

Ontario patio furniture company makes masks to prevent coronavirus spread

Gold Crest Industries now making GC Face Masks sold online



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When Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered all nonessential businesses to close as part of the stay-at-home directive to stop the spread of the [novel coronavirus](#), Jenaro Garcia shuttered his shop and sent his workers home.

Gold Crest Industries had been making patio cushions, cloth umbrellas and pillows from the same factory in Ontario for 29 years. That is, until that day, March 20.





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But Garcia, 47, owner and president of a company his father, Jose Garcia, had started in 1991, did not sit on his hands. Instead, he began sketching designs for disposable and washable masks after hearing they were in short supply and very much needed for essential workers and the general public.

“I told them (employees) I have an idea. I think we have all the expertise and all the machinery to be able to produce these masks,” he said during an interview on Thursday, April 9.

“We deal in textiles. We deal in sewing. We have the ability to produce this product to help all of us get through this,” he said, recalling his pitch to his staff.

Now, three weeks later, 12 workers are back at work, cutting out patterns and stitching masks, using those same sewing machines that once made patio cushions and throw pillows. They also created a website — www.gcfacemask.com — for the public to buy masks online and receive them via direct delivery.

“I think the country called out to private enterprise to help out and we are meeting the call,” he said.

“It shows good old American ingenuity and entrepreneurship — and patriotism,” said Garcia, son of a Mexican immigrant.

As of Friday, April 10, the new Gold Crest operation has made about 15,000 masks, he said. These are disposable and cloth masks, but not N95 masks, which are for health care workers and emergency responders.

He is supplying janitorial companies, other businesses and nonprofits handing out food and grocery items to those in need. Also, he will soon provide masks at cost to the office of 4th District San Bernardino County Supervisor Curt Hagman, he said.

Hagman's management team has so far received 60,000 masks from various manufacturers or as donations from individuals and private companies. He has personally handed out 1,400 to home health care workers, he said Friday.

Gold Crest is part of what he coined the COVID Kindness Campaign, Hagman said. "It is people helping out neighbors and businesses standing up and saying they want to donate. I am thankful we are seeing people rally like this," he added.

Garcia is working on getting masks to [KidCare International's Food Bank](#), a Claremont-based nonprofit providing free meals to low-income families and the homeless.

Judy David, a volunteer with KidCare, said the organization is talking to Gold Crest to get more masks for both volunteers and recipients. Because of [new orders from the county that everyone must wear masks or face-coverings](#) when outside, now, both servers and recipients must wear masks.

"The masks are essential," she said on Friday. "We cannot accept clients who come without masks."

If she had more masks, she said, she could give them to those receiving groceries who also can't afford to buy masks, which are often expensive or impossible to find.

When the food drive was almost shut down, National CORE saved the day by giving the group 30 masks, David said. The nonprofit, which will give out 150 boxes of food this week, will continue its efforts at a drive-up event starting at 9:30 a.m., and a 10:30 a.m. walk-up service, on Saturday, April 11, at [1200 N. Campus Ave., Upland](#), she said.

Garcia said the masks for the food bank are on their way. "It will allow for participants of the food bank to receive food," he said.

Disposable masks, which go for \$22.97 for a 12-pack, are made of heavy-duty polypropylene fabric. The "essential masks" are microbial resistant and washable and sell for \$14.97 each, according to their online marketplace.

Washable masks are made of 100% Sunbrella, a fabric that is used for outdoor furniture, awnings, umbrellas and on marine vessels, Garcia said.

In addition to masks, medical gowns are in short supply. Garcia is researching how to make gowns and hopes to have a prototype ready by next week.

"Maybe this will open up a new industry for me," he said. "I am always interested in learning new things."