

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-businesses-have-nothing-to-do-but-do-good-11585663200>

METRO MONEY

# New York City Businesses Have Nothing to Do but Do Good

Most are facing a disastrous present or gloomy future, but many are stepping up to help those in need



PHOTO: ROB SHEPPERSON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



By

*Anne Kadet*

March 31, 2020 10:00 am ET

Upon launching in November, Brooklyn's Air Co. was in the glamorous business of making fancy vodka using new technology that produces ethanol from nothing more than carbon dioxide pulled from the air and hydrogen.

Then the new coronavirus hit.

Now it's using that newfangled process to produce a more pedestrian product: hand sanitizer. And it's donating the majority of its output to local hospitals and government agencies, including the New York Police Department.

Of course, this being the product of a Bushwick, Brooklyn, startup, the disinfectant, dubbed "Hand Sanitizer by Air Co.," comes packaged in an ultra-sleek, minimalist bottle that cops and nurses alike are sure to admire.

Air Co. is bent on providing "the utmost quality of design," says co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Gregory Constantine. "And that's been translated into our hand sanitizer as well."

It's hard to find a business in New York City these days that isn't facing a disastrous present or gloomy future. But it's also hard to find one that isn't trying—in its own special way—to pitch in and help.

Nabeel Alamgir, co-founder of Lunchbox, a digital-ordering platform for restaurants, got an email the second weekend of March from a colleague in the venture-capital community proposing a website that would allow consumers to browse restaurant listings and buy gift cards to provide the eateries with cash flow.

Mr. Alamgir immediately put his company's team of 13 developers on the job. Within six hours, the website, Help Main Street, was up and running. Many on the Lunchbox team stayed up 48 hours straight to build it out. The site now has more than 16,800 listings across the country including 3,200 in New York City; restaurants receive 100% of the proceeds.

Mr. Alamgir says employees fought over the opportunity to pitch in. "If we don't help out, we'll go crazy," he says.

Medical workers are to the pandemic what police officers and firefighters were to 9/11—everyone is vying for the opportunity to support doctors, nurses and paramedics. Around the city, these employees have been showered with free scooter rides, laundry service, energy shots, pizza, pastries and, of course, cold-brew coffee.

---

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

---

*How are businesses in your community changing course to help with the Covid-19 crisis? Join the conversation below.*

---

Field Failing, founder and CEO of Fields Good Chicken, a minichain with six locations in Manhattan, says he felt compelled to support the medical community when his wife gave birth

to their second child at a local hospital just as the pandemic hit.

“It was inspiring to see the doctors and nurses and hospital staff going about their business seemingly unfazed,” he says. “It gives me chills to think about it. Humanity needs people like this.”

Mr. Failing tried offering free takeout at his restaurants to anyone with a medical ID, but few turned up. “We’re not very close to the hospitals,” he says.

On March 21, his business started delivering free pans of chicken, roasted Brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes and cauliflower mac and cheese to staff at Manhattan hospitals and emergency rooms.

While he had to close five of his locations temporarily, he feels optimistic. “I believe if you are philanthropic in the way you operate, it comes back to benefit you,” Mr. Failing says.

Indeed, many business owners say their assistance is partially motivated by the sense that in a crisis like this, we all survive or fall together.

“It’s charity, but it’s self-interest to support the neighborhood and do what we can,” says Matthew Quigley, a managing director at Plaxall, a family-owned business in Long Island City, Queens.

The plastics manufacturer, which also owns and manages a lot of neighborhood real estate, is donating takeout food trays to local nonprofits and restaurants, organizing fellow manufacturers to produce medical face shields, and lending space to the LIC Relief Covid-19 Response Group.

The city’s legions of instructors, meanwhile, are creating free streaming classes and videos to instruct and entertain people stuck at home. Topics range from meditation and dance to coding and piano.

---

## MORE ON CORONAVIRUS

---

- [What We Know About the Virus](#)
- [How to Prepare](#)
- [Navigating Your Life](#)
- [A Guide to State Lockdowns](#)
- [Live Updates: Coronavirus and Business](#)

---

After she temporarily closed both Manhattan locations of the Fashion Class, a sewing school for children and adults, for example, owner and founder Kerri Quigley (not relation to Matthew Quigley) started producing short YouTube videos featuring hand-sewing projects including “How to Sew a DIY Protective Fabric Face Mask.”

The video depicts Ms. Quigley in her North Bergen, N.J., home, cheerfully crafting a mask from bird-print fabric. Some local hospitals are so desperate for supplies they are accepting donations of these masks, she says.

Even hard-core professionals are pitching in.

Umbrex, a Queens-based membership association of independent management consultants who typically work with Fortune 500 outfits and private-equity portfolio companies, launched a Pandemic Task Force that includes more than 100 volunteers offering free consultations. They are helping businesses such as nail salons, restaurants and yoga studios with tasks including applying for Small Business Administration loans, forecasting cash flow and communicating with customers.

“People say this is our World War II,” says Will Bachman, co-founder and managing partner. “Now it’s our turn to be the greatest generation. I heard from my dad about how they went around collecting aluminum foil and paper. We’re stuck in our apartments and homes, but it’s our chance to help people.”

**Write to Anne Kadet at [Anne.Kadet@wsj.com](mailto:Anne.Kadet@wsj.com)**

Copyright © 2020 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <https://www.djreprints.com>.