

PRESS RELEASE



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1,500 KN95 masks have been distributed to 16 area nonprofits providing essential services across central and mid-coast Maine

(Augusta, ME – for immediate release) Crisis & Counseling Centers (C&C), along with 15 other Partner Programs of the United Way of Kennebec Valley (UWKV) are now equipped with KN95 masks that allow staff to continue to respond to the needs of clients. It is all thanks to a collaborative effort between vendors, nonprofits, funding partners, and the generosity of donors that made it possible for local nonprofits to access this essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the wake of global shortages.



Lionel Booth a Residential Team Leader at Crisis & Counseling Centers is pictured wearing a KN95 mask in front of C&C's Caldwell Road offices in Augusta.

“We credit the ability of our partners PROforma Marketing Essentials and the United Way of Kennebec Valley for making this come together so quickly for local nonprofits who continue to serve clients throughout this global pandemic,” says Michael Mitchell, CEO at C&C.

In late March, PROforma Marketing Essentials contacted C&C about their ability to source KN95 masks from China. That same day a funding request was submitted to the UWKV's COVID-19 Response Fund. The request was to fund C&C to purchase 1,500 masks, procuring a portion for its staff and distributing the remainder to other partner programs of the United Way. Within two days the funding request was approved and the procurement of masks was underway.

"We were impressed when longtime United Way partner program Crisis & Counseling Centers reached out to us with a very thoughtful proposal to purchase face masks for local nonprofits," said Courtney Yeager, Executive Director at UWKV. "Through our COVID-19 Response Fund, made up of generous gifts from individuals and businesses across the community, we were able to bring 1,500 masks to nonprofit employees so they can continue their vital work."

"It was a no brainer for us," Mitchell shares. "Our frontline workers in our crisis, case management, parent peer support, mental health, and substance use disorder programs would clearly benefit from the added protection. The challenge for us was that the minimum order was 1,500 hundred masks. That far exceeded our agency's need. It didn't make sense for us to stockpile resources that were scarce, and we knew other agencies could benefit from them. Without this collaborative effort, these masks would have been out-of-reach for our organizations to try and purchase on our own."

Peter Palermo, Partner at Camden-based PROforma Marketing Essentials, a local Maine company with a global network of resources through parent company PROforma shares, "We were proud to play a part in this by leveraging our national and global partnerships to secure PPE at a time when the whole country was scrambling. PROforma has done an outstanding job of supporting us to help us provide the PPE that our clients desperately need. It was a total team effort from start to finish."

The team at PROforma Marketing Essentials were in constant communication about each of the hurdles the masks needed to clear—from receiving FDA Certification, to the customs clearing process, and the inevitable shipment delays in the wake of limited flights for freight out of China. The team at UWKV were champions for securing funding to support this essential need for our collective staffs. They identified the needs of other partner programs, facilitated communications between the agencies, and helped coordinate a pick-up schedule that allowed for social distancing and sanitization between pick-ups. This process, which started in late March with an email, a brief team meeting at C&C, and a phone call to the United Way, wrapped up last week when masks were delivered and distributed to partner programs.

"Everyone was incredibly supportive and understanding throughout this process which has been a real blessing," explains Mitchell. "This is what trusted partnership looks like and we are very grateful to be part of a community that continues to rally to support its own."

For more information about how to contribute to the United Way of Kennebec Valley's COVID-19 Response Fund visit www.uwkv.org/covid19.

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About Crisis & Counseling Centers: Crisis & Counseling Centers (C&C) is a 50-year-old multi-service mental health and substance use disorder agency headquartered in Augusta, Maine. C&C's mission is to develop and deliver effective solutions to the diverse behavioral health needs of our community in a professional and respectful manner. The agency provides a comprehensive treatment continuum which includes: Crisis Mobile Resolution and Crisis Stabilization Unit services; mental health, substance use disorder and co-occurring disorders treatment; statewide parent/caregiver support through its G.E.A.R. Parent Network program; Children's Targeted Case Management; PATH Case Management services; Targeted Case Management for pregnant women or parents struggling with substance use disorder; correctional behavioral health care services; and medication management. Referrals for services can be made by calling the central access team at (207) 626-3448 x 1175. **Crisis Support is available 24 hours a day by calling the Maine Crisis Line at (888) 568-1112.**