

The PPE Project

Remaining focused on serving the disability community



Distribution day at Home of Guiding Hands

Over one million articles, 1,297,330 to be exact, of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies have been received, stored and distributed to the San Diego and Imperial Valley disability community of care providers, clients, families and vendors. And there is much more to come!

The San Diego Regional Center (SDRC) and Home of Guiding Hands (HGH) have a symbiotic relationship serving people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. SDRC is one of 21 regional centers that provide services to persons with developmental disabilities in California.

HGH is a vendor of the regional center and provides services to more than 4,000 men, women and children.

At the onset of COVID-19 and the Department of Developmental Services' request, the San Diego Regional Center divided its operations into a hub and distribution center for PPE and cleaning supplies for care providers. They soon realized they needed help to serve the communities better. Home of Guiding Hands stepped in, offering its large resource center as a storage and distribution facility.

Carlos Flores, SDRC Executive Director, said, "We responded not in a diminished capacity during these challenging times, but we stepped up as the nexus of support and communication within our community. In every way, we innovated, brain-stormed and problem solved. From distributing a million articles of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, to remaining in close communication with 32,000 clients and families, maintaining the financial lifeline of 1,500 service providers - we have found a way!"

Edward Hershey, HGH V.P. of Operations, has taken the lead in coordinating efforts with SDRC to effectively and safely distribute supplies. Edward shared, "under these extraordinary circumstances, everyone has had to pivot. While changing what they do, our team and partners have remained focused on serving the disability community. When we stay aligned with why we do what we do, how we get the job done becomes very clear."



Carlos Flores, Executive Director of The SD Regional Center, visits HGH for a television interview



Boxes of supplies are stored throughout the HGH Verbeck Resource Center awaiting distribution

Edward and his team, including Tiffany Swan, Home & Community-Based Service Specialist for SDRC, have coordinated efforts to disperse these hard-to-find articles to more than 300 organizations monthly, and on family distribution days, almost double that number. They are helping individuals who cannot leave their homes, providers who would otherwise not find the supplies to support their clients, and families who cannot afford the expense of PPE supplies - gloves that once sold for \$30 a box in February, now sell for \$150 a box!

Tiffany Swan said, "HGH received shipments in the middle of the night, offloaded all the items, and still worked the next day on HGH's needs. I do not think Mark Klaus understands the word "No," and I would like to keep it that way."

"This indeed has been a collaborative effort to benefit clients, families, service providers, and our community as a whole," Mark Klaus, HGH President & CEO shared with GB Magazine. "The collaboration with the SDRC, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Community partners (like Autism Support of Imperial County), and others have been outstanding! My gratitude goes out to everyone at play, especially Edward Hershey and his team, who have been doing ALL the heavy lifting."

The PPE Project to date has dispensed over 13,000 N95 masks, 1,000,000 surgical masks, 77,000 face shields, 76,000 hand sanitizers, 63,000 gloves, 14,500 gowns, and 1,000 cloth masks. **GB**

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