

Note to media: video available at <https://www.facebook.com/harvest.foundation.mhc/videos/1020092168385678/>.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Martinsville-Henry County Community Leaders Unite for Mask Up MHC Initiative to Combat COVID-19**

*Chamber, Health Officials, Community Leaders Stress Need to Continue Using Both Masks and  
Social Distancing*

MARTINSVILLE, VA (JUNE 24, 2020)—A broad cross-section of community leaders, including those from the City of Martinsville, Henry County, Sovah Health, The Harvest Foundation, Southern Virginia Baptist State Convention, West Piedmont Health District joined with the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber to announce a new initiative called Mask Up MHC, using “#MaskUpMHC”, to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. The purpose of Mask Up MHC is to provide access to a mask to everyone in Martinsville-Henry County, encourage wearing a mask properly as well as to continue social distancing. The masks will be available throughout the community under the campaign during which fun, engaging activities will be promoted to encourage the wearing of masks.

“Our challenge to every person in Martinsville and Henry County is to continue practicing social distancing and to wear a mask every time they are in public places to help dramatically reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community,” Mayor Kathy Lawson said.

Jim Adams, Chair of the Henry County Board of Supervisors added, “We encourage everyone to wear a mask according to the guidelines. My mask protects my friends, neighbors and loved ones, and that’s something everyone should want. It isn’t about me.”

We sincerely appreciate the willingness of the leadership of our hospital, the business community, government officials, faith-based organizations and other not-for-profit organizations for uniting our community under the Mask Up MHC initiative,” said Lisa Watkins, president of the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber.

Karli Foster, The Harvest Foundation staff lead for COVID education said, “The Mask Up MHC campaign was developed as a spin-off of the Virginia Department of Health’s Mask Up Virginia campaign. We thought it would be helpful to create a local campaign because we have a local issue. Our numbers are continuing to rise, and the only thing we can do to stop that is to protect ourselves. We can do this by wearing our masks. They may be uncomfortable, but they are helping protect you and your loved ones. Our tag line is ‘Do it for someone you love. Wear a mask. Save a life.’ I know that as a community, we can get through this crisis together, stronger and resilient!”

“We are so pleased to have the support of our local Chamber, Martinsville, Henry County, and countless organizations and businesses throughout our area, to help keep those in our community safe and healthy,” said Nancy Bell, public information officer, West Piedmont Health District. She added, “wearing a mask is the single most effective way to stop the spread of COVID-19, and if everyone wore a mask, we could cut down new infections by more than 90%.”

Several entrepreneurs in our community now manufacture and sell masks online: [www.solidstonefabrics.com](http://www.solidstonefabrics.com) and

[www.molliesoriginals.com](http://www.molliesoriginals.com), and make it easier to purchase masks locally.

“Mask Up MHC demonstrates the creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit of our community. When you see government, entrepreneurs, businesses, nonprofits and faith-based organizations all working together for the common good, it reminds us what it means to be a community,” Charles Whitfield said. Whitfield serves as MHC Chamber chair, president of the Virginia Baptist State Convention, pastor of First Baptist Church East Martinsville, and is a local entrepreneur. “This virus affects all of us, and with all of us working together, I believe our Mask Up MHC initiative will serve as a model for other cities and communities.”

Dale Alward, CEO of Sovah Health – Martinsville added this encouragement from the hospital. “We have been overwhelmed with love and support for our hospital staff from so many organizations and individuals in our community. We have been wearing masks throughout this pandemic. We wear masks to protect you, now please wear your masks to protect us, and everyone else.”

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