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This Agency's Anti-Vaccine Message Is a Public Health Plea in Disguise

BooneOakley posed as a fake funeral home to draw attention to Covid-19 death rates

The campaign ran in Charlotte, N.C. during Sunday's football game.

By **Emmy Liederman**

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On Sunday, North Carolina-based agency BooneOakley offered an off-beat message to tailgating **football** fans at the Saints vs. Panthers game in downtown Charlotte, N.C.: don't get vaccinated.

The agency posed as a fake business—Wilmore Funeral Home—to shock residents with a **sobering reminder about the dangers of exposure**. Since the campaign launched, the vaccination page for a walk-in clinic in Charlotte has seen a 500% increase in traffic.

The ad redirects to wilmorefuneralhome.com, a simplistic site that presents visitors with two options: "Get vaccinated," with a hyperlink to the clinics site, or "We'll see you soon." As of Sept. 22, the funeral site has generated nearly 150,000 page views.

"It got attention because people were out tailgating, and we want people in Charlotte to get vaccinated," Mary Gross, associate creative director at BooneOakley, said. "One more vaccine could keep one child or immunocompromised person from being exposed."

Spread the message, not the virus

While the billboard only saw the light of day for a few hours this weekend, it has reached a more widespread social media audience, which has largely praised BooneOakley for its work.

"We have gotten emails from people across the country who believe what we do, which is that this vaccine is the answer to ending this pandemic," she said.

As of Sept. 21, 48.8% of North Carolinians are fully vaccinated, which is lower than the nation-wide average. According to Gross, who worked on the campaign, if just one resident signs up for an appointment after seeing the campaign, it would have been worth it.

Gross shared that her agency has been traditionally supportive of passion projects, which allowed the team to execute this campaign with efficiency. BooneOakley worked with Writers For A Progressive North Carolina in 2016 to give a cheeky Happy Birthday greeting, or "HB2U," message to former governor Pat McCrory, who signed transphobic bathroom bill HB2.

"As an agency, we are not afraid to **stand up for what's right**," she said.