



North Davie Street, Greensboro

## GMA/FirstPoint Foundation loan program targets COVID-19 relief

**A** \$100,000 loan fund has been established by the GMA/FirstPoint Foundation to assist businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While GMA members are encouraged to apply, loans are available for any qualifying business in Guilford County, said Mark Prince, president and CEO. “GMA’s legacy since 1906 has been to support and assist our entire business community.”

Loan amounts will be limited to approxi-

mately one month’s business revenue prior to the onset of the pandemic, with a maximum loan amount of \$10,000.

The loan program will be administered by Piedmont Business Capital, he said, which will process all applications.

Loan recipients will receive a 90-day grace period before repayments begin. Terms are 36 months of principal and interest payments at 3.82 percent.

Following 12 months of timely payments,

Prince said, a business may request that the balance due be forgiven. Loan funds may only be used for maintaining or restarting a business. Funds may not be used to pay off previously incurred debt without prior approval.

“This is a perfect example of why we set up the GMA/FirstPoint Foundation in 2015,” Prince said. “This is what GMA is about – helping GMA member businesses through these unprecedented times.”

Full details at [piedmontbusinesscapital.org](http://piedmontbusinesscapital.org).



Bonnie Kays, owner of Cincy’s restaurant on February One Place.

## Downtown Greensboro, Inc. teams up with GMA to offer grants to businesses

**A**fter being in business all these years, I’ve never seen anything like it,” said Bonnie Kays, owner of Cincy’s restaurant on February One place in the heart of downtown Greensboro.

Kays was talking about the struggle to keep her business afloat in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hers is just one of the many downtown businesses feeling the pinch. Restaurants in particular have been hard hit. Dine-in service was prohibited for weeks in order to limit

potential transmission of the virus. When allowed to open, capacity was reduced to maintain social distancing.

Cincy’s is primarily a lunch spot, and business volume after reopening did not support operating every day. In early July, Kays could only justify opening three days a week.

“I never imagined it being this hard,” said Kays, who became an owner of the business in 1990. Cincy’s was established in 1987.

A grant program created

by Downtown Greensboro, Inc. (DGI), with support from GMA, provides some relief for Cincy’s and many other businesses.

“We thought of the idea in May and were able to implement the program within a matter of weeks,” said Zack Matheny, president and CEO.

An application program was publicized to DGI members, describing how to apply for the \$1,500 grants. Businesses quickly respond-

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*Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.*



### South Elm art

After demonstrations in early June, South Elm Street was transformed into an outdoor art gallery. Photos, page 7.

# National medical placement firm looks to GMA training to help keep staff up to date, motivated

When a hospital in Anchorage or Albuquerque needs to fill a critical position on its anesthesia staff, there's a good chance one of the first calls made will go to a Kernersville number.

For more than 40 years, United Anesthesia Associates, Inc. has been a resource to match anesthesiologists and certified registered nurse anesthetists with positions in hospitals and surgery centers around the nation.

"We cover all 50 states from this one location," says Tracy Strother-Mayer, the privately held company's chief executive officer.

Some of the medical professionals in United Anesthesia's database are open to filling locum tenens positions. The Latin term refers to a temporary position that is open because of staffing shortages, vacations, or other short-term situations.

The company also serves anesthesia professionals seeking long-term positions.

The company has been a member of GMA for more than a decade, Strother-Mayer says, because it finds great value in the benefits available to members.

Many of United Anesthesia's employees have been on staff for 15 or 20 years, she says.

"Our staff is really like a family. It's important to keep them growing, to have new ideas, and to keep learning."

GMA's Workplace Workshops, she explains, provide mental and motivational stimulation that energizes United Anesthesia's employees.

Workplace Workshops are one of the most powerful advantages that GMA offers, she says.

"They are so uplifting and mov-

ing. Our people love them," Strother-Mayer says.

Employees select one or two of the Workplace Workshops they'd like to attend when the list of speakers and topics is published each year. Those who go report back and share the highlights with their co-workers, benefitting the entire team.

Workplace disruptions caused by the pandemic have made GMA's free member benefits even more valuable, she says. Many of GMA's on-going educational programs have transitioned from live presentations to virtual meetings online.

"Our staff has been even more invested," Strother-Mayer says.

