

'We are in the same family': Chinese community donates masks and money to fight COVID-19

Holly V. Hays, Indianapolis Star Published 3:32 p.m. ET March 26, 2020 | Updated 4:41 p.m. ET March 26, 2020

Corrections and clarifications: This story has been updated to correct Wei-Hua Lee's age.

As the novel coronavirus outbreak worsens and hospitals try to [conserve their stores](/story/news/health/2020/03/23/indiana-hospitals-brace-supply-shortage-because-coronavirus/2901273001/) of personal protective equipment, some in the Indianapolis Chinese community are stepping up to help.

On March 21, members of the [Indianapolis Chinese Community Center](https://www.indy-chinese.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=56&lang=us) collected around 600 masks, as well as boxes of gloves and hygiene items to donate to nearly a dozen area hospitals and medical offices.

Quanbo Xiong, president of the community center, said everyone should work together in the face of the crisis. Xiong said he knows of several members of the Chinese community who sent help to family and friends in China when the outbreak first began are now seeing them return the favor.

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Ya-Hua Hui (left), and Quanbo Xiong, greet a community member who is making a donation during an outreach effort in Carmel by people in the Chinese community, Saturday, March 21, 2020. (Photo: Robert Scheer/IndyStar)

"People should talk more ... and help each other," he said, "instead of (being) hostile with each other. ... It makes the world, makes the community, much more beautiful."

The community center has partnered with Chinese-language newspaper Asian America Today, Children's Eyes on the Globe, Chinese American Bridge, America China Society of Indiana and Indianapolis Chinese Performing Arts, Inc., in this effort.

Wei-Hua Lee is trained in pediatrics (https://academicaffairs.iupui.edu/AACContent/Html/Media/AACContent/03-Events/Faculty%20Retirement%20Luncheon/2016_Tribute_Booklet.pdf) in China before coming to the U.S. in 1983 and getting a PhD in pharmacology from the IU School of Medicine. The 63-year-old now oversees Asian American Today, where she's been working to inform the Central Indiana Chinese community of COVID-19 developments.

She was moved to act when she saw a TV news report describing how doctors were re-using or sharing masks as they treat patients.

"If you just think about protecting yourself, then you fail the patient," she said. "You swear to serve the patient to (the) best of your ability, and if a patient (is) in front of you, even though you cannot protect yourself, you have to do your work."

Lee said she wanted Hoosiers to know the Chinese community is making an effort, especially in the face of [growing anti-Asian sentiment](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/coronavirus-us-asian-americans-racism) across the country.

It's shocking and concerning, Lee said, to hear President Donald Trump and others refer to COVID-19 as "[the Chinese virus](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/coronavirus-us-asian-americans-racism)".

"We just feel that we don't know what is going to happen to us," she said. "Because many people ... like to take it out on people. If he has named (it the) Chinese virus, could we be the enemy of everyone?"

COVID-19: Resources

- [Here's how to protect yourself, according to the CDC.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html)
- [Here's what to do if you get sick, according to the CDC.](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html)
- The Indiana State Department of Health hotline is 317-233-7125 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and 317-233-1325 afterward.

Xiong said he wants people to know that he and other members of Indianapolis' Chinese community are with them in the fight against COVID-19.

"We love this area, we are in the same family," he said. "We want to work together to overcome this crisis."

Donate masks

Volunteers will again be accepting donations on March 28 at the following locations and times:

- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Carmel High School Gate 9, 520 E. Main St., Carmel.
- 1:30-3:30 p.m., Saraga, 2308 E. Stop 11 Rd., Indianapolis.

Items accepted include N95 masks, protective goggles, respirators, surgical masks, isolation masks, gowns, face shields and gloves.

To make a financial contribution to Children's Eyes on the Globe, which has provided hygiene kits to low-income residents through Indianapolis neighborhood centers, visit <https://donorbox.org/children-s-eyes-on-the-globe>.

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