaccination rates in the greater Milwaukee area are < 30%.<sup>3</sup>

The Medical College of Wisconsin, the City of Milwaukee Health Department and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee embarked on a unique community based participatory research strategy to increase teens' knowledge about HPV by utilizing teens as peer educators and promoters of a multimedia campaign.

Our goal in this pilot study was to determine the feasibility of incorporating teens into development of HPV related health messages utilizing both social media and conventional media and whether these culturally relevant materials would resonate with other teens.

## Methods:

Six youth leaders recruited from select Boys & Girls Clubs sites formed peer educator teams to increase community awareness of HPV.

The teams recruited a total of thirty youth who received age and culturally appropriate HPV education, discussed branding and logo development, and worked with a local artist to create the project's own 'brand'.

An informative teen focused HPV web-site was developed [www.itsjust3HPV.org](http://www.itsjust3HPV.org) (Figure 1.) collaboratively by all of the youth participants .

The individual teams then designed billboards (Figure 2.), brochures (Figure 3.) and public service announcements (PSA) about HPV and the vaccine under the mentorship of community healthcare and marketing professionals.

The website was also utilized to display the team projects for two weeks and encouraged the community to vote for their favorite messages and mode of delivery in each category.

Winners in each media category were announced at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spread the Word PSA Premiere held on May 9th, 2013 in downtown Milwaukee, WI, a citywide teen health event to raise awareness on reproductive health issues. The winning projects will be disseminated citywide.

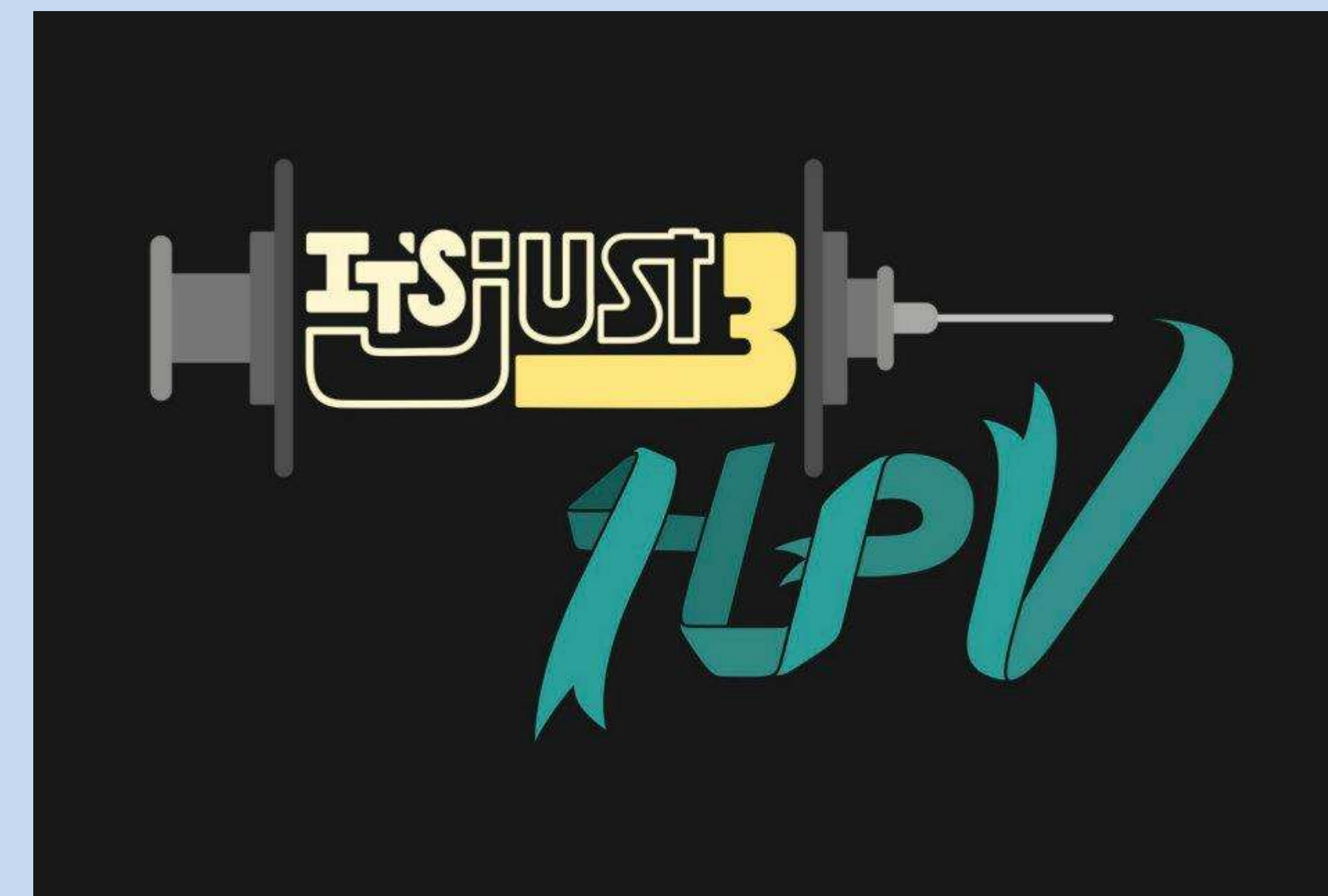


Figure 1. HPV Logo created by youths for website [www.itsjust3hpv.org](http://www.itsjust3hpv.org) and branding purposes



Figure 2. HPV Billboards shown on electronic billboards in Milwaukee

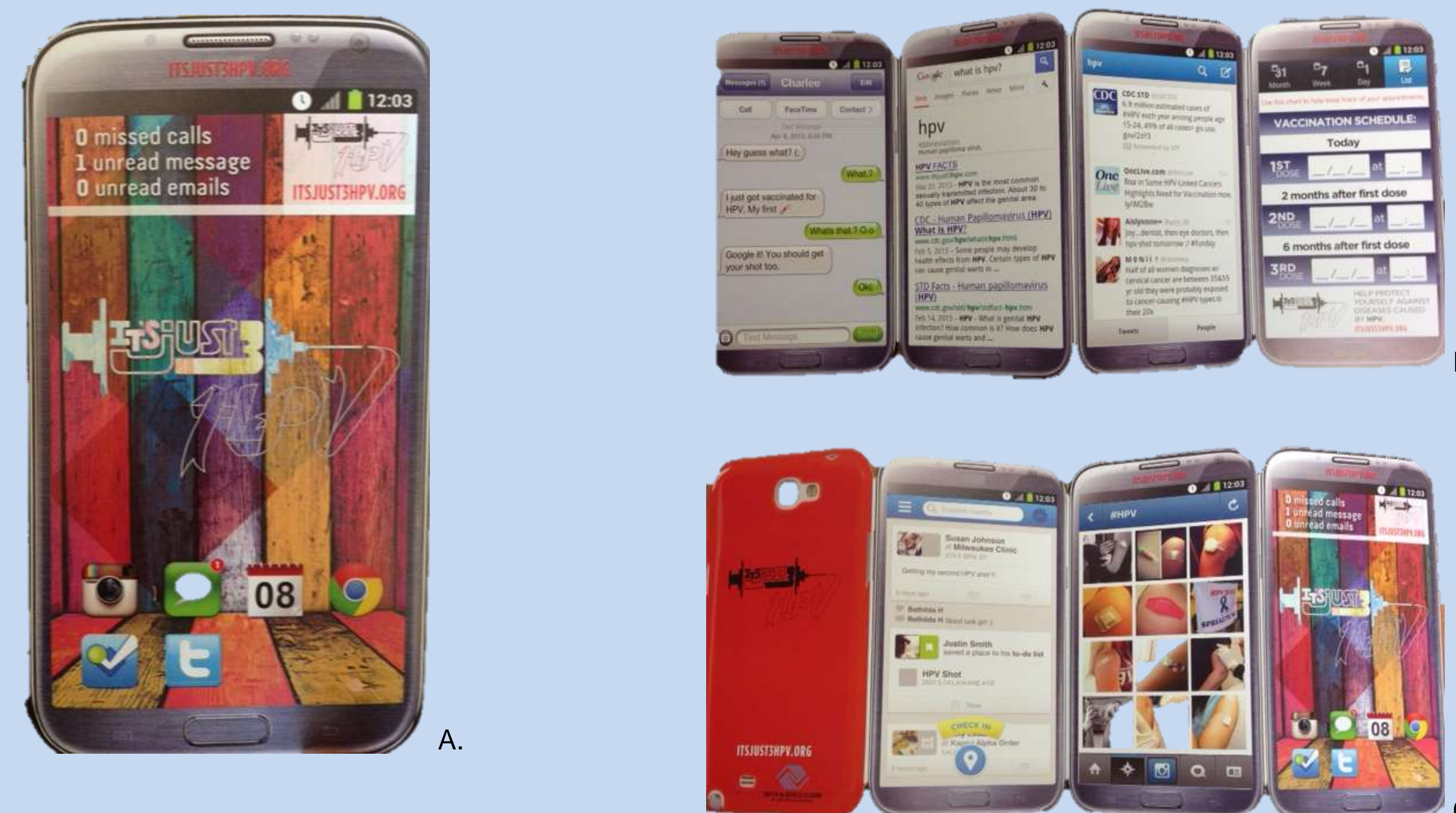


Figure 3. HPV Brochure: A. cover art, B. inside visuals and C. back visuals

## Results:

Teen focused materials have been displayed on billboards (Figure 2.) throughout the city and pamphlets (Figure 3.) created by the teens are to be disseminated through local health clinics that serve this population. The website that was launched in April of 2013 has been followed for viewing metrics and has logged over 3000 views as of July 2013. Currently it is viewed about 29 times a day. Our PSA vides have been viewed almost 300 times on YouTube. Our starting group of 30 youths have reached out to thousands in a brief interval of time indicative of the power of the internet to assist health messaging.

## Conclusions:

Adolescents can and should be engaged in the development of culturally relevant health messaging. Our strategy represents one approach to development of such materials that will appeal to this population. The results of this pilot and the continued ability to track metrics from the website are encouraging for measuring broad exposure of the strategy. The long term goal is to maintain our web presence and determine, with the assistance of the Wisconsin Immunization Registry, whether the HPV vaccination rate can be positively affected by innovative campaigns tailored to the community and whether we can foster continued community engagement especially in urban underserved areas. If successful, this strategy can be applied to other important health issues and possibly even other urban areas.

## References

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