

Mukilteo Beacon

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Mukilteo company joins fight against COVID-19

Kaas Tailored shifts focus from furniture to producing surgical masks, face shields

BY DAVID PAN
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With the medical community and first responders in desperate need of personal protective equipment, Gov. Jay Inslee has issued an urgent plea for businesses to join the fight against COVID-19.

Inslee requested help from manufacturing companies to help produce surgical masks, face shields and other safety items in short supply for the state's health-care workers and public safety personnel during a news conference last week.

In part because the federal government's supply of personal protection equipment (PPE) is dwindling, Inslee said that the state has to find other ways to produce the much-needed equipment, worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious injuries and illnesses.

"We rather urgently need to increase the stocks of particular personal protection equipment," Inslee said.

He added that every nurse, doctor, maintenance worker, police officer and firefighter deserves to be protected.

"So it is up to us to do everything humanly possible to get them this lifesaving equipment," Inslee said.

While the governor was issuing his call for help from the state's manufacturers, a Mukilteo company already



Beacon photo by David Pan

Tam To, an employee of Kaas Tailored, sews a surgical mask. Responding to Providence's 100 Million Mask Challenge, Kaas Tailored has produced more than 140,000 masks and 50,000 face shields.

is taking the lead in producing surgical masks and face shields.

Kaas Tailored, a manufacturer of furniture and aerospace products, was one of the first companies to shift its production to safety equipment.

Jeff Kaas, who owns the company with wife Stacey, made the decision after hearing about Providence's 100 Million Mask Challenge. Providence noted that demand

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Students not returning to classrooms

High school seniors to finish their studies via distance learning

BY DAVID PAN
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Students in the Mukilteo School District and across the state will not be heading back to their classrooms this spring.

All public and private schools will remain closed through the end of the academic year as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Gov. Jay Inslee and Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal announced at a news conference Monday, April 6. Inslee earlier ordered all schools closed on March 13 and indicated that the closure would last through at least April 24.

"I'm pretty devastated, but at the same time I'm not surprised," said Kamiak ASB President and senior Kara Toves. "I thought it was a matter of time. ... I had a feeling, but I didn't want it to be true."

"It's still a big shock. None of us expected this for our senior year or for any year for that matter."

Fellow senior Abhishan Pandher came home Monday afternoon and heard the news from his father.

"It's crazy," said Pandher, president of the Knights in Action, a community service club. "I think it was one of those things where we knew that it was inevitable."

The extension of the closure order means that students will finish their studies through distance learning.

Last week, online instruction started for high school students in the Mukilteo School District. Teachers began reaching out to their students in a variety of ways.

"It's been a little stressful," Pandher said. "There's like no one way of communication."

The Kamiak senior noted that teachers have been emailing, using Google Classroom and the video conference program Zoom to communicate with students.

"Some of our teachers are making a really good effort to connect with us, despite us being away," Kamiak senior Lauren Bocalan said.

One English teacher checked

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On the frontline: ER doctor details challenges treating COVID-19 patients

BY DAVID PAN
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Dr. Matt Beecroft is used to dealing with life and death situations in his role as an emergency room physician at Providence.



Dr. Matt Beecroft

But even Beecroft has been surprised by the enormous impact of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic on the medical community, as he and his colleagues fight to save patients' lives day after day.

The intense emotions come in waves, said Beecroft, who also works in the emergency department at Harborview in Seattle.

"There are days when you feel very anxious, especially at the beginning of the outbreak," Beecroft said.

Hearing about other health-care professionals getting sick from the coronavirus caused him concern.

"You get this feeling in the pit of your stomach," Beecroft said. "I've logged into my life insurance and made sure it's paid up. I'm making sure my kids are taken care of. I've written letters to my kids in case I get sick. Those moments are spacing out, but they still happen."

The emergency department has seen a steady stream of coronavirus patients, most very ill. The general sense is that the public is staying out of hospitals unless necessary.

"Often they are pretty sick when they show up," Beecroft said. "We're seeing people in pretty advanced stages of the disease."

Most patients are dealing with respiratory symptoms.

see **ER DOCTOR** page 2 ▶

Homicide victim has been identified

67-year-old Mukilteo man found dead in Skagit County

A Mukilteo man, the apparent victim of a homicide, has been identified by the Snohomish Medical Examiner's office.

Howard P. Benzel, 67, was found near State Route 9 between State Route 534 and Big Lake Boulevard in Skagit County on Monday, March 30.

