



HOMETOWN HEROES

You can't stop a global pandemic, but you can soften its blow. In the aftermath of COVID-19, it's become more evident than ever that Palm Beach County is a patchwork of people quick to support one another.

Jumping to the aid of neighbors, Steel Tie Spirits switched from distilling spirits to hand sanitizer; the Junior League of Boca Raton mobilized to collect diapers; Robin Kantor, head of Score Academy, sent a pizza to every high school senior robbed of the opportunity to walk at graduation; and Marci Dubler of Confetti Confections surprised fellow North Palm Beach residents by leaving cookie-decorating kits at their doorsteps.

And that's just the beginning of the county's creative, caring response. From large-scale initiatives to helping hands, whether on the front lines or behind the scenes, we salute the countless local heroes who stepped in and stepped up.

BY SKYE SHERMAN

MEMBERS OF THE PALM BEACH POLICE & FIRE FOUNDATION CREATED AN EMERGENCY FUND TO BENEFIT FIRST RESPONDERS AND ALSO DONATED MASKS TO FRONTLINE WORKERS AT GOOD SAMARITAN MEDICAL CENTER, ST. MARY'S, AND FOUND CARE.



SOLOMON STRUL

FASHION FORWARD

Amanda Perna, founder of The House of Perna, headquartered at Delray Beach's Arts Warehouse, responded to the fashion industry fallout during the pandemic the best way she knew how: seated at her sewing machine with a gleam of creativity and a heart to help.



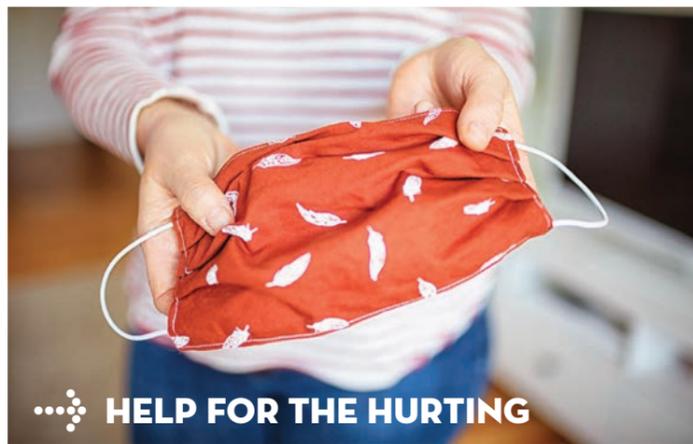
"It all started with me sewing masks at home alone, with a goal of 100, trying to help frontline workers," Perna shares. "Now we're working seven days a week to get masks out as quickly as possible. I've been able to keep my team working and provide jobs for 12 other seamstresses who were furloughed or laid off because fashion virtually shut down due to the pandemic."

Perna donates a mask for each one purchased; within weeks, her team had put 5,000 machine-washable fabric face masks into the hands of first responders and shipped orders to every state—and even as far as Abu Dhabi. Her colorful creations can be spotted on medical professionals from Jupiter Medical to Wellington Regional to West Boca.

To further extend mask access, Perna partnered with Good Housekeeping magazine to create how-to videos for making masks at home, including a no-sew version, which have quickly garnered more than a million views and empowered people worldwide to protect themselves and others. (thehouseofperna.com)

MASKED & READY

The Palm Beach Police & Fire Foundation mustered as first responders to our first responders, donating 1,000 hazmat suits, 10,000 masks, thermometers, and hand sanitizer to police and fire departments and local medical centers. The foundation also provided 40,000 masks to Palm Beach residents via drive-through distributions. (palmbeachpoliceandfirefoundation.org)



HELP FOR THE HURTING

KNOWING IMPOVERISHED AND HOMELESS POPULATIONS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO A PANDEMIC'S ILL EFFECTS, A TEAM OF NURSES FROM FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY'S CHRISTINE E. LYNN COLLEGE OF NURSING COLLABORATED WITH THE NORTHWEST COMMUNITY HEALTH ALLIANCE TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE AND DISTRIBUTE HUNDREDS OF REUSABLE FABRIC MASKS—WHICH THE NURSES MADE BY HAND USING MATERIALS THEY BOUGHT THEMSELVES—TO A STRUGGLING WEST PALM BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD. (NURSING.FAU.EDU)



CAPEHART



CULINARY CREATIVITY

After having to lay off 650 employees overnight, Rodney Mayo, owner of Sub-Culture Group, converted his heartbreak into handiwork. Roping in contacts from across the county, Mayo redirected the energy he normally pours into his bustling restaurant business and launched Hospitality Helping Hands, or H3.



