



# DIRECT FORUM

MARCH 2020

VOLUME 16 ISSUE 4

Direct Forum is a free email newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything!

**1. Living with Covid-19**

**2. Video of the month:  
The Long Wait  
(John Lewis, 2011)**

## Living with Covid-19

There is no denying that we are all living in fear right now as if someone has opened a Pandora's box. But even in the Greek myth of Pandora, the thing at the bottom of her box of woes was hope.

And that's the kind of message to relay right now!

These past few weeks have tested our resolve. Yet, during these dark days, we have also seen so many positive examples of the strength of the Canadian spirit – kind, generous and determined. Today, I want to focus on those who have been our rays of sunshine.

With this in mind this newsletter is nothing but some good news stories to cheer you up.

CONTINUES ...

# Toronto charity offers subsidized housing near hospitals for health-care workers



As hospitals prepare for a surge of COVID-19 patients, one Toronto non-profit is offering subsidized accommodation to health-care workers so they can avoid exposing their families to the illness. StayWell Charity, which ordinarily helps house patients who can't afford to relocate to major cities for treatment, is now offering their services to doctors, nurses and other front-line workers.



St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, has already earmarked one room for its team and is prepared to book more if needed.

StayWell has around 1,000 apartments and hotel rooms at its disposal that could potentially house health-care workers in major cities across Canada.

Steven Argyris, a director with the charity, said a few doctors are already staying in their furnished rooms so they can be closer to hospitals and avoid putting their families at risk of infection. "My wife is a physician and there's a lot of chatter where doctors are concerned about being on the front lines," added Argyris. "This would give them the comfort that they need."

The charity is connecting with major hospitals in the Toronto region and has reached out to municipal, provincial and federal levels of government to offer their services.

Currently many hotels aren't booking customers and Airbnb hosts may be unwilling to let high-risk people stay in their apartments.

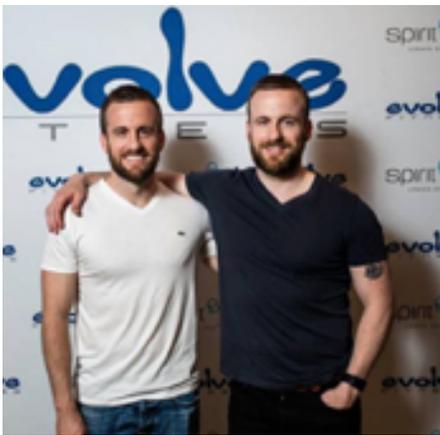
*This report by The Canadian Press was first published March 25, 2020*

CONTINUES ...

# Halifax's Evolve Fitness Starts Coronavirus Fundraiser For Other Small Businesses

**This is what paying it forward looks like in the age of a pandemic**

By Brian Trinh



After nearly a decade in business, brothers Mitchell and Matt Benvie decided to close the doors to

Evolve Fitness, a gym in Halifax's North End community.

They're one of many small businesses in Canada that have either had to lay off staff, issue pay cuts or outright close due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But before finally locking the doors, the owners told each client to take home one of their dumbbells. After all, just because the economy was feeling sluggish didn't mean gym members should have to feel the same. That idea quickly evolved into their 21-day fitness challenge.

The program works on a donation basis with a minimum \$5 entry. That fee gets you access to their various online workouts recorded via Zoom. All of the proceeds are then spent on gift cards to support other shops and services in Halifax once business returns to normal. The gift cards are then handed out as prizes to participants over the three weeks.

For Benvie, many of his clients are business owners themselves and have supported Evolve since day one. This is his way of paying it forward.

"I know so many people that are affected, like completely shut down without even the option of doing something we're able to do," Mitchell told HuffPost Canada. "I feel pretty fortunate with the online training option and everybody's home and everybody wants to stay fit. But it's hard