



PRESS RELEASE

May 7, 2020

South Bay Workforce Investment Board
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South Bay Workforce Investment Board Assists Hawthorne High School Students with COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment Project for Healthcare Workers

HAWTHORNE – The School of Manufacturing & Engineering at Hawthorne High School turned to the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) in March for support in its project to produce surgical mask extenders called, “Ear Savers” for frontline healthcare workers throughout the Los Angeles/South Bay region. After exploring ways they could use their engineering labs and equipment to help cope with the COVID-19 crisis, the school learned about the injuries healthcare workers were sustaining due to irritation behind their ears caused by prolonged use of facemasks for up to 12 hours per shift.

The SBWIB introduced the school to the business and medical partners within the Bio-Flex Consortium that the SBWIB helped establish in 2018 and also channeled \$2,200 to the school from funds provided by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas to provide much-needed materials to expand production of the mask extenders as well as face shields.

In keeping with Distance Learning, the students monitor the production and maintenance of materials remotely to optimize quality and quantity of their products. The extenders are 3D printed in a material called Onyx, a nylon material with carbon fiber. So far more than 400 have been distributed to Kaiser Permanente in Harbor City, Long Beach Memorial and Centinela Hospital.

Bio-Flex is a bioscience initiative designed to build a workforce pipeline of bioscience and healthcare professionals in the Los Angeles region providing good paying jobs while supporting the industry. Partnerships include many stakeholders in education, school districts, employers, associations and workforce boards. Visit the Bio-Flex website at www.sbwib.org/bioflex

“We are supporting the high school with this project to encourage innovation and ensure that the youth have the support they need to remain inspired and motivated to stay on a solid career path,” said SBWIB Executive Director Jan Vogel.

As the students continue to ramp up production, deliveries of the mask extenders will go to Torrance Memorial Hospital, Providence Little Company of Mary Hospital and the Hawthorne Police Department.

SBWIB observes safe and sanitary practices in the delivery of services to its clients at our South Bay Business and Career Centers serving South Bay communities while encouraging virtual workshops, conferencing and social distancing in partnership with EDD and onsite AJCC partners. For further information, telephone 310-970-7700 or visit www.sbwib.org and www.sbwib.org/covid-19-resources

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