

## 'One community': Chinese American group donates 1,000 masks to Dayton VA

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### Body

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Long before Daytonians woke up to the reality of the global crisis that COVID-19 would become, the Dayton Association of Chinese Americans (DACA) held an emergency council concerning the future impact of the virus.

The group's efforts have intensified to help the Miami Valley region combat the outbreak.

The Dayton Chinese community utilizes WeChat as a networking tool. In late March a DACA member heard from a doctor at the Dayton VA medical Center that staff had limited access to masks as the hospital was working to conserve them for the anticipated peak period when patients with COVID-19 will flood the hospital.

Photo: Staff Writer

In coordination with DACA, a one-time donation of 1,000 surgical masks as a substitute for the usual N95 masks was made on the morning of March 26, and were delivered to the Dayton VA Medical Center.

Asian Americans have been doing their part to help combat the coronavirus pandemic, even as they face being targeted for anti-Asian racist threats, since the pandemic has been dubbed by some, "the Chinese virus."

Megan LeMaster, the English Language Learner (ELL) coach for Centerville City Schools, has school initiatives designed to increase engagement between residents and immigrant families. She is hopeful that people appreciate the efforts from the Asian community during the coronavirus outbreak.

As fear around the virus has spread throughout the nation, many Asians in the U.S. have reported an increasing amount of acts of aggression and racism," LeMaster told the Dayton Daily News. "The Dayton area is not immune to this type of ignorance. Although the World Health Organization has officially named the virus that causes the disease COVID- 19 as SARS-CoV-2, there is the continued reference to it as the "Chinese virus."

LeMaster explained that, Hongwei Yu, president of DACA and a resident of the Dayton area for 10 years, said the Chinese community wanted to come together with residents to be "one community," in order to fight a major global disaster like COVID-19

Photo: Staff Writer

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In late January, a fundraising account for monetary donations was initiated and on March 23, DACA launched the fundraising website [thedaca.org](http://thedaca.org). in order to raise money in the fight against the coronavirus. A sewing group, with more than 40 members has formed to help contribute PPE masks.

DACA soon united its fundraising efforts with the Greater Dayton Chinese School (GDCS) led by volunteer principal, Naibo Jiang, to double up against the pandemic. But some still fight the idea of being "one community," during the crisis.

Jiang, besides his role in GDCS, is a research scientist at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and has been Dayton-area resident for a decade. He discussed recent incidents directed at the Dayton-area Chinese community.

One Dayton resident found a note on his car with a racial slur while at the grocery store and also described a situation where a local middle school student reported being called "coronavirus" by classmates, Jiang said.

But members of the Dayton Chinese community do not see these acts of aggression as defining their experiences living in the region.

Photo: Staff Writer

Jiang says he's received support from his neighbors and that the GDCS has been contacted by the FBI Cincinnati Division Civil Rights Squad to monitor any acts of discrimination against the Chinese community.

"The government hasn't forgotten us," he said. "We live here, work hard here, our kids grow up here, same as other Asian immigrants, same as other European immigrants, same as other Latin American immigrants. We all work together to make the U.S. greater."

Hongwei Yu comes from Shandong Province, China, and has been living in the United States with his family for about 20 years. He has been serving the Chinese community in Dayton for almost 10 years.

As an Asian American during the coronavirus crisis, he wants to see that every single person gets the help they need regardless of their demographic background.

"It is in this moment that all human beings have to face, as the moment when Titanic hit the iceberg in 1912," Yu said. "It has dramatically changed the world, disrupted our lives, and even affected our minds. All kinds of news, knowledge, rumors and stories came in tsunami, and it was even difficult to distinguish between true and false. We consider calmness as the first immunity."

Photo: Staff Writer

Although the Chinese community in Dayton is not big, donations have been steadily increasing.

"I want to talk about donating masks. This is an important job for us to support local medical institutions," Yu explained.

Ping Yang, principal research scientist at Cargill Research and Development, serves on the board of directors at DACA and the Healer Within Foundation (HWF). Medical professionals have displayed courage they navigate through the crisis, she said.

"The courage and heroic actions showed by the medical professionals, regardless of which country they are from, is extremely inspiring," Yang said. "They are our heroes and we need to do everything we can to help them and to protect them. I am extremely happy to see the quick actions from our governor; I am very grateful to be an Ohioan."

Amanda Jin, who previously worked as an English teacher in China and currently is employed at Fuyao Glass America, lives in the Tipp City area. She immigrated to the United States in 2012. Jin says she's felt a sense of being "one community" with others during the COVID-19 crisis.

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"All the messages I have received are positive and encouraging. People around me show their concerns and loving heart, which is very uplifting," Jin said." A lot of Tipp City elementary school teachers drove their cars one day to our neighborhood with heart-warming signs on their windows to cheer us up. What a pleasant surprise in this scary pandemic."

Jin heard about the shortage of PPEs in the U.S. and then reached out to family members working at the Upper Valley Hospital, Miami Valley Hospital and to medical professionals at Kettering Health Network.

"Our family has donated some N95 masks to our family members at Upper Valley Hospital and some disposable surgical masks to the mailman," she said. "We also ordered some disposable surgical masks from China and are considering donating to either hospitals or other essential business professionals like police, grocery store staff, bank staff, etc. We have also written notes to our elder neighbor to offer help if needed, like grocery shopping."

Her son has made some heart-warming cards for a nursing home in Centerville to show his concerns and care for the senior citizens.

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