

NIAGARA CATHOLIC SUPPORTING FRONTLINE WORKERS WITH ESSENTIAL PPE

Niagara Catholic is working with organizations in the community to provide urgently needed personal protective equipment (PPE) for frontline workers.

The Board has eight advanced technology 3D printers, obtained through the a grant from the GE Additive Education Program, which have been mobilized to create visors for protective face shields, as well as ear savers, to ensure the comfort of individuals required to wear masks on the job.

When schools closed in March, Director of Education John Crocco reached out to Dr. Andrea Feller, Niagara's Associate Medical Officer of Health, and offered them the use of Niagara Catholic's advanced 3D printers to produce PPE supplies for health care workers in Niagara hospitals, Emergency Services and long-term care facilities. Niagara Catholic subsequently partnered with 3D PPE GTHA on the project in this endeavour to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

The organization was founded by medical students from McMaster University, including students from McMaster's Niagara Regional Campus, and the University of Toronto. It has now grown significantly to include more than 140 student-volunteers, including two Niagara Catholic graduates - Larissa DellaVentura (*Saint Francis Catholic High School*) and Bianca Marcella (*Saint Paul Catholic High School*) who will enter their third year in Brock University's Medical Science program in September. This partnership with students will optimize the logistics required to assemble and distribute the PPE to hospitals affiliated with McMaster University, the University of Toronto, Niagara Health, Hotel Dieu Shaver, and Hospice Niagara. Currently, the group is working on providing approximately 7,000 face shields for emergency medicine physicians in Niagara.

"As we have heard so often throughout this pandemic, we are a community and we come together to assist one another," said Mr. Crocco. "As a proud community partner, Niagara Catholic has leaned in to support our colleagues in the health field. We know there is a critical shortage of personal protective equipment and accessories to support frontline workers in our hospitals, emergency medical services, care homes, and essential businesses. This project is an excellent example of the collaboration between Niagara Catholic and the community – in this

case, members of our Information Services Technology team, the Board's Technology Enabled Teaching Consultant, a representative from Student Support Services, and our K-12 Digital Learning Coaches. The staff eagerly embraced this opportunity, and have brought their expertise to the table for the benefit of our community. I am extremely proud of the initiative shown by our staff to mobilize the advanced 3D printers into use, to assist the many individuals who put their lives in harm's way daily to ensure that we and our loved ones are healthy, safe and fed."

Five Niagara Catholic staff members will use the 3D printing machines at their homes to produce the necessary PPE supplies.

The program is in the final stages of the prototype phase, which should be completed within the week. The pilot phase will begin May 4, and the initial delivery of 450 ear savers and 100 frames is expected to take place by May 11.

Niagara Catholic provides excellence in Catholic education to approximately 20,000 students throughout Niagara, from Kindergarten through graduation.

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For more information on 3D PPE GTHA, please visit 3dppegtha.ca or email 3dppemcmaster@gmail.com and one of the medical student leads will get back to you.

