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West Marine Identifies Innovative Approaches to Supporting Communities During Pandemic

The company is working with multiple organizations to develop needed PPE for hospital staff

WATSONVILLE, Calif. – April 27, 2020 – In the search for innovative and impactful ways to support its communities nation-wide, West Marine is working with multiple researchers to transform Ocean Reef snorkel masks into respirators for hospitals and health care systems. The company is also working at a local level to make donations that meet hospital-specific needs.

West Marine, a leading retailer for the boating and outdoor industry, sent several snorkel masks to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Sutter Medical Group and Milwaukee School of Engineering for their teams to determine what adaptations are necessary to transform the masks into respirators. After several weeks of testing and coordination with Ocean Reef, the manufacturer of the snorkel masks, the masks are ready to be distributed to hospitals and health care systems around the country.

“We kept seeing reports of scuba masks with the potential of being adapted into respirators and we realized this was a real possibility to do our part during this pandemic,” said Ken Seipel, CEO of West Marine. “We’ve worked closely with all of these organizations to develop the appropriate adaptor for the masks and as the masks continue to be deemed acceptable PPE, we are ready to begin distributing over the next few weeks.”

West Marine plans on distributing approximately 1,200 masks to hospitals able to utilize the adapted masks. Ocean Reef has also pledged to donate the same number of adaptors so hospitals will receive the full kit. Testing has completed at Alta Bates Summit Medical Foundation in Oakland, California and 200 masks have been sent for use in the ICU and emergency departments. Partnerships with additional hospitals are in process and masks will be sent once testing is complete.

“We are thankful for the long retail partnership with West Marine and are thrilled to support their efforts by donating 1400 APA +RD40/22 adapters to this project,” said Ocean Reef in a statement.

On a local level, West Marine donated product to help create 4,000 face shields to be distributed throughout the Bay Area and store managers across the country are connecting with area hospitals and health care systems to determine specific donation needs. Including 5,000 gloves in Fort Lauderdale, a supply of bungee cord to make face masks in Richmond, Virginia, and 150 spray suits in San Diego.

About West Marine

For more than 50 years, West Marine has been the premier retailer of boating, fishing, sailing and paddling gear. With more than 240 stores located in 38 states and Puerto Rico and an eCommerce website reaching domestic, international and professional customers, West Marine is recognized as a leading resource for cruisers, sailors, anglers and paddlesports enthusiasts. West Marine employees share the same love for the water as our customers and provide helpful advice on the gear and gadgets they need to be safe and have fun. To learn more about West Marine, please visit the West Marine website at www.westmarine.com.

About Milwaukee School of Engineering Rapid Prototyping Center

The Rapid Prototyping Center is working with teams at hospitals across the country to develop custom 3D printed adapters to accommodate any commercial filter cartridges available. Sourcing has become a daily challenge, and 3D printing is a dynamic manufacturing tool that helps medical facilities win that challenge.