

COLUMBIA ROTARY DONATED \$60,000 IN PPE TO FIGHT COVID-19

By Ana Faguy, *Howard County Times*,
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target of \$60,000 to meet the counties' needs.

According to Cecil Phillips, 78, public relations chair for the Rotary Club of Columbia Town Center, the nine clubs together raised \$15,000, funds that were matched through a Rotary district grant. The group also received \$22,750 through a Rotary global grant, and \$4,000 from Disaster Aid USA, a national Rotary project that assists U.S. Rotary districts, clubs, and members in times of disaster.

Early in the summer, the Rotary clubs contacted the counties to see what was available in their stockpiles; then clubs called every assisted-living facility in their respective counties to see what was needed and where, according to Berman.

"The idea [was] to provide PPE in anticipation of a second wave," said Berman, an Urbana resident. "We were anticipating that during a second wave it would be hard to acquire PPE again, and we were right — people are starting to run short."

According to Berman, the groups were able to purchase and donate 40,000 three-ply masks, 3,000 N95 respirators, 400 safety goggles, 400 face shields, 5,000 gowns and 1,500 boxes of gloves.

Phillips, a Columbia resident, said Rotary members met in a parking lot to separate and distribute the supplies among the 28 facilities. Afterward, the members delivered the PPE to the respective facilities.

"This is an ongoing process. The need in Howard County is absolutely astonishing," Phillips said.

Showunmi said she's hopeful the current supplies can last the facilities for the next three months. She said if the opportunity presents itself, the Rotary Club of Columbia Town Center will continue to raise funds and apply for grant opportunities.

Since the beginning of November, the Rotary Club of Columbia Town Center has donated nearly \$60,000 worth of personal protective equipment to 28 local senior care facilities, nine of which are in Howard County.

With the help of eight other Rotary clubs in Howard, Montgomery, Frederick, and Anne Arundel counties, the Rotary Club of Columbia Town Center raised funds, organized and supplied local facilities with necessary PPE amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"When [COVID-19] happened, we identified the need quickly and tried to see if we could bridge the gap between getting PPE and helping the different organizations financially," said Harsana Showunmi, 42, president of the Columbia Rotary club.

Showunmi, an Ellicott City resident, said the idea originated in a weekly Rotary meeting, when club member Alvin Thompson, a 72-year-old Columbia resident, mentioned an existing need for PPE at Winter Growth Howard Center, an assisted living facility in Columbia. That idea transformed into a multicounty project.

Columbia Rotary members, including Showunmi, began reaching out to local Rotary clubs to join forces, bringing nine clubs together for the effort.

Gerardine Berman works as the treasurer of the Rotary Club of South Frederick County and was one of the individuals brought on board. Berman, 55, worked to secure funding and apply for grants to reach the group's



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[Above] Southern Harford County Rotary is having a three-part virtual series on "Cooking with Chef Lou Piero" beginning Friday, January 15, at 6:30pm.



[Above] The Rotary Clubs of Howard County are proud to announce Cindy's Spirits in Elkridge as their business of the month. Long term Elkridge residents Cindy and Tom Quick have owned and operated Cindy's Spirits since 2007. Cindy is also the Elkridge Rotary club president and comes from a family of Rotarians. Most recently, Cindy offered to sponsor the Pints for Polio event to raise funds to help eradicate Polio. Recognizing a Business of the Month is a new initiative sponsored by the Rotary Clubs of Howard County. To learn more go to <http://www.howardcountyrota.rymaryland.org/> or contact AG Temrah Okonski at okonskitg@verizon.net