

COVID-19 Community Innovation Stories, Week of April 13, 2020

In the face of the Coronavirus Disease pandemic (COVID-19), the country is seeing innovations in communities that demonstrate the best of American ingenuity. We highlight these stories to show how many people are helping those around them, and prompt everyone to think about how they can help others.¹

Supporting Children’s Mental Health During COVID-19 Through Literature

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings released a story book, “My Hero is You: How Kids Can Fight COVID-19,” to help children understand how to stay safe and address fears and anxiety associated with the pandemic. The book was produced through the collaboration of multiple nongovernmental organizations and international agencies, including the United Nations. To inform the book’s development, over 1,700 children, parents, caregivers, and teachers from across the globe shared their perspectives on coping during the pandemic. The book is [available online](#) in multiple languages.²

Sports Stadiums Increase Capacity for Food Production and Distribution to Feed the Needy

The Washington Nationals baseball team and its philanthropic arm, Nationals Philanthropies, have partnered with World Central Kitchen to prepare and distribute thousands of meals per day.³ These meals feed seniors, families in need, public housing residents and neighborhoods in the surrounding community. The additional staff and funding will enable World Central Kitchen to produce up to 50,000 meals per day as compared to only 4,000 at their previous facility.

¹ 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.

² 2020 Children’s story book released to help children and young people cope with COVID-19,
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/children-s-story-book-released-help-children-and-young-people-cope-covid-19>

³ 2020 With baseball paused, the Nationals and José Andrés’s World Central Kitchen hustle to feed the needy
https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/with-baseball-paused-the-nationals-and-jose-andress-world-central-kitchen-hustle-to-feed-the-needy/2020/04/08/e2a9a0d2-79d6-11ea-9bee-c5bf9d2e3288_story.html



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Special Olympics Encourages Fitness During COVID-19

While states across the country have cancelled in-person Special Olympics events planned over the next few months due to COVID-19, some state organizations have launched fitness challenges to encourage Special Olympic athletes to stay fit and active. Pennsylvania Special Olympics is offering a daily virtual workout program, [Commit to Fit](#), with daily workout videos and live workout sessions. North Carolina Special Olympics challenged their community to participate in their 30-Day Fit 5 Challenge that includes exercising 5 days each week, eating 5 fruits and vegetables each day, and tracking activities in a Fit 5 tracker.⁴ The national Special Olympics organization has partnered with the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) network to create the *School of Strength* [fitness video series](#) led by Special Olympics athletes.⁵

Connecting with the Outdoors Safely

The Austin Parks Foundation created simple social distancing, hygiene and good neighbor [best practices graphics](#) to help people enjoy the outdoors and understand the rules for parks and playground use. The National Hiking Society developed a webpage that answers [frequently asked questions about safe outdoor practices](#) at playgrounds and local and national parks during the outbreak, and reminds readers to follow local government and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. guidance.

American Red Cross of Central Florida Adapts Disaster Relief Services for COVID-19

American Red Cross of Central Florida volunteers are providing emergency services to affected families using virtual resources like video conferencing to deliver financial assistance for temporary lodging and necessities as well as critical support services like health or mental health services. During a recent home fire, volunteers delivered emergency financial assistance and comfort items using social distancing and case workers followed up with phone calls to help the family with next steps.⁶

Coordination with Federal Executive Boards

The Greater Boston Federal Executive Board⁷ is supporting the FEMA Region 1 COVID-19 Task Force by helping emergency managers connect with other federal agencies that are not part of the formal incident support coordination structure. Working as a bridge between federal agency liaisons and state contacts, the board fielded inquiries about a wide variety of topics including the status of CENSUS 2020, border closures and postal service

⁴ 2020 Special Olympics North Carolina, Protected: Preparing and Responding to COVID-19, <https://sonc.net/protected-preparing-and-responding-to-covid-19/>

⁵ 2020 Cision PR Newswire, Class is Now in Session! Special Olympics Launches School of Strength Fitness Campaign in Response to Athletes' Need for At-Home Workouts, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/class-is-now-in-session-special-olympics-launches-school-of-strength-fitness-campaign-in-response-to-athletes-need-for-at-home-workouts-301029316.html>

⁶ 2020 American Red Cross of Central Florida, Central FL Disaster Volunteers Carrying Out Mission During COVID-19, <https://www.redcross.org/local/florida/central-florida/about-us/news-and-events/news/dat-in-covid-19.html>

⁷ Federal Executive Boards (FEBs) were established by Presidential Directive in 1961 and are a forum for communication and collaboration among Federal agencies outside of Washington, D.C.

testing sites as well as tracking the status of federal agencies and sites that may impact citizens (e.g., Veterans Administration Medical Centers and Social Security offices).⁸

File of Life Medical Packet Prepares Montgomery County, Maryland, Residents for the Possibility of a Hospital Visit

File of Life has developed a [COVID-19 medical history card](#) to help individuals prepare for COVID-19. Originally intended for the elderly and people with preexisting conditions, *File of Life* has developed a new pocket card that contains key medical information should an individual be sent to the hospital for a COVID-19-related emergency where visitors and family members are not allowed inside. The card is designed to fit in your pocket and provide life-saving information about emergency room patients who may not be able to speak to communicate with medical staff upon arrival to the hospital.⁹

Making Masks More Comfortable for Medical Workers

A northern Indiana company is making plastic clips to protect medical workers' ears from being irritated by the elastic straps on face masks protecting them during the coronavirus pandemic.¹⁰ Hometown Shirts and Graphix temporarily closed its door after Governor Eric Holcomb issued stay-at-home orders that extend through at least April 20. However, the company's owners have turned their downtime into an effort make plastic clips to hold face masks' elastic straps at the back of a wearer's head, rather than around the ears, where long-term use can cause discomfort. Since early April, the company has laser-cut and donated more than 3,000 clips to medical staff at Indiana hospitals, nursing homes, and grocery stores.

Keeping Kids' Birthdays Special

A number of local fire departments are going above and beyond to help celebrate children's birthdays during the pandemic. The Chugiak Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company in Chugiak, Alaska, is taking requests to provide drive-by salutes for kids living in its service area of 50 square miles.¹¹ Other communities are organizing drive-by parades that allow friends to drive by the birthday celebrant's home, often with signs and balloons, while maintaining a safe distance to continue social distancing.

FEMA's Best Practice Initiative

Throughout the response to COVID-19, there are extraordinary efforts nationwide to support personnel and resource needs to battle the pandemic. FEMA is working to highlight these efforts and encourage everyone to think about

⁸ 2020 FEMA Region I and Greater Boston Federal Executive Board synopsis submitted through email.

⁹ 2020 *File of Life Medical Packet Could Help You Prepare for a Hospital Visit*, <https://wtop.com/montgomery-county/2020/04/file-of-life-medical-packet-could-help-you-prepare-for-the-possibility-of-a-hospital-visit/>

¹⁰ 2020 Lonely zoo animals, drive-by salutes, food truck helpers: News from around our 50 states (Indiana) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/50-states/2020/04/14/lonely-zoo-animals-drive-salutes-food-truck-helpers-news-around-states/111546794/>

¹¹ 2020 Lonely zoo animals, drive-by salutes, food truck helpers: News from around our 50 states (Alaska), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/50-states/2020/04/14/lonely-zoo-animals-drive-salutes-food-truck-helpers-news-around-states/111546794/>

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.

For more information on how to help during COVID-19, visit’s [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.