

One million pieces of PPE donated to Chicago first responders and essential workers

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The University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab, in partnership with a group of Chinese American business leaders in Chicago led by Citadel Securities CEO Peng Zhao, are providing one million protective face masks to the city's first responders and frontline workers.

"We are incredibly grateful for this very generous donation made by Chicago's Chinese American business leaders, which will go a long way in helping our residents stay safe and protected from the spread COVID-19," said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "Throughout this crisis, Chicago's businesses, local organizations and individual residents have gone the extra mile to help our communities struggling with the challenges of this unprecedented event. Our city's robust response is due in part to their tremendous partnership, and their work will help lay the foundation for the historic recovery that will come."

The Crime Lab and Education Lab are working with city agencies and local nonprofits to distribute the protective masks to those most in need, including first responders across city agencies, essential staff at Chicago Public Schools working to feed and support families during the school closure, and non-profit organizations whose critical social services and anti-violence work with the city's most vulnerable youth and families continues amid the pandemic.

The effort to organize this donation was led by Peng Zhao, CEO of Citadel Securities, and his wife Cherry Chen. "Cherry and I are proud to have called Chicago home for nearly 15 years, and we are grateful to the frontline responders who are risking their wellbeing to protect Chicago neighborhoods," Zhao said. "On behalf of the Chinese American community, I thank the Crime Lab and Education Lab for their work to ensure this equipment gets to those who are providing critical services across our city and to our most vulnerable residents."

The Crime Lab and Education Lab, which work with non-profits and governments to use data science and social science to solve pressing crime and human capital challenges facing cities, will coordinate the distribution of the masks. "We are deeply moved by the extraordinary generosity of leaders of the Chinese American business community in Chicago," said Roseanna Ander, executive director of the Crime Lab and Education Lab. "Their kindness and humility in donating vital supplies is an important reminder of the power of communities coming together to support one another, especially in the face of adversity and divisiveness."

Masks will also be distributed to the Chicago Police Department, which has seen over 400 officers test positive for COVID-19. "This generous donation of PPE to the men and women of the Chicago Police Department is truly appreciated and underscores the support we have received for our officers who have continued to serve and

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protect the residents of Chicago throughout this COVID pandemic, despite increased risk to themselves and their families," said David Brown, superintendent of the Chicago Police Department. "It really means a lot to us and I can't thank the local Chinese American business community enough."

Many of Chicago's non-profits also continue to engage youth and adapt programming in order to meet the changing needs of students. Among the non-profits receiving masks is Youth Advocate Programs, an organization that has continued to provide evidence-based intensive mentorship and holistic support to youth on the South and West sides of the city during this crisis.

"Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Youth Advocate Programs has maintained a commitment to providing the highest quality wraparound supports to youth in Chicago, who even before the pandemic, faced some of life's most complex challenges. In addition to modifying our engagement and service delivery strategies, we are working tirelessly to ensure that our staff and participants have the protective equipment they need," said David Williams, regional vice president at Youth Advocate Programs. "We are deeply grateful to the Chinese American business community for this generous donation of masks, which will do so much to help youth in some of the city's most affected communities."

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