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# How Austin Air Systems managed a jump in demand during pandemic

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Lauren McMillan, president, Austin Air Systems  
JOED VIERA

By Lian Bunny - Reporter, Buffalo Business First  
3 hours ago

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Austin Air Systems, a Buffalo air purifier business, has helped in emergencies such as hurricanes Sandy and Katrina. The knowledge from those experiences came in handy during the pandemic.

“We’re aware of how to ramp up when we need to,” said [Lauren McMillan](#), president.

Austin Air experienced a tenfold increase in business. The 30-year-old business was busy before the pandemic though its air purifiers were mainly household items, McMillan said.

Then in March 2020, air purifiers suddenly became a safety necessity and Austin Air’s customer base expanded to stores, malls, restaurants, medical offices and schools.

Austin Air shipped more than 100,000 of its air purifiers to school districts across North America, she said.



A look inside Austin Air  
JOED VIERA

Here is how McMillan and her company pivoted to keep up with the sudden product demand.

**Austin Air quadrupled staff.** While some companies are struggling to hire workers, McMillan said her business has longstanding employees with close, big families so the company hired groups of people from the same household. The 480,000-square-foot production floor easily allowed for social distancing. Austin Air had a more difficult time filling office positions, where workers are in closer quarters. She declined to disclose Austin Air’s number of employees.

**Reduced item offerings to streamline production.** Rather than offering the typical five types of air purifier filters in four colors, the business shifted to three types of filters in two colors.

**Investment in new equipment and stocked inventory.** Austin Air bought equipment in to make air purifier filters more quickly to keep up with demand. The company purchased more inventory to have materials in-house to avoid supply chain issues.

**Lengthened the work week.** The company worked seven days a week for six months last year and at the beginning of this year, McMillan said. The business is currently more caught up on production. Demand for Austin Air’s air purifiers has calmed down but is still at higher levels than 2019 and early 2020. McMillan thinks Covid-19 made more people aware of Austin Air and the benefits of air purifiers, which should continue to impact her business beyond the pandemic.

“There are a lot of benefits to clean air that have nothing to do with Covid,” she said.

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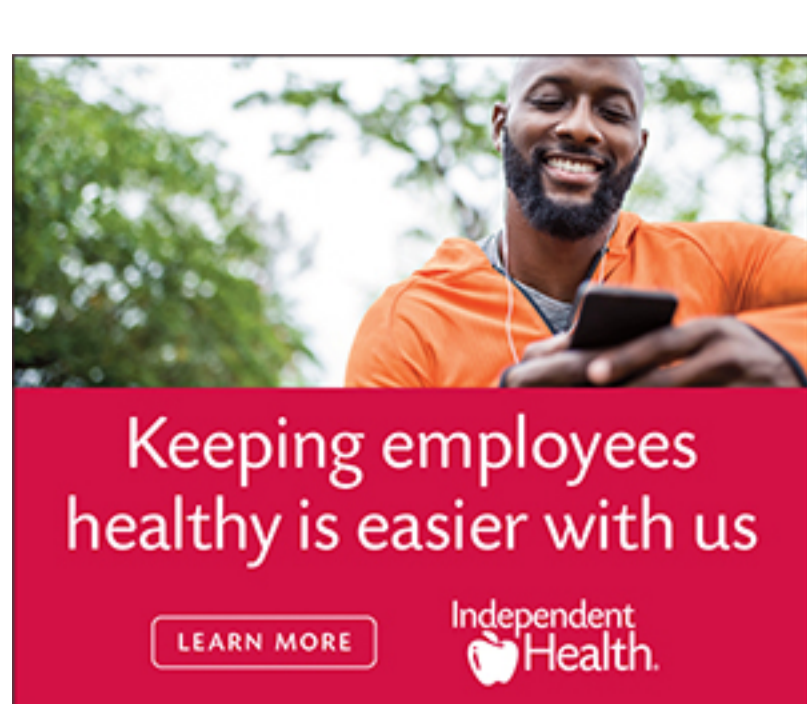
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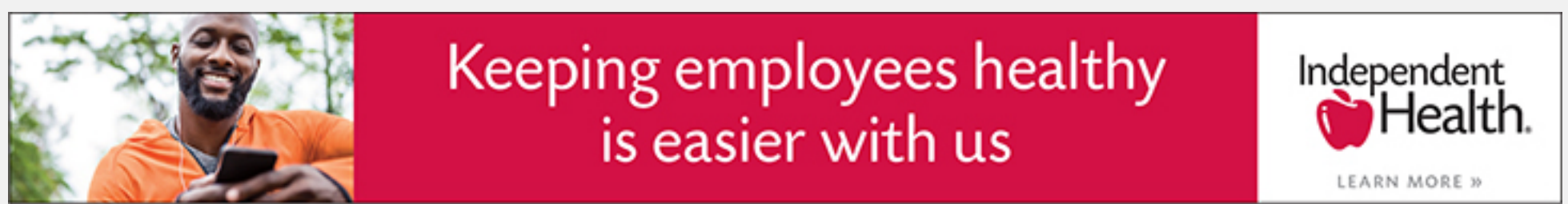
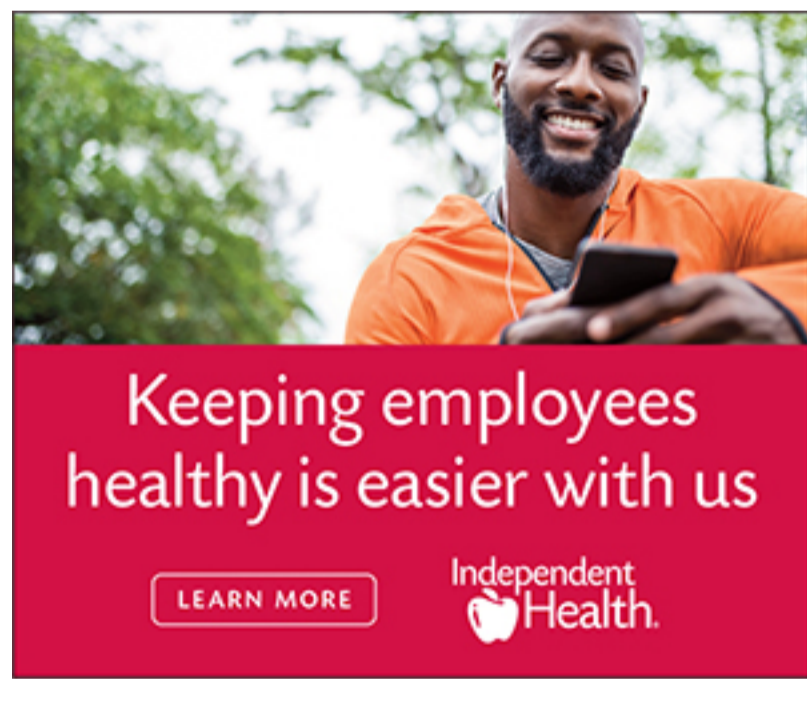
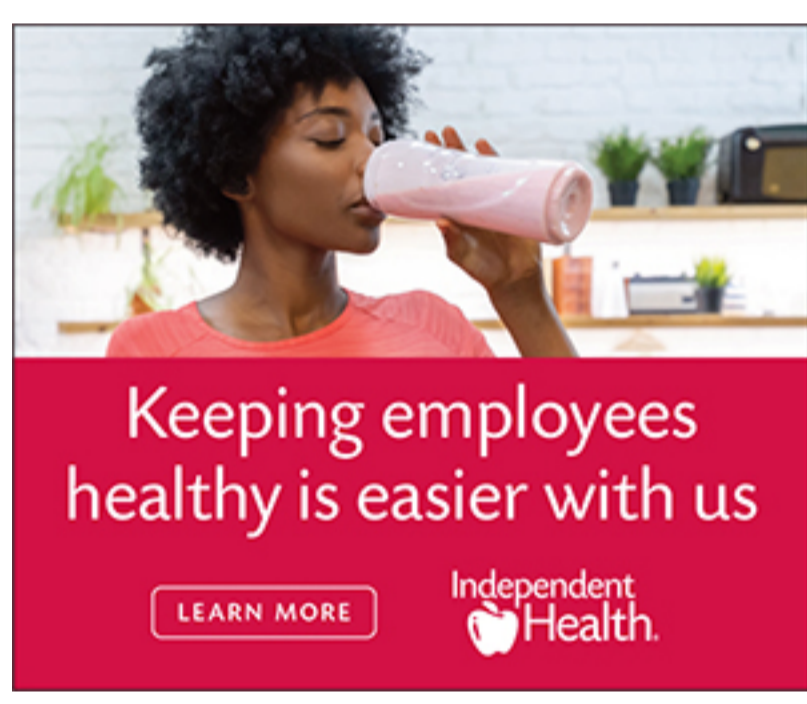


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