

# Anti-vaccine activists gather for a conference even as COVID rages | NPR

By Paige Pflieger

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The coronavirus pandemic continues to claim thousands of lives a week — mostly people who aren't vaccinated. But that's not stopping a major gathering of anti-vaccine advocates and conspiracy theorists in Nashville, Tenn., this weekend.

The event is being orchestrated by Tennessee couple Ty and Charlene Bollinger. They have been labeled as some of the nation's biggest vaccine misinformation superspreaders.

"If we're superspreaders, we're superspreaders of the truth," Charlene Bollinger says. "We have countless testimonies of people that are alive today because of our work, and this is straight from heaven. God has put us on this Earth for such a time as this."

The Bollingers got their start by promoting unproven alternatives to chemotherapy. Then they cashed in on their DVDs that push falsehoods about vaccines.

Charlene Bollinger calls Tennessee an ideal place to host an event like this one. She says the state has recently become home to many conservative pundits who have questioned aspects of the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as vaccine mandates.

"Right here in Tennessee, now we've got Candace Owens, we've got Ben Shapiro, Tomi Lahren," she says. "A lot of local freedom fighters."

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