In an April 1 news release, the Snohomish Medical Examiner's office wrote that the cause of death was blunt force injuries and the cause of death was homicide.

Everett Police Major Crimes detectives arrested a 40-year-old man. He remains in custody at Snohomish County Jail.

Based on information from a passerby, detectives traveled to Skagit County and recovered the victim's body.

It was on March 28 that Everett Police officers

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for PPE has created a severe shortage across the world.

"The challenge put out to the community is to produce 100 million masks," Kaas said. "Even that probably won't be enough."

Kaas texted a contact at Providence, and Kaas Tailored's design team worked closely with officials from the hospital, who provided detailed specifications for the surgical masks and face guards.

"They know what the doctors need," Kaas said. "We know how to make stuff."

Providence also supplied the materials - surgical wrap - used to make the face masks. Surgical wrap is normally used to protect equipment after it has been sterilized. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, most elective surgeries are being postponed.

Kaas Tailored started producing masks and face shields less than 48 hours after the 100 Million Mask Challenge was announced. The company employs about 200 people, and some volunteers also have joined the effort in the company's 90,000-square-foot facilities housed in two buildings on Beverly Park Road.

Kaas Tailored has produced more than 140,000 surgical masks and 50,000 face shields since March 19.

"Most people are showing up. Most people are smiling even though we're struggling," Kaas said. "Overall, what I've heard from many different people is that this is the best teamwork we've ever had."

Providence's executive vice president and chief clinical officer Amy Compton-Phillips said Providence's physicians were elated when they received face shields Kaas Tailored provided.

"We brought a stash of these over to our physicians that are actively taking care of COVID patients, and they were almost in tears as we were dropping them off because they just need them so much to take care of the people that they are trying to serve," Compton-Phil-



Beacon photo by David Pan

Plastic is cut into strips for face shields that are being produced by Kaas Tailored, a manufacturing company located in Mukilteo.

lips said in a Providence video extolling the collaboration between Providence and Kaas Tailored. "It's actually an unbelievable partnership."

Kaas Tailored isn't just focused on production. Kaas and his staff also have put detailed plans up on its website for other companies to use. Manufacturers across the state, country and the globe are accessing the information provided by Kaas Tailored. Kaas is also actively consulting with dozens of companies and health-care organizations.

"We're sharing the data with the world as quickly as possible," he said. The goal is to save lives.

"It's a love-your-neighbor deal," Kaas said. "I don't care what country a nurse is in. I want her face to be protected. ... If my team has a hand in protecting nurses on all continents, that's a cool thing."

Kaas Tailored is currently hiring workers to help produce personal protection equipment. For more information, see <https://kaastailored.com/careers/open-positions/>

Other Mukilteo companies have joined the call to provide personal protective equipment and other medical supplies. See related story on this page.



Photo courtesy of Terrene Inc

Workers at Terrene Inc. assemble material for face masks. The company has produced 170,000 kits that can be made into masks for health care workers.

Mukilteo companies united in effort against coronavirus

One day, Danica Chadwick, a nurse manager at Providence Regional Medical Center, told her husband Colin that the hospital was running short on personal protection equipment, such as face masks.

"Somebody should call me. I can make all that," said Colin, who owns Terrene, Inc., a metal fabricator company.

Providence officials directed Chadwick to Kaas Tailored, another Mukilteo manufacturing company that provided details and helped coordinate between Providence and Nordstrom, where Terrene's mask kits are being sent.

As of this week, Terrene, Inc. has provided more than 170,000 kits to make masks.

Terrene Vice-President John Adair said the company's 13 employees have been working in two shifts five days a week. "We're spread a little thin, and we're wearing a lot of hats," Adair said.

The switch to producing parts for surgical masks went smoothly.

"It was not difficult at all," Adair said. "It just took communication and coordination. The biggest challenge is getting up to speed."

Ram Technologies, a foam and fabric converter, also had pivoted from producing sports and outdoor equipment and is now manufacturing 10,000 face masks and face shields.

Electroimpact, an aerospace tooling and automation company, collected about 100 N95 masks from its supplies and donated them to Providence.

The company also was able to produce its first batch of face shields, which likely will be sent to Overlake Hospital. Employees kept hearing about the need for personal protection equipment from friends and company officials realized they would be able to produce the equipment.

MDI Manufacturing and Design Inc., as part of its usual business, supplies parts for ventilators for General Motors and Ventec.

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