

Thousands of Cloth Face Masks to be Donated and Distributed to Farmworkers in Central Coast Thanks to Work of Natividad Family Medicine Resident

By Catherine S. Forest

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Salinas, CA – Anne Irvine, MD, a resident at UCSF Natividad Family Medicine Residency, has been working to reduce COVID-19 illness among Central Coast farm laborers by teaching about COVID-19, physical distancing, hand sanitation, and face coverings. Dr. Irvine reached out to Southern California apron manufacturer Hedley and Bennett, which has pivoted to make masks, and asked for a donation. Hedley and Bennett are responding by generously donating 40,000 masks to help protect farmworkers and their families, Central Coast communities, and the fresh food chain. Ellen Bennett, CEO and Founder of Hedley & Bennett explains, “We are so proud and honored to be able to provide masks for all the farmworkers in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. As a company that was born in a kitchen and started out making aprons for chefs, we’ve been dedicated to the culinary world from the beginning, and it means so much to us to be able to give back to workers who are so critical to our food system and yet so vulnerable in this moment. It wouldn’t have been possible with the help of our amazing community who showed up to support this kind of donation through our buy one, give one program.”

Dr. Irvine is partnering with Project PPE for the Central Coast (PPE4CC), the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA), California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), the United Farm Workers (UFW), and Lideres Campesinas to distribute the face masks to workers from Watsonville to King City. Infographics on safely taking masks on and off and how to care for them, plus guidance on best practices to protect our community by incorporating face coverings, hand hygiene, physical distancing, and staying in place when possible will also be included due to the generosity of Dina Clark Design and Community Printers. Details about distribution locations will be announced later this week through multiple media channels and sponsoring agencies.

Dr. Irvine explained that “The heart of the Salinas Valley is the farmworker community. As a family medicine physician in Salinas, I’ve come to know them also as my patients, my teachers, and growers/harvesters of the food that feeds my family. When COVID began to affect us all, I saw their need for PPE as essential workers, and the lack of resources available. When I saw Hedley & Bennett’s Stand Up and Fight campaign, I knew I had to ask for masks on behalf of the community.

When they heard what was needed, Hedley & Bennett also felt moved to help us protect the farmworkers who feed the country and donated 40,000 masks for us to distribute across the Central Coast.”

“The current COVID-19 outbreak in Monterey County is significant and warrants immediate action”, said Catherine Sonquist Forest, MD, MPH, FAAFP. Dr. Forest is the founder of Project PPE for the Central Coast, which evolved to address the emerging shortages of PPE throughout the Central Coast region. A collaborative to specifically address the unique conditions of agriculture, including representatives from farm worker organizations, governmental agencies, health care organizations, academic centers, advocacy groups, and growers and shippers, had already begun to address these issues when the migration of labor from Southern California to the Central Coast began for spring harvest a few weeks ago and an outbreak occurred among farmworkers. Coordination between these groups is unprecedented and a united public health response will be crucial to the health of the entire community. Other strategies addressing case tracing, testing, isolation and quarantine are already being implemented to complement the modified stay-at-home orders and protections for essential workers.

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About UCSF Natividad Family Medicine Residency, PPE4CC, CCA, CRLA, UFW, and Lideres

Campesinas

UCSF Natividad Family Medicine Residency

Natividad is one of the original 8 family medicine residencies in California, and to this day upholds its legacy of full-spectrum training to prepare graduates to meet the needs of underserved communities. We recruit amazing mission-driven residents who eagerly jump in to serve our patients and to take advantage of the full array of clinical experiences at our single-residency institution, where faculty across specialties believe in training family physicians to provide comprehensive care from the hospital to the community. Natividad is Monterey’s county hospital, serving the city of Salinas and the rural communities of Salinas Valley, including many agricultural workers from rural Mexico and a number of other immigrant communities. Our rigorous community medicine curriculum prepares our residents to recognize and address the social determinants of health affecting our patients and supports partnerships with community organizations and health educators (promotores) to improve the health of our communities. Teaching is central to Natividad’s culture; residents

teach medical students on all major rotations and receive training in teaching and leadership to support their development.

