



Public Health Administration

Danette York, M.P.H., Director
Andy Miller, M.D., Health Officer

202 Mira Loma Drive
Oroville, California 95965

T: 530.552.4000
F: 530.538.2164

buttecounty.net/publichealth

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 14, 2020

Face Shields Donated to Butte County Public Health for Distribution to Healthcare Partners

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. – Healthcare workers in Butte County will receive free reusable face shields donated by North Valley Community Foundation and Feather River Health Foundation thanks to a unique partnership involving county public health departments, Chico State University and Idea Fab Labs.

The goal is to produce and distribute 20,000 face shields in the next four to eight weeks in Butte, Glenn, Tehama and Colusa counties.

The four county Public Health Departments conducted surveys to arrive at a number needed for each county. Completed shields will be trucked to each county's public health office, then distributed by the county. The shields will be given to hospitals, doctor's offices, urgent care clinics, dental offices, veterans clinics, student health centers and more.

Butte County Public Health (BCPH) will contact healthcare providers and offices when the shields are ready and available. Organizations who missed the survey may still be added to the distribution list by emailing BCPH at: PublicHealthDOC@buttecounty.net

"It has been incredible to watch this come together," said David Little, executive vice president of NVCF. "Everybody recognized a need for personal protective equipment for all health care workers, from doctors in emergency rooms to hygienists in dental offices. Then everyone worked to figure out how to make it happen."

The project started at Idea Fab Labs, a Chico tech company. Enloe Medical Center requested face shields from Idea Fab Labs Director Erin Banwell, who showed Enloe administrators prototypes made on 3D printers. Enloe initially ordered 500, then requested thousands.

That's when the university joined the effort. A team of professors, in consultation with Enloe Medical Center, developed a 3D printable frame that supports a clear plastic face shield. The frames were initially produced remotely by a collection of university and community-owned 3D printers because the university was shut down.

Enloe requested 3,000 shields and the university effort was turning out 100 to 200 per week.

NVCF offered to help with funding for the shields but sought to include three surrounding counties, as well as other health care workers aside from hospitals.

Faced with a demand that was closer to 20,000, Greg Watkins, chair of the university's Department of Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering and Sustainable Manufacturing, received permission from the university to begin producing the frames using plastic injection molding machines in the engineering labs on campus.

Students designed and fabricated the molds and are now running production. They are producing about 600 frames per day – and may be able to double that.

“This started as a volunteer effort from engineering faculty and students who wanted to help out,” said Watkins. “Everybody came together and put in a lot of hours to make this happen. It's gratifying to see our students apply their design and manufacturing education and utilize our campus facilities to help out the local medical community.”

Idea Fab Labs is cutting transparent plastic shields that snap onto the frames produced at Chico State. The shields and the frames can be cleaned and reused. Idea Fab Labs was a small tech startup in Chico that now has more than a dozen employees making PPE products.

NVCF and Feather River Health Foundation split the cost of the plastic material and the labor so the shields could be donated. NVCF and Feather River Health Foundation both have coronavirus relief funds and this month formed a partnership to combine resources.

NVCF has now distributed more than \$750,000 in grants for coronavirus relief. For more information on how to donate to NVCF's Coronavirus Rapid Response Fund, see www.nvcf.org/coronavirus-covid-19-rapid-response.

###