"It was so immediate, we really didn't have any answers for them other than filling out unemployment and waiting for a stimulus check, but we told all our staff that we would always keep one or two of the restaurants open just to feed them and their families," says Mayo. "We reopened Howley's the following day and had a line a mile long."

H3 served 800 meals that first day and extended its efforts to all laid-off workers, regardless of industry. Within weeks, H3 had served 100,000 hot meals—and in so doing, put 100 restaurant staff members back to work.

As part of these efforts, H3 mobilized seven locations in West Palm, Delray, and Boca Raton, producing an average of 3,000 meals per day. Its team also set up a weekly grocery distribution point to hand out pantry staples and other necessities, such as diapers, by the thousands. While this initiative has helped those in great need, it also kept long-time local hot spots like Dada, Hullabaloo, and The Dubliner in the food-service business, but in a whole new way. (hospitalityhelpinghands.org)



RESTAURATEUR RODNEY MAYO OF SUB-CULTURE GROUP (ABOVE, FAR RIGHT) CREATED HOSPITALITY HELPING HANDS TO FEED THOSE WHO LOST THEIR JOBS AS A RESULT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.



ALISSA DRAGUN

MAKING PROVISIONS

EMBER GROUP LAUNCHED BUCCAN PROVISIONS AS A WAY TO GIVE BACK, CONVERTING GRATO, A POPULAR RESTAURANT IN WEST PALM BEACH, INTO A COST-EFFECTIVE PRODUCTION FACILITY FOR HIGH-QUALITY, NUTRITIOUS MEALS. IN ITS FIRST THREE WEEKS, THE ORGANIZATION PARTNERED WITH OTHER LOCAL NONPROFITS TO SERVE 14,000 MEALS TO VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING FRONTLINE MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND NEWLY UNEMPLOYED WORKERS. (BUCCANPROVISIONS.ORG)

ONE FOR ONE



CHEF MALATESTA'S AMERICAN CHOP SUEY



Chef Blake Malatesta, culinary director of Space of Mind Schoolhouse's nonprofit Community Classroom Project, began selling meal boxes—complete with interactive cooking demos—containing all the ingredients needed for families to prepare a fresh, healthy dinner together. For each box purchased, one is donated to a family in need. (findspaceofmind.com)

A MAYOR'S CALL TO ACTION

In early April, West Palm Beach Mayor Keith A. James invited his constituents to become hometown heroes with the introduction of the WPB Together Fund. James called upon the private sector and local business leaders with the ability to do so to make monetary donations to support the city's COVID-19 recovery-assistance efforts.

"Each of us can do a little something to help our fellow residents and business owners, but together, we can achieve so much," James said in statement.

The fund, which was estab-



lished through the Community Foundation of Palm Beach and Martin Counties, addresses needs such as housing/rental assistance, meal services, and small-business aid. As of press time, more than \$18,700 had been raised. (wpb.org)



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Forced to close during the pandemic, the Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach dedicated resources to feeding the community. Since May 1, the resort has been providing 1,000 meals a week to hospitality and restaurant workers, neighbors in need, health-care workers, and first responders. With help from Citadel Securities, the resort has been purchasing these meals

through locally owned restaurants such as Cholo Soy Cocina and Mazie's. "Home is where the heart is, and the Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach is committed to continuously look for ways in which we can support our community, our home for almost 30 years," says Mohamed Elbanna, regional vice president and general manager of the resort. (fourseasons.com/palmbeach)



CRISTYLE EGITTO/EAT PALM BEACH



IAN DORRAE PHOTOGRAPHY

F&B LIFELINE

As statewide restrictions shuttered restaurants and bars, blogger Cristyle Egitto of Eat Palm Beach knew she couldn't sit idly by while the industry she loved faced calamity.

"I've been part of the food community for the last seven years; some of these chefs and owners are like family," says Egitto. "Any time there's a charity event, they're the first to step up and donate time, energy, food, and gift cards. It was clear to me this was the time to reciprocate their generosity."

To combat the ruinous effects of the closures, Egitto launched #SavePBFood, a fundraiser doing double duty: Donations are used to place catering orders at local restaurants that are then brought to first responders and families in need. Egitto has raised more than \$20,000 (and counting) to purchase food from more than 60 local restaurants to boost morale through 100-plus deliveries to hospitals, fire stations, police departments, and medical offices.



CRISTYLE EGITTO HAS BEEN SUPPORTING THE CULINARY INDUSTRY BY DELIVERING FOOD, INCLUDING COOKIES BY CONFETTI CONFECTIONS, LUNCH FROM LEMONSHARK POKE, AND PIZZAS FROM 123 DATURA, TO FRONTLINE WORKERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS.