PPE4CC

Started by Idea Fab Labs Santa Cruz, and Catherine S. Forest, MD, MPH, FAAFP, with the encouragement of Encompass Community Services, followed by the partnership with the Santa Cruz County and Monterey County Medical Societies, we began to address the emerging shortages of PPE. The non-profit working world of organizations like Encompass Community Services workers, followed by the avalanche of requests for help from other front line workers (residential care, janitors, bus drivers, grocery checkers, medical assistants, ambulance services, etc.), and including the news about essential shortages from other states, is what led us to try to get ahead of the curve. We strongly support #SaferInPlace and #SocialDistancing. When absolutely necessary for work or essential services. Every person should be wearing a mask appropriate to level of risk outside #SaferInPlace and we should move immediately toward innovation. We strive for equity in protection for all. If someone's work meet's OSHA requirements for respiratory droplet protection, they should be wearing NIOSH approved PPE, if available. However, as supplies are drying up globally, we seek to innovate and utilize reusable, local materials and crafters. We are striving to provide the best available protection in the context of the global pandemic in the service of our community and in collaboration - radical interdependence.

CCA-viva

The Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) provides education, orientation, and legal support to farm workers and other low-income working families who want to establish neighborhood committees to improve housing and health conditions. **CCA** trains these committees to negotiate with landlords to resolve issues such as unsafe housing conditions, housing discrimination, and security deposits. **CCA** also trains these committees to provide preventive health information and interventions in their neighborhoods.

CRLA

CRLA serves low-income individuals residing in over 22 California counties. As rural areas and small cities of California continue to change, so does our outreach and service to diverse communities. Today, CRLA serves a wide array of clients, while maintaining specialized programs that focus on services for farmworker populations. CRLA clients also include individuals with disabilities, immigrant populations, school children, lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgender populations, seniors, and individuals with limited English proficiency.

CRLA reaches over 42,000 individuals a year through a combination of advocacy strategies that: 1) increase access to high-quality, no-cost legal services; 2) ensure the equitable and fair distribution of resources in rural communities; and 3) protect the rights of low-income individuals to seek justice under the law.

UFW

UFW: Working for a safe and just food supply

Integrity: Doing the right thing even when no one is looking

Si Se Puede® Attitude: A personal and organizational spirit that promotes confidence, courage, hard work, and the belief that we can do the impossible.

Dignity: Recognizing and respecting the inherent worth of all people.

Innovation: The active pursuit of new ideas.

Begun in 1962 by Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Gilbert Padilla and other early organizers, the United Farm Workers of America is the nation's first enduring and largest farm workers union. The UFW continues organizing in major agricultural sectors, chiefly in California. Recent years have witnessed dozens of UFW union contract victories protecting thousands of farm workers, among them agreements with the some of the largest berry, winery, tomato, dairy and mushroom companies in California and the nation. More than 75

percent of California's fresh mushroom industry is now under union contract. Many recent UFW-sponsored laws and regulations protect all farm workers in California, especially those at non-union ranches. They include the first state standards in the U.S. to prevent further deaths and illnesses from extreme heat and in 2016 the first law in the country providing farm workers in California with overtime pay after eight hours a day. The UFW continues to actively champion legislative and regulatory reforms for farm workers covering issues such as worker protections, pesticides and immigration reform.

Lideres Campesinas

Lideres Campesinas' principal goal is to form a network of communication throughout the state of California to promote the development of a united effort between campesinas and other groups who advocate the rights of the campesina community. Líderes Campesinas attempts to secure the progression of programs that help other campesinas discover their own capacity to be a leader and serve as a vehicle to guide them in the process of discovering and ensuring their human rights as a member of a family, local community, state, nation, and global community.

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