

## Local companies and banks work together to donate reusable protective gowns to nursing homes

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Shown are representatives from companies that donated gowns with nursing home staff and city officials.

Cambridge, MA East Cambridge Savings Bank and three other local companies – Brookfield Properties, Pro EMS, and Trinity Property Management – joined forces to purchase \$60,000 in reusable protective gowns for three local nursing homes. 1,500 gowns were distributed to Neville Center at Fresh Pond, Sancta Maria Nursing Facility, and Cambridge Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. Unlike disposable gowns that need to be changed or thrown out after each use, these protective gowns can be washed and reused up to 600 times.

Bill Mergendahl, chief executive officer of Pro EMS, championed the issue of providing high quality PPE to nursing homes. “These gowns are the highest quality and provide a truly sustainable and efficient solution to this critical shortage of PPE,” said Mergendahl. “Moreover, these gowns were manufactured here in Massachusetts by Merrow Manufacturing in Fall River.”

Having seen firsthand the crisis unfold at these facilities, Mergendahl shared his concerns with the city’s acting fire chief Gerry Mahoney who suggested involving Cambridge Chamber of Commerce president and chief executive officer David Maher to garner support from the business community.

“Cambridge has always had an active and involved business community that is eager to step up and

support the community, especially in times of crisis,” said Maher. “The generosity of these four companies – East Cambridge Savings Bank, Brookfield Properties, Pro EMS, and Trinity Property Management – will make a direct impact on these nursing homes by protecting health care workers and the senior citizens they serve.”

“When East Cambridge Savings Bank was approached about this effort to provide reusable gowns to nursing homes, we knew it was a way we could make a meaningful difference and help seniors citizens and medical staff – two groups who have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic,” said Gilda Nogueira, the Bank’s president and chief executive officer. “We are incredibly fortunate to be part of a community like Cambridge that comes together to support some of our most vulnerable neighbors during a difficult time.”

Tom Gomes, executive director of Sancta Maria Nursing Facility, reflected on the significance of this donation to the facility he oversees. “When you see a group of people coming together to help the residents and staff who we have the privilege to care for and work with, it’s truly a humbling experience. This is a perfect example of the positive things that can happen when a group of compassionate and caring people work together to help those in need.”

The Cambridge COVID-19 Task Force, which includes representatives from the Cambridge Public Health, Fire, and Police Departments, Mount Auburn Hospital, Cambridge Health Alliance, and Pro EMS personnel, has provided support on many levels to Cambridge nursing facilities since the first days of the pandemic. Identifying and procuring PPE is a critical issue that nursing homes are facing, and this collaboration between local businesses to purchase reusable gowns is a significant step forward in protecting the wellbeing of nursing home patients and staff.

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