"The format has allowed us to inject cash into local restaurants while thanking and providing a feel-good [moment] to our first responders," she explains. "It's given the community a platform to participate and make a difference." (eatpalmbeach.com)



SNAP PHOTO CINEMA



SUPPER CLUB

FLORIDA'S STAY-AT-HOME ORDER SPARKED AN IDEA FOR DELRAY BEACHERS JOHN BREWER AND IAIN PATERSON; WITHIN HOURS, THE SOCIALLY DISTANCED SUPPER CLUB, WHICH RALLIES MEMBERS TO PLACE HIGH-VOLUME "FLASH MOB" ORDERS AT PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS, WAS BORN. IN SIX WEEKS, THE FACEBOOK GROUP HAD GROWN BEYOND SOUTH FLORIDA, ACCUMULATING 35,000 MEMBERS ACROSS 15 CHAPTERS NATIONWIDE.

FEEDING SOUTH FLORIDA

As unemployment skyrocketed and society screamed to a halt, Feeding South Florida, the hunger-relief organization already serving a quarter of the state's food-insecure population, saw a massive increase in demand. The nonprofit added another 130 distribution sites and, in Palm Beach County alone, conferred more than 6 million pounds of food in six weeks—all while finishing a 5,000-square-foot commercial kitchen.

"Prior to the COVID pandemic, we served over 700,000 individuals in need; now we're seeing over a million people in need of our assistance," say Sari Vatske, executive vice president. "We've more than doubled our output."

What's more, Vatske adds, about 40 percent of beneficiaries are in need of support for the first time. She explains that because of the region's dependence on tourism and associated businesses, Feeding South Florida saw a spike in workers from all sectors, especially hospitality and retail. "South Florida is the eighth-largest metropolitan area in the United States, so our economy [was] hit particularly hard."

Fortunately, Feeding South Florida's COVID-19



FEEDING SOUTH FLORIDA INCREASED ITS DISTRIBUTION SITES AND FOOD SUPPLY TO HELP THOSE AFFECTED.

FAR LEFT: JOHN BREWER, WITH TURTLE TAVERN OWNER BEVERLY DIAMOND, BEGAN THE SOCIALLY DISTANCED SUPPER CLUB TO ENCOURAGE FOODIES TO ORDER FROM LOCAL ESTABLISHMENTS.



COURTESY OF FEEDING SOUTH FLORIDA

Response Fund turns every dollar into seven meals. In addition to operating drive-through distributions and pantry sites, the organization supports a network of partner agencies and offers a delivery program to homebound seniors through Amazon and Uber Eats. (feedingsouthflorida.org)



FROM LEFT: RICKY BOLUFE OF THE SOCIAL DISTANCE FESTIVAL; ANTHONY BURKS, A BENEFICIARY OF THE CULTURAL COUNCIL'S ARTIST RELIEF FUND.

JACK PHOTO



ART THERAPY

That the arts improve our lives is incontrovertible. But in light of postponed shows, darkened venues, and a halt on large gatherings, many wondered how artists and performers would pull through.

The Social Distance Festival, launched by Delray Beacher Ricky Bolufe, was one soul-soothing answer. Bolufe created the Facebook page to host livestreamed performances from South Florida musicians facing canceled gigs—a place for bands and solo acts to play, receive exposure, and collect money in a virtual tip jar. With so many relegated to their homes, the page grew legs of its own, even hosting two-day festivals with artists playing every half-hour.

The West Palm Beach Downtown Development Authority (downtownupb.com) organized a similar weekly event, Saturday Soiree, with live musical performances by local artists, including West Palm Beacher Allegra Miles of *The Voice* fame—best spectated over takeout from downtown restaurants. The DDA also released coloring pages depicting downtown scenes, such as building-wide murals and the Kravis Center.

Another glimmer of hope came in the form of the Cultural Council for Palm Beach County's Artist Relief Fund (palmbeachculture.com), a crowd-sourced fundraiser to award grants to area creatives whose livelihoods were adversely affected by the pandemic. The council also compiled a running list of virtual cultural experiences—from dance classes to gallery tours, lectures, science demonstrations, and other enriching on-screen activities—and presented One Voice, a musical collaboration between four of the county's major cultural institutions. ◀



VISUAL FEAST

WEST PALM BEACH ARTIST SARAH LAPIERE HOSTED AN INSTAGRAM LIVE ART AUCTION OF HER EAT LOCAL SERIES—20 ORIGINAL PAINTINGS INSPIRED BY LOCAL FOODIE FAVORITES, FROM PUMPHOUSE LATTES TO HAVANA EMPANADAS—RAISING MORE THAN \$4,000 TO BENEFIT H3 AND #SAVEPBFOOD. (SARAHLAPIERE.COM)