

## In This Together: How Our Community Is Giving Back

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*“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” –Mister Rogers.*

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to spread throughout counties in Illinois, many local students, teachers, businesses, and civilians have been showing support for healthcare workers, families in need, and those most at-risk in heartfelt and innovative ways.

- 1) **School teachers and administrative staff are assembling and donating PPE.** Perhaps one of the most local examples of this is from High School District 214 (Arlington Heights, Wheeling, Buffalo Grove, Rolling Meadows, Mount Prospect, and Elk Grove) and Harper College (Palatine). These schools [have set out to produce and donate 5,000 full-face protective shields](#) within the next few weeks for those working at sites like drive-up testing lines and food pantries.
- 2) **Non-essential businesses donating masks, gloves, gowns, and other PPE.** From specialty medical clinics who are temporarily closed or limited in operations- like dental offices and optometry clinics- to construction companies, beauty salons, and tattoo parlors, dozens of local businesses are continuing to donate whatever PPE they have in stock to those working on the front lines during this pandemic.
- 3) **Fabric/clothing companies, seamstresses, and [Etsy artists are sewing masks](#) and/or donating materials to create masks.** Etsy, a site where artists can sell their work to customers across the country, has been encouraging their sellers to create masks- not the ones that are needed by those on the front lines, but for civilians who can wear these masks as a means of protecting others. Since you can be a carrier of the virus but not show any symptoms, many local officials have been encouraging locals to wear “make-shift” masks when they go out for essentials like groceries out of items like scarves and pillow cases. These masks may not fully protect from getting the virus, but they can help prevent you from spreading germs to others.
- 4) **Schools across the nation are creating food packages for families in need** and making them available for either curbside pick-up or delivery. As of March 19th, they had already given out [over 500,000 meals!](#)
- 5) **Programs have been set up to connect isolated nursing home residents with pen pals.** Back in March, Legacy Healthcare became one of the first senior care companies to launch a pen pal program during the COVID-19 outbreak. Since family members and friends can no longer visit their loved ones in-person until the Coronavirus curve is flattened, they launched their [“Letters of Love”](#) program, which means that anyone with internet access can sign up to be connected with a senior pen pal!
- 6) **[Distilleries across the nation are now brewing up a much-needed monopoly: Hand sanitizer!](#)** So far, over a dozen distilleries in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs have joined in on this exceptional cause.
- 7) **Locals are collecting and offering food donations to those in need.** In the northwest suburb of Mount Prospect, several neighborhoods have turned what were once mini library boxes- mailbox-like structures where people could “check out” books- into [mini food pantries](#), where locals can place or pick up donations without coming into contact with others. These boxes are also being sanitized a few times per day.

- 8) **Nonprofit organizations, like Cradles to Crayons Chicago, are hosting virtual fundraisers** to collect donations to provide essential supplies- such as diapers- to local families in need. For more information or to donate, visit <https://bit.ly/33NUtDi>.

I know it's hard to believe, but times like this won't last forever, and we all play a role in how long it will take to pass. Continue to do your part in flattening the curve by staying home when possible, social distancing when out in public, and encouraging others to do the same.

