

PRESS RELEASE

The Health Council Helps to Provide Care Homes with PPE

(Hamilton, Bermuda 4th June 2020) – In the continued effort to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in Care Homes, the Health Council has procured personal protective equipment (PPE), securing 50,000 KN95 masks and 1,000 face shields for Bermuda’s Care Homes as part of their Third Sector partnership.

The action from the Health Council aims to provide additional support for care home workers and its vulnerable residents from the disease. This will also assist Care Home facilities that have difficulty obtaining personal protective equipment. The cost of the KN95 masks, funded by the Third Sector, totalled \$3.24 per mask (product price and international shipping included), which are now being distributed to the Care Homes by the Health Council Staff.

Dr Ricky Brathwaite, Chief Executive Officer of Bermuda Health Council, said: “I think it’s often easy to criticize the lack of PPE until you get into the lion’s den of procurement and realize how big of a challenge getting these products are. It’s the time difference, the relationships that have to be managed, the surreal costs of shipping, the customs process within multiple countries, long queues of buyers vying for the same goods, the language barriers, the global reduction in cargo flights, the feeling from the pressure of not wanting to run out of PPE locally, and so many nuances that we have learned to appreciate. After working round the clock for weeks, we are ready again to source the next batch of PPE and pass on as much savings as possible from bulk procurement to the community.”

As a result of securing these masks, we are saving over \$280,000 collectively for our Care Homes over the next three months – when comparing their purchase of these items at retail. In the retail space, these same masks often go for in excess of \$8 each.

Through its connections with Georgia Tech University and their Engineering department, the Health Council connected with Atlanta Beats COVID and William Strika of Roswell Fire Labs located in Georgia; to have 1,000 face shields manufactured and donated to Bermuda’s Care Homes. This was another opportunity to go outside of the normal box of procurement and leverage international relationships and creativity to support our local stakeholders.

Atlanta Beats COVID (atlantabeatscovid.com) is a group of volunteer makers, and Southeast industry experts that are working to provide healthcare providers and other vital members of the community with PPE to stay safe while battling COVID-19.

As the country manages this disease, our Care Homes will continue to have an emergency allocation of PPE set aside from the government stock.



Ja-Mae Smith, Project Manager at Bermuda Health Council, states: “Each of the Care Homes are adjusting to their new normal. PPE training was provided in person, following social distancing guidelines by Department of Health staff, and each Administrator has been supplied with a video on proper usage and discarding of PPE which can be watched by staff whenever they need a refresh. The procurement of the mask and face shields would not be possible without our partners in the Third Sector and the community. Because of your generous donations to the emergency fund we have been able to supplement the needs of the care homes in tremendous ways; we are ever grateful and I thank you Third Sector and Bermuda on behalf of all 21 Care Homes. The work to continue keeping our Care Homes safe is not over, we are reviewing our lessons learned from the last few months and we will be diligently working over the summer to ensure we are prepared for the next “flu & cold season” in the fall.”

The Health Council will continue to identify opportunities to increase access to PPE as we understand that budgets are tight and PPE purchased at retail in these large amounts are unsustainable for these organizations.

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About Bermuda Health Council

Established by the Bermuda Health Council Act 2004, the Bermuda Health Council (“Health Council”) is tasked with regulating, coordinating and enhancing the delivery of health services in Bermuda. Led by a Board representing a broad range of sectors in Bermuda’s community, and staffed by a team of committed professionals, the Health Council works with health system stakeholders towards achieving a quality, equitable and sustainable health system.