

# COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of May 11, 2020

---

In the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the country is seeing innovations in communities that highlight the best of human ingenuity. We highlight these stories to show how many are helping those around them and prompt everyone to think about how they can help others.<sup>1</sup>

## Mobile Wi-Fi Vans

In San Antonio, vans equipped with high-speed Wi-Fi networks are dispatched to various locations in the city to enhance internet capabilities for students. The mobile hotspots provide free internet within a range of 100 to 200 feet. City residents accessing the network must observe social distancing guidelines. Vans are deployed based on an assessment of various factors. Some of these factors include student population in the area and areas that lack broadband internet access.<sup>2</sup>

## Reopening Courts

Wisconsin courts have created a multi-disciplinary COVID-19 task force to ensure safe court proceedings during the pandemic. In Dodge County, Wisconsin, courts that are reopening are considering extra precautions of having two jury rooms, rearranging the courtrooms, and allowing jurors to wear masks. Minor court actions, like those involving traffic violations, have been either delayed or conducted through teleconference.<sup>3</sup>

## Lawyers Looking to Help

The American Bar Association teamed with a technology start-up company to create a portal that helps lawyers find pro bono opportunities to specifically help people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic or other natural disasters. Lawyers can filter opportunities by practice area, community, and type of work (e.g., remote). Common cases include individuals filing for unemployment benefits; navigating housing issues and unlawful evictions; experiencing

---

<sup>1</sup> This document contains references and links to non-federal resources and organizations. This information is meant solely for informational purposes and is not intended to be an endorsement of any non-federal entity by FEMA, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or the U.S. government.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.viainfo.net/cares/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.govtech.com/em/safety/Masks-Needed-Preparation-of-Resuming-Trials-in-Dodge-County-Court.html>



**FEMA**

domestic violence when sheltered in place with an abuser; experiencing delays in court proceedings; and nonprofits and small businesses navigating canceled contracts.<sup>4</sup>

## Drone Donation

A software company is donating dozens of self-flying drones to emergency responders across the country as part of its Emergency Response program. These drones can be used by police and fire departments to assess situations from afar and gain situational awareness. The company is also providing free training and support for the use of these drones.<sup>5</sup>

## Free Face Masks

New York City is providing free face coverings to residents in an effort to promote adherence to the state mandate requiring the use of masks in public places. An estimated 7.5 million face masks will be distributed at more than 50 designated sites across the city's five boroughs. Information on where residents can pick up masks is located on the [NYC Face Coverings Distribution website](#).<sup>6</sup>

## Virtual Tour App

In the Faroe Islands, a territory of Denmark that greatly relies on tourism, virtual visitors unable to travel during the coronavirus pandemic can use a free mobile application to visit the islands by "controlling" a local tour guide to create their own sight-seeing route. Camera-wearing locals will respond to sight-seeing commands from people at home. The tour guide app also has the capability to provide commentary.<sup>7</sup>

## Social Media Influencers Team Up with The Red Cross

The International Federation of the Red Cross recently announced that it is collaborating with social media influencers around the world to combat the spread of misinformation on COVID-19. Influencers who partner with the Red Cross will incorporate verified information and messaging into their creative content.<sup>8</sup>

## Hospitality Workers Education

A culinary program at the University of Memphis is incorporating COVID-19 considerations into its curriculum as it trains future restaurant industry workers. The new curriculum added classes on deep sanitation and on profitably operating under social distancing guidelines.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2020/04/30/a-new-pro-bono-portal-just-launched-for-lawyers-looking-to-help-people-hit-hard-by-the-pandemic/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2020/05/03/tech-for-good-during-covid-19-sky-high-gifts-extra-help-and-chips/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/nyc-distributes-masks-city-parks-grocery-stores-after-photos-residents-crowded-parks-go-viral-1501857>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.springwise.com/innovation/travel-tourism/remote-control-people-faroe-islands>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.barrons.com/news/red-cross-looks-to-global-influencers-to-fight-virus-infodemic-01588690508>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bizjournals.com/memphis/news/2020/05/04/how-innovations-from-coronavirus-experience-may.html>

## FEMA's Best Practice Initiative

Nationwide, there are extraordinary efforts nationwide to support personnel and resource needs to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. FEMA is working to highlight these efforts and encourage everyone to think about what they can do to be a part of providing solutions to help. Visit <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/best-practices> for more information.

Topics for the “Best Practices” series are generated from crowd-sourced suggestions. Have an idea? Let us research it! Organizations and individuals can e-mail best practices or lessons learned to [fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:fema-cipsupport@fema.dhs.gov).

For more information on how to help during COVID-19, visit [FEMA's website for information on donations and volunteering](#).

FEMA does not endorse any non-government entities, organizations, or services. Claims made by third parties have not been independently verified by FEMA.