

A pandemic miracle: Local school system on donation

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Asheboro Courier-Tribune

USA TODAY NETWORK

After a meeting discussion about getting more masks, the Randolph County School System has been selected to receive 97,500 masks from America's Mask Challenge.

The challenge is in partnership with United Way Worldwide, the Business Roundtable and the CDC Foundation. United Way, a privately funded nonprofit, plans to deliver 200 million face masks for students, teachers and staff in under-resourced educational institutions.

In a press release, Brian Gallagher, president and CEO, said, "The challenge is an opportunity to help protect the 37 million students, 4 million teachers and school staff at 56,000 schools receiving federal Title 1 funding."

Since his start in the office, President Joe Biden has vowed to safely reopen many schools within his first 100 days, prompting this challenge's goal of at least 40 million for the school year.

According to the CDC, cloth masks in schools can help slow the spread of the coronavirus, along with hand-washing and regularly disinfecting surfaces. The masks are provided by Hanes Brands, a clothing apparel brand that has agreed to coordinate masks by CDC guidelines and produce masks for delivery.

The Winston-Salem based company has not only served as the pilot for distribution but has also donated 25 million masks to the Mask Challenge.

Southerlyn Reisig, director of public relations for United Way Worldwide, said so far 10.5 million masks are scheduled for delivery. "About half of those were scheduled by the end of 2020, the balance has been scheduled this year. This is based on the school systems' preference."

When deciding the amount of masks per system, the organization

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looks at Title 1 schools, rising COVID rates, unemployment rates and other need factors.

After they coordinated with the school systems, Hanes Brands shipped directly to the school systems. "Each shipment included five masks per student, teacher and school employee of the targeted schools."

The organization also worked first-hand with superintendents of each school system to arrange when and how the masks would be delivered. Other than Randolph County the company reached out to all 100 counties in the state.

"I know that Forsyth County schools had a distribution of 150,000 masks last week, and is expecting 100,000 more soon," Reisig said.

The Randolph County School System has been vocal on social media about being thankful for the huge donation.