



Dr. Alfie Meek, director of Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute, Center for Economic Development Research, spoke to local business people at the Southwest Gwinnett County Chamber breakfast Friday, Sept. 11, at 8 a.m. in Peachtree Corners.

Dr. Meek provided statistics to those in attendance who sat at tables approximately 10 feet apart at Atlanta Tech Park. He said the state and county are on a downward trajectory in COVID-19 cases, with older populations in south Gwinnett County more affected. Ninety-two percent of deaths are people over the age of 55, he said.

To date, there have been 244 deaths in Gwinnett County, numbers that were reassuring to some members of the audience. He said the death rate in Gwinnett County is far lower than other counties in Georgia. He said the death rate from COVID-19 is less than the death rate for freak accidents, at 38.3 per 100,000 people for COVID-19, and 41.7 per 100,000 for freak accidents.

"We need to protect the vulnerable but not lock-down the economy," he said.

Some have noted a best-case scenario that is V-shaped, where the economy will rebound as quickly as it declined, with minimal long-lasting damage. But Dr. Meek said that scenario won't happen. He said the economy may rebound to pre-COVID levels in early 2023 or possibly late 2022.

Most of the job loss occurred in low-income workers in the service industry. In Gwinnett County, the loss was mostly in the northern part of the county, in the Buford area, he said.

He looked at the disease and considered other social problems. Having schools closed is a greater health threat, as it is difficult for schools to address learning deficits and case of abuse when then they are not in school, he said.

Dr. Meek predicts a movement toward products and services for the home, such as home gym equipment, home theaters, shopping from home and movies on demand. Where employees

work will move more toward home, as 30 percent of jobs can be performed from home. As a result of that trend, real estate will experience shifts.

"You have people in high-rise apartments who don't want to live there," he said. And they won't have to.

The Southwest Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary partnership of business and professional people working together to build a healthy economy and to improve the quality of life in Berkeley Lake, Norcross and Peachtree Corners. For more information about the SGCC, call 470-482-1899 or go to: <https://www.southwestgwinnettchamber.com/>