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#IdahoMakersUnite connects makers, COVID-19 responders

BOISE, Idaho (April 2, 2020) — Idaho Makers for Equity, an Idaho STEM Action Center initiative focused on accessibility and inclusion in education, has pivoted to help respond to urgent public health needs related to the COVID-19 crisis by launching #IdahoMakersUnite. The program connects Idaho makers with health care professionals, other essential workers, and at-risk populations who need personal protective equipment.

“Frontline workers throughout Idaho ranging from first responders and physicians and staff at hospitals and doctor’s offices to pharmacists, lab techs, and nursing and retirement home employees desperately need help sourcing increasingly scarce personal protective equipment,” STEM Action Center executive director Dr. Angela Hemingway says. “So do elderly citizens, immune-compromised individuals, and other members of our communities who are more susceptible to this coronavirus. People who want to help stop the spread of COVID-19 can join a growing army of Idaho makers who are providing solutions to keep members of their community safe and healthy.”

Dr. Hemingway urges organizations that need help connecting with makers who want to provide PPE to visit STEM.idaho.gov/idahomakersunite and complete the online form. The page also has details about options for making PPE, including links to instructions for making alternative N95 masks using MERV13 filters or HEPA vacuum bag material, as well as health and safety guidelines and other resources. Makers may be eligible for nominal grant funds from the STEM Action Center to help offset certain expenses, and businesses and individuals can donate dollars and supplies to the cause, too.

Word of the #IdahoMakersUnite program is spreading fast. It just launched Monday and the STEM Action Center is already working with makers at Boise State University, the Burley Junior High 3D print club, Gizmo CdA Makerspace in Coeur d’Alene, and the Salmon Public Library to create face shields for health care workers. Dr. Hemingway says it is only a matter of time before the DIY community starts crowdsourcing ventilator parts.

KTVB-TV, one of the STEM Action Center’s media partners, is helping recruit makers and connect them with organizations and workers on the frontline. In addition to airing PSAs, the NBC affiliate is employing Zipwhip technology to automatically send the hyperlink to the #IdahoMakersUnite page to people who text “MAKE” to (208) 321-5614.

The STEM Action Center has also launched STEM@Home — an information clearinghouse for free science, technology, engineering, and math online learning resources — in response to the pandemic. The agency added a STEM@Home tile to its Resource Portal at resources.stem.idaho.gov to make it easy to find activities, experiments, articles, curriculum, and YouTube videos by age or grade or subject area. Visitors can also submit resources for possible inclusion.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to increase access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit [STEM.idaho.gov](https://stem.idaho.gov) for more information, and visit <https://stem.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.

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