

logo not found or type unknown

Owner of Billboards Pushing Ads Discouraging Vaccination on St. Croix Stands By Ads; Dept. of Health Investigating

Coronavirus / **Published On October 08, 2021 05:17 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **October 08, 2021**

Image not found or type unknown



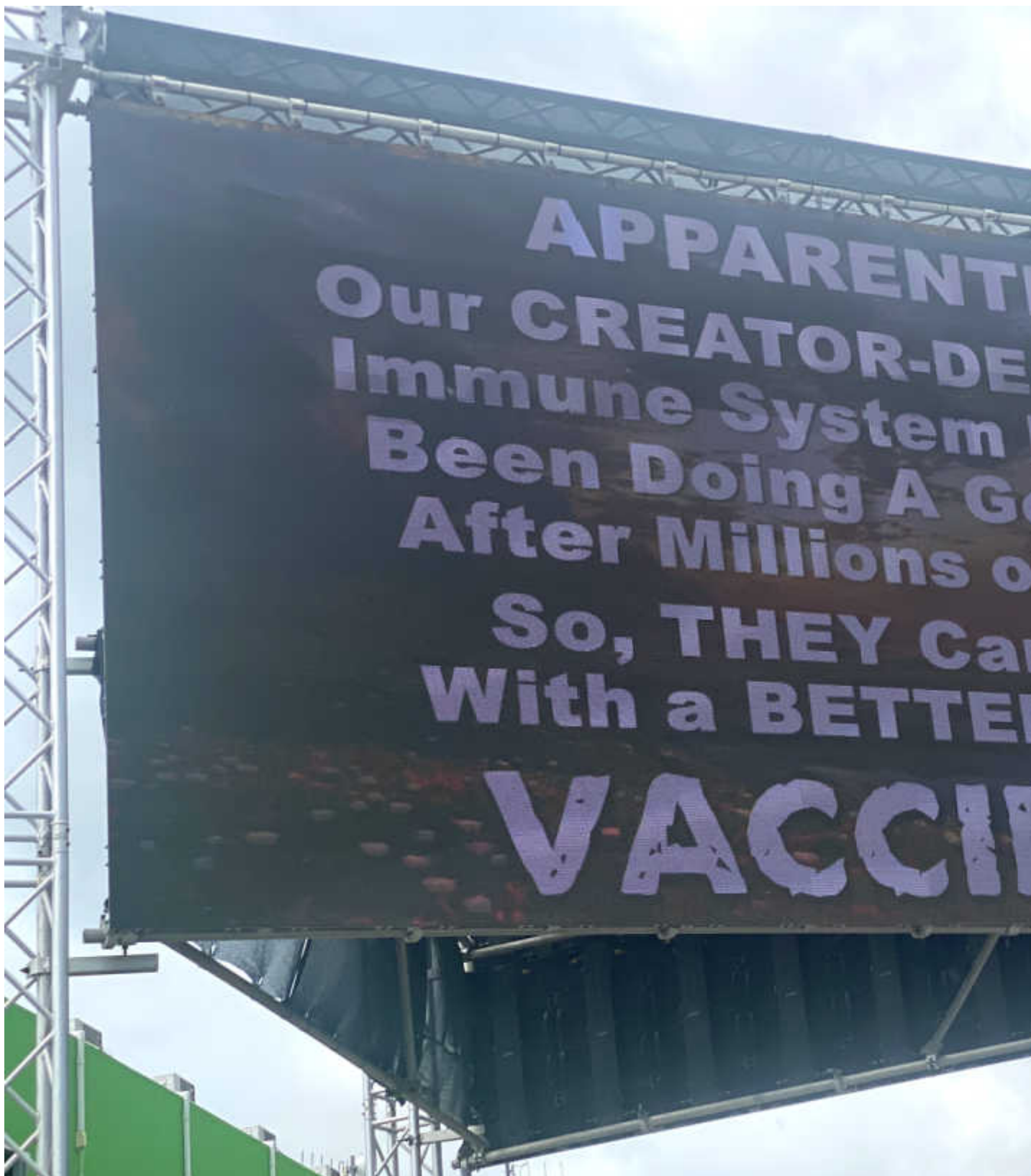
Billboard in La Reine running ad discouraging Covid-19 vaccination. Billboard owner Rick Jarvis says, "There's nothing on that board that is misinformation." By. VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Two billboards on St. Croix owned by a businessman named Rick Jarvis, one located near the Sion Farm traffic lights and another near the La Reine traffic lights have been running ads discouraging vaccination against Covid-19, complicating efforts by government and health authorities to increase vaccination rates in the territory.

Mr. Jarvis, however, who continues to receive a number of government ads even as his operation hampers the government's Covid-19 efforts, stood by his business model during an interview with the Consortium Thursday night, contending that the body's natural immune system was sufficient to fight the Covid-19 disease. To date 4.4 million people have died from the virus worldwide, including 72 Virgin Islanders.

According to the New York Times realtime Covid-19 tracker, [only 45 percent](#) of Virgin Islanders were vaccinated as of Friday, among the lowest in the United States.

The billboard in La Reine as of Thursday included two ads. One reads, "Apparently, our creator-designed immune system has not been doing a good job after millions of years, so they came up with a better idea.... vaccines."



Asked why he believed the vaccines would be developed if they were not needed to fight Covid-19, Mr. Jarvis said, "There have spinach and broccoli and all these kinds of things, right? Is that good for the body? And they got junk food." Mr. Jarvis did not elaborate.

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said Thursday the department is investigating whether the ads meet the misinformation threshold. She further stated that the V.I. Dept. of Health would continue to provide information grounded in solid data based on scientific research and approved by the country's leading health authorities. "We go to what we've always said and continue to educate the community based on the science and the data, and we'll continue to do that. And if we continue to do that, we'll always change even if it's one mind, then that one mind can change others, and that's really and truly how we look at it," she said.

Another ad reads, "A vaccine is created to prevent a specific disease. If it does not prevent: 1) contracting the disease, 2) spreading the disease, 3) death from the disease — what is the purpose of the vaccines???"

Mr. Jarvis suggested that he found nothing wrong with the ad, and when asked whether he knew that the vaccines were effective at preventing death over 90 percent of the time, he stated, "No, there is nothing, no such thing..."

While Covid-19 vaccines do not prevent all deaths, multiple research and overwhelming data have solidified that even after the Delta variant became the predominant strain, vaccine efficacy for full [Pfizer](#) or [Moderna](#) vaccination was 90 percent effective against hospitalization and 91 percent effective against death. Even locally, of the 72 Covid-related deaths published by the V.I. Dept. of Health, only one was announced [as being someone who was fully vaccinated](#).

While there are breakthrough cases where vaccinated people get ill, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says "all Covid-19 vaccines currently available in the United States are effective at preventing COVID-19 as seen in clinical trial settings."

The CDC also states, "Some people who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19 will still get sick because no vaccine is 100 percent effective. Experts continue to monitor and evaluate how often this occurs, how severe their illness is, and how likely a vaccinated person is to spread Covid-19 to others."

Mr. Jarvis later in the conversation sought to distance himself from the ads running on his own billboards, telling the Consortium, "Those stuff that are on that billboard, all of them, just like the things them on the radio... it have disclaimers on the board." He then read to the Consortium what the disclaimers purportedly state, "The pictures and video content displayed on this billboard is not necessarily the views of the owners or management."

He then reverted to his original stance, concluding, "There's nothing on that board that is misinformation."