**PARTICIPATION  
= SUCCESS**



Tracy Strother-Mayer is CEO of United Anesthesia.

"We've really enjoyed a lot of the webinars."

United Anesthesia  
(800) 334-8320  
unitedanesthesia.com



## Meeting ... but socially distanced

GMA's Competitive Advantage Networking (CAN) group held a couple of its Friday morning meetings outdoors and socially distanced. All Star Chem-Dry hosted one meeting at its new facilities on Walnut Circle Drive. GMA has now put all in-person meetings on hold to be extra cautious as the pandemic continues.



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The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.

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# Be smart, be proactive to minimize health risks at work

BY SHAWN STRAUB

You have cleaned the building, obtained hand sanitizer and masks. You are ready for your employees to return! But are they ready to come back?

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused people to be hesitant about returning to the workplace. Some are genuinely scared to return. This is a difficult time for everyone, but there are things business owners and managers can do to help ease the transition.



Straub

First, you should draft a letter to your employees relaying all of the practices and procedures that will be followed as they return to work. Your team should be aware of any changes made to ensure everyone stays safe.

They should also be aware of the ways in which it will affect them and their daily routine. Knowing that you have put processes and precautions in place may ease some anxiety.

One of the primary things that you want to express to your employees is that they must stay home if they are sick.

Gone are the days when the person who comes in with a cold is the hero because they do not want to miss a deadline. Your team must

know that under no circumstances should they come to work if they have a cough, fever, or any sign of illness.

With COVID-19 it is also recommended that, if an employee has been in contact with anyone who has symptoms, that person stay home. It is always better to err on the side of caution when it comes to this pandemic.

Now is the time to emphasize basic hygiene. Remind people to wash their hands! The Centers for Disease Control website has posters to place around sinks with reminders on how to thoroughly wash your hands. ([www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html))

We recommend setting an alarm to remind people to get up every hour, stretch, and wash their hands. This might seem like overkill, but we promise people will appreciate everyone around them having clean hands.

Recommend to your team that they practice social distancing when not at work.

If you have a team member that takes their weekend to go to the beach in Florida and returns to work on Monday, they may be spreading a serious illness without displaying symptoms. With that being said you are well within your rights to ask questions directly related to a person possibly having COVID-19 symptoms. Those might include “Do you have a cough or shortness of



breath?”

The N.C. Department of Health has created a screening questionnaire (<https://bit.ly/3iOEg7J>) designed specifically for this purpose.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has also given the green light to take employee temperatures to ensure no one is sick. Normally this would be an absolute no, but with the public health risks of this pandemic, you may do so if you think it is necessary to safeguard everyone’s health.

Employers should consider adjusting work spaces and schedules to enforce social distancing. This may

include closing down communal break areas, as well as not holding large meetings. Working in shifts also is recommended. Small groups working different hours limits contact with others.

Finally, make sure everyone is aware of the process for making use of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act under the Family and Medical Leave Act Expansion Act ([www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/ffera](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/ffera)). Both policies have requirements for all companies with fewer than 500 employees.

The more information you can provide for your employees on the precautions being taken, the more comfortable they will feel.

Be open to frank discussions with your staff about their concerns and how you

will address them.

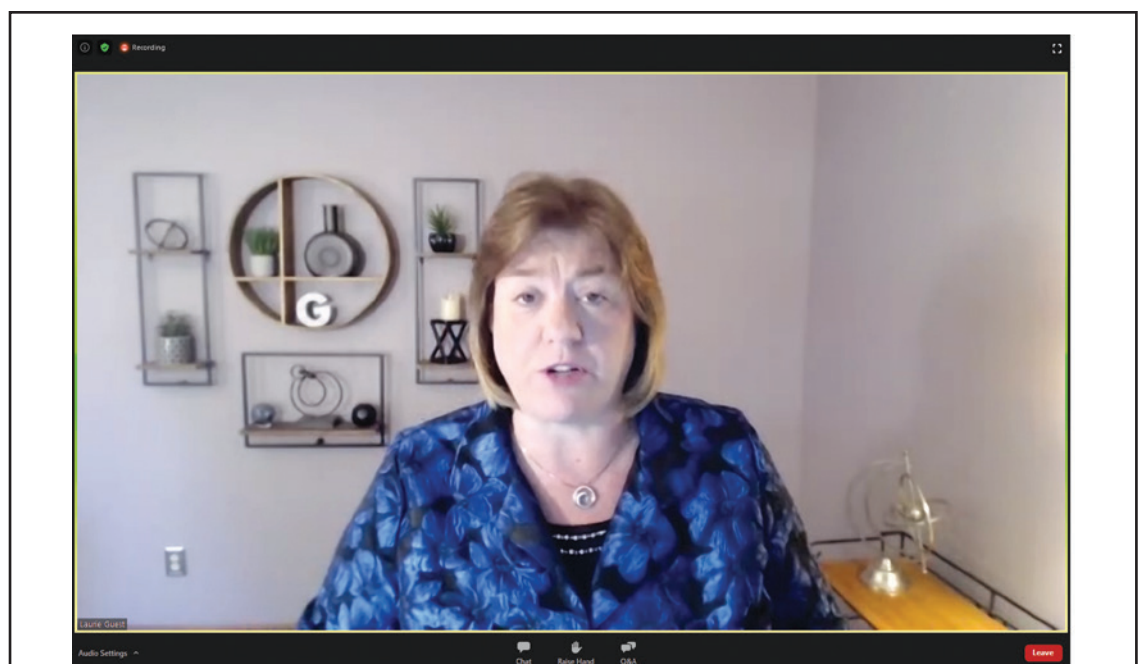
As a manager or employer, it is important for you to stay up to date on the latest information. The Centers for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Labor, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services issue new guidance almost daily. Try to stay abreast of new information so you can better protect your employees and, in turn, your business.

This new normal is hard, but we can all get through it together.

Shawn Straub, M.A., is the founder and CEO of ALT HR Partners.

(336) 965-2827

[www.althrparkers.com](http://www.althrparkers.com)



## Workplace Workshop via Zoom

Speaker Laurie Guest presented the July 8 Workplace Workshop. Her topic was “Life in the Espresso Lane: How to Be Smooth, Bold and Balanced in a Fast-Paced World.”



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# The business of making music made a career for Rob Massengale

Professional musician Rob Massengale says the best advice he ever got was to learn the music business.

It's one thing to always be on time and to have mastered your instrument – in his case, the bass. But it's another to be able to manage a band, book gigs, and keep the bills paid.

Taking his dad's advice, Rob Massengale mastered those things, too. It's made for quite a career.

His father, the late Burt Massengale, led the Burt Massengale Orchestra for more than 50 years and was a fixture on the Tar Heel music scene. As a young man, he played in his father's group when live music could be heard in numerous places around the Piedmont Triad just about any night of the week.

"That was back when country clubs were flourish-



ing," Massengale says.

Hotel lounges had live bands. Fraternal organizations, such as the Elks, hosted dances for members on weekends. And the holidays were something else.

"During Christmas," he recalls, "we would play just about every night of the month of December."

It's apparent that versatility is one of the keys to success as Massengale ticks off the bands and genres he and his bands have covered. Motown. The Beatles. The Stones. The Doobie Brothers.

Versatility and professionalism as a performing musician gets rewarded with more opportunities to play.

Touring groups and tribute bands hire musicians from the area when they come through, and Massengale often got the call.

"There were tribute

groups for The Drifters, Coasters, The Marvelettes, The Shirelles. I had a guy in New York who, whenever they were coming into North and South Carolina, Virginia or Georgia would call and say, 'Hey, Rob. We need a quartet.'"

Massengale would deliver. "If I was playing a wedding and couldn't do it, I had other guys that could," he says. "That was a big part of the business."

Throughout most of his career, music was integral to the Triad business scene and provided steady work for musicians, from jazz combos to six-piece bands with horns to larger groups.

Massengale and his groups played the furniture market in High Point, corporate sales events, awards dinners and the like. The work was good and steady. "I got hooked in with High Point University back in the early days and had a good 10-year run," he says.

Massengale credits his late wife, Toni, for much of his success. She was a motivator and an initiator. "She was very supportive," he says, "a great band wife."



Rob Massengale with his stand-up bass.

The couple expanded their music business footprint by booking other musicians. They called their enterprise the Massengale Entertainment Source. "She wanted to emphasize that it wasn't just my band," he says.

Massengale has been a member of GMA for more than a quarter century. Back in the days when live music was commonplace and expected, his band often played

at GMA events. Playing live music is like networking. When a band makes a favorable impression, it often leads to other work.

"Music can be a good sales tool," Massengale says with a smile, "if you know how to play quiet and let the people do their sales job."

*Massengale Entertainment Source*  
robmassengale.com  
336-375-1999



The Rob Massengale Band in the early 2000s.

## GTCC's R3 program offers free business counseling on wide range of topics

There's good news for Guilford County's small businesses affected by COVID-19.

Guilford Technical Community College is offering free, one-on-one remote counseling with professionals on a broad range of topics, from accounting and finance to web design. The program is known as R3, short for Reboot, Recover, Rebuild.

The program is targeted to companies with around 25 or fewer employees and \$2 million or less in annual revenues, says Mark Hagenbuch, director of GTCC's

Small Business Center.

R3 is being funded with federal monies aimed at revitalizing businesses adversely affected by the pandemic. About \$3 million came to North Carolina, which is using the state's 58 community college campuses to deliver the business assistance.

GTCC is partnering with GMA as well as the Greensboro and High Point Chambers of Commerce to engage with professionals who can provide the program's services to businesses.

The goal is to pair businesses with specific needs with service providers with

expertise in that area, he says.

For instance, a business owner needing assistance renegotiating a lease might be paired with a real estate attorney. A company needing an updated employee manual might be paired with a human resources professional, and so forth.

Hagenbuch is seeking business pros interested in providing counseling as well as companies that need assistance. Inquiries should be made by email, addressed to sbc@gtcc.edu.

Availability is limited and offered on a first come, first served basis.

### Disaster Counseling Categories

Accounting & Finance  
Access Business  
Capital  
Brand – Marketing  
Brand – Rebranding  
Business Plan  
Business Startup  
Online Sales  
E-Commerce  
Email Management  
Marketing  
Employee Recruitment  
Employee Management  
Lead Generation  
Loan Repayment

New Client  
Recruitment  
Online Marketing  
PR – Press Release  
Repeat Customer  
Strategies  
Sales Training  
SEO (Search Engine Optimization)  
Social Media  
Development  
Social Media Review  
Web Design  
Website Review

## DGI grants

Continued from page 1

ed, and the first round of grant checks was delivered in early June.

The DGI Retail Revitalization Grant Program fund was created with a \$30,000 donation from DGI. GMA contributed \$25,000. Other sums came from the Greensboro Virus Relief Fund (established by the United Way of Greater Greensboro, the city, and the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro). An anonymous donor gave \$10,000, and additional donations were made through a GoFundMe campaign.

At press time, the fund had received more than \$107,000, Matheny said.

Grant recipients may use the funds as necessary, he said, from paying rent to re-

stocking inventory to buying hand sanitizer and face masks to prevent spreading coronavirus.

Matheny notes that downtown businesses “are not chain stores. These are women and men who wake up every day thinking about how they are going to survive in this difficult world of small business. They are our neighbors. They’re our friends.”

The DGI grant fund is still soliciting donations, Matheny said, because no one can predict how long the pandemic will continue. “But,” he said, “we know we’ve got to support our retailers.”

*More information on the DGI grant program is available at <https://bit.ly/2Ofgns3>.*



### Something Barowed Candy Bar Stations – Lori Poag, owner

“The majority of our business is gatherings for children’s birthday parties and kid-related events, graduation celebrations. We also rent out our space for baby showers. When COVID-19 started, we just couldn’t do anything. The grant was great for us. It definitely helped out with our overhead.”

“We had applied for an SBA grant, but we didn’t receive it.

“Having DGI on the local level, there is someone here that actually cares about us, that knows our name.

“DGI does so many great things. They care about the business owners downtown.”



### La Facial Hair and Nail Salon – Ellen Moore, owner

“I’ve been in business for 27 years at the same location on East Market Street. DGI reached out to all the downtown businesses, and I jumped on board immediately. I feel fortunate to be a one-person operator. I take only one client at a time now.”



### Poke Bowl – Billy Liu, owner

“The grant will help me pay rent and get some hand sanitizer and dividers for between the tables. We have really been hurt.”



### Area Home – Mark Hewett, owner

“I’ve been in business 20 years and weathered quite a few things, but this was something that’s never happened before. It was really beneficial for us

to have that \$1,500. It really helps and went toward paying the bills. Having a little money coming in gives you peace of mind.”

## Networking opportunities made GMA right for Graybar

Anyone who's been around the construction trades for long knows the name Graybar. Graybar is one of the go-to places for anything electrical from spools of household wiring to fuses and tools and conduit. It's a supply house that operates from coast to coast.

Toni Ridge joined the Greensboro location in January after moving to the Piedmont Triad from Chapel Hill. She took a position in outside sales. "I'd always been in the utilities and communications industries," she says. Electrical components was a related field, and different enough to be interesting.

Then came March and the coronavirus pandemic. Things changed. Like so

many others, she began working from home. She also had to adapt to offering new types of products to satisfy the needs of clients.

In addition to wire cutters and voltmeters, it's now possible to pick up an infrared thermometer at Graybar. Personal protective equipment, such as face masks and shields, is available, along with cleaning supplies.

New products, she says, have created opportunities. "Like a lot of businesses, we are definitely thinking outside the box," she says.

Unchanged is Ridge's reliance on networking. "One thing I've always done in my career is networking," she says. "Not only do I enjoy it, but it's the key to successful business as well."

**NEW MEMBER PROFILE**



Toni Ridge at Graybar Electric in Greensboro, where she works in outside sales. In the background is Matt Stadler, counter sales.

The Greensboro location wasn't active in a local business organization when she was hired, Ridge says. She convinced managers that Graybar would benefit from a group with networking opportunities, and she was tasked with making the selection. Ridge chose GMA.

Ridge was able to attend only a few GMA events before the pandemic shutdown, but the warm atmosphere and free exchange of information impressed her. She especially liked the format of AM Center City Briefings, which often reveal news on construction proj-

ects in Greensboro.

"If I had to pick a favorite thing, other than the people," she says, "that would be it. I'm looking forward to doing those virtually, as well."

Toni Ridge  
Graybar.com  
(336) 412-6450

## Vics helped GMA transition to webinars, sees possibilities in challenges

Greensboro's own John Isner is a top-notch professional tennis player, but he still has a coach, right?

The same goes for golfers on the PGA Tour, says Jay Vics. Even the best players have coaches to help them stay on top of their game, mentally and physically.

Many small business owners operate in similar fashion, says

Vics, owner of JVI Mobile, a digital marketing agency. They have to be good at many things, but sometimes can use assistance on certain things, such as marketing in this digital age. That's where Vics comes in.

Small business

owners, he says, "need help. They need a coach to work with them and give them the tips and tricks."

Vics originally set up his business as a traditional agency. But as he designed websites and devised social media strategies for his clients, he realized another unmet need: Many clients really wanted to know how to do those things by themselves.

Vics, who has operated his home-based agency since 2015, saw an opportunity. He could become a digital media coach in addition to providing agency services. But as a one-person business, he could only serve so many clients in a given week.

**GMA PEOPLE**



Jay Vics of JVI Mobile as most clients see him: Online from his home office.

That led to his next revelation. Vics decided to create a website offering a range of tutorials and webinars where people hungry for information can get tips. Topics might include using Facebook Messenger to promote a business or targeting customers through geolocation marketing. The information,

often in the form of video conversations with clients, is free to access. An online scheduler allows a person to schedule a personal consultation with Vics. Vics set up his website with a unique internet suffix: howto.agency.

Vics was on track to present a program in March as part of GMA's

Digital Marketing Institute (DMI) series. Then the pandemic arrived, curtailing business and gatherings. DMI programs, which are free to employees of GMA member companies, usually are held in GMA's Community Room at the downtown Greensboro headquarters.

Vics suggested to

GMA staff that his DMI seminar transition from a classroom setting to a webinar.

"I said, 'Let me try this.' And it worked. Really, really well."

The pandemic pushed Vics' plans for online training into overdrive. He quickly developed videos with tips on successfully balancing home life and work life while working from home.

"I knew other people were going to struggle with that," he says.

The pandemic has created innumerable challenges for businesses. Vics' creative approach demonstrates that, even in a pandemic, challenges can also present opportunities.

JVI Mobile  
howto.agency  
910-233-4484

# Seen on South Elm

**G**reensboro's South Elm Street became an outdoor art gallery in the days following protests and Black Lives Matter demonstrations. A quiet Sunday in early June found people strolling the sidewalks and thinking about the messages.

Later on, as the panels started coming down, some were chosen to be preserved at the Greensboro Historical Museum, reminders that art can help heal a community.

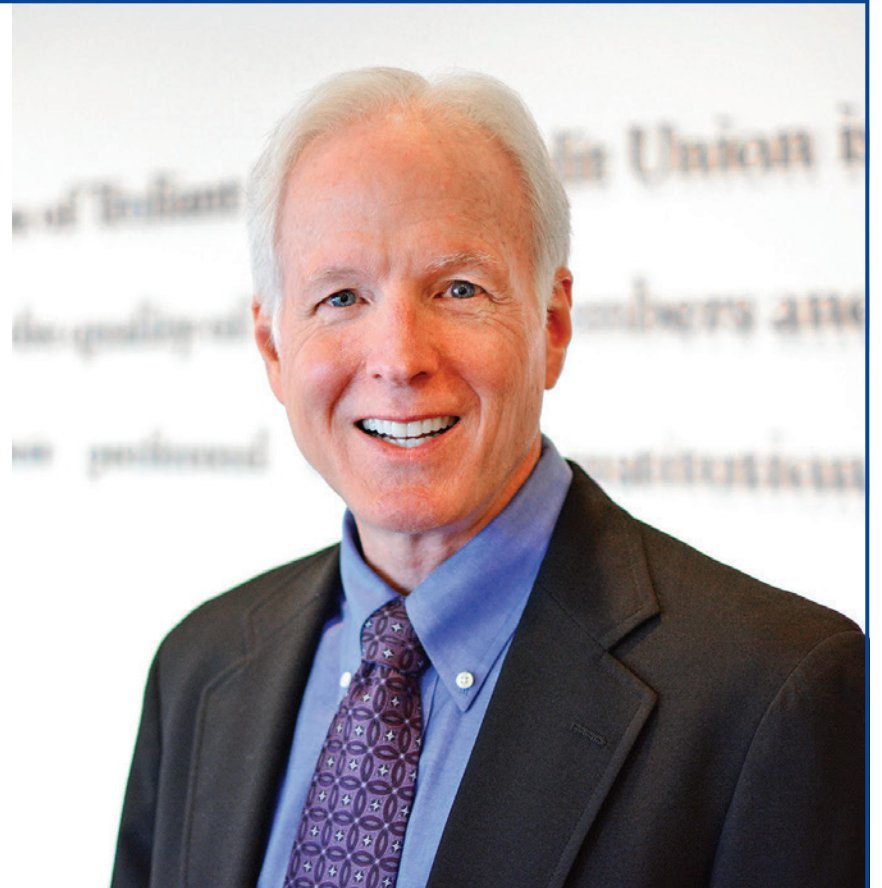


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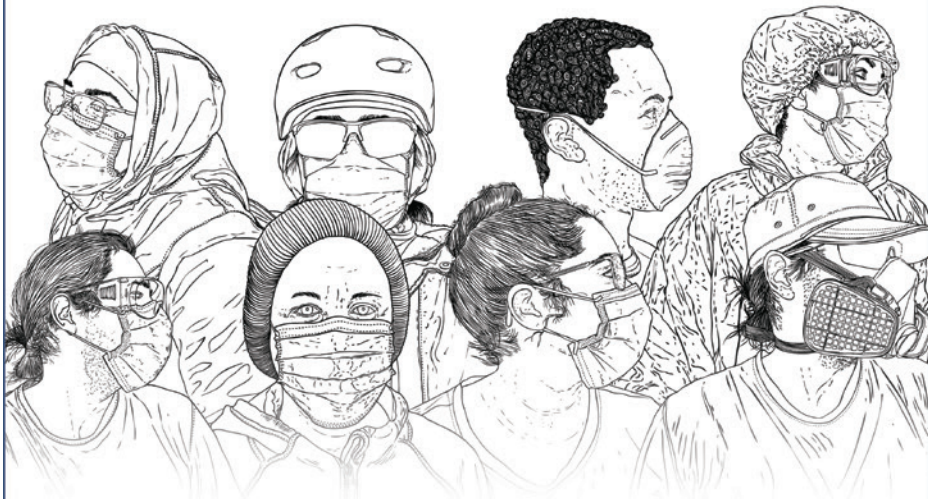
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