

## **Affordable PPE “Pop-Up” for Columbia County Small Businesses** *County Commissioners trigger small business buying power with accessible PPE program*

June 15, 2020, St. Helens, OR -- PPE purchased in bulk will be available for small businesses to order and pick up starting Friday, June 19 at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. The program is a collaborative project between the Columbia County Board of Commissioners and Columbia County Economic Team (CCET).

Commissioners approached CCET, a member of the County’s Emergency Management Economic Recovery working group, to develop a PPE program in response to small business owner challenges obtaining PPE in order to operate safely. The availability of PPE is imperative for implementing good protective measures in order to reduce COVID risk since Columbia County was allowed to re-open under Oregon’s Phase 1 & 2 Guidelines.

“Our county has been fortunate to maintain a very low COVID-19 case impact rate relative to other counties,” said Paul Vogel, Interim Executive Director of CCET. “Especially with re-opening, businesses and the public need to keep doing what we’re doing: being safe and careful, controlling what we can – and that means using masks, gloves, good practices and following state public health guidelines,” Vogel added.

CCET will be stocking only basic supplies: face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and gowns intended for personal services sector. Medical grade supplies have been made available by County Emergency Management throughout the COVID outbreak and that will continue. As the small business PPE program operates for the foreseeable future, needs may change to different or additional items, which CCET will consider. Disposable masks may also be available for customer use at a future date.

PPE will be available for pick-up at the Columbia County Fairgrounds each Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. PPE orders should be placed in advance in order to prepare them for pick-up, to reduce waiting time and help maintain proper physical distancing. Order forms can be downloaded from CCET’s [small business website](#) beginning Wednesday, June 20. Order forms submitted by email will be prepared and available in turn during the Friday pick-up. PPE may be purchased without pre-ordering, but purchasers should expect longer wait-times. Access to the fairgrounds and the Pop-Up is through Gate 2, 58892 Selzer Road, St. Helens. Purchasers must wear masks and adhere to public health guidelines that have been put in place, including registering all parties for potential future contact tracing.

“We thank the County Fair Board for their tremendous cooperation in providing this valuable service to small businesses,” said Robert Blumberg, President & CEO of Wauna Credit Union and President of the CCET Board of Directors. “We have heard horror stories of price gouging by suppliers and even refusal to ship small orders to individual businesses. This program will

stop that, protect our small businesses, and help them and their customers successfully re-open stay open, helping get our economy and communities moving again. That is CCET's primary mission right now," Blumberg added.

Hosting the PPE Pop-Up is one of many new initiatives the Fair Board is pursuing to stimulate activity and use of the Fairgrounds since County Fairs have been cancelled by state directive.

Businesses should limit their orders to what they need for one to two weeks. All orders must be paid and signed for with a check or cash. In addition, purchasers must sign a commitment not to re-sell the products, which are being made available at cost.

"When available county funds can be put to direct use in helping small businesses re-open, recover and stay open, it's a win for our communities and our county," Blumberg said. "The fact that we can purchase some PPE from local businesses, also putting people to work makes this even better." He added, "Affordable, smart safety practices enabled by local workers, companies and jobs is a win-win for Columbia County during a very challenging time."

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*Columbia County Economic Team delivers business-driven economic development services that support the creation, growth, and retention of Columbia County businesses. CCET is focused on retaining, expanding retain, and recruit businesses and industries, participating in existing or new industry clusters. increasing per capita income, diversifying the economy, and promote sustainable economic growth through family wage jobs. CCET coordinates the delivery of professional economic development services by networking the efforts of existing and new organizations and providing leadership to create a climate in which existing businesses can thrive while attracting diverse new investment. CCET's COVID-19 focus on small business recovery can be followed through daily small business email updates and at [smallbizhub@columbiacountyoregon.com](mailto:smallbizhub@columbiacountyoregon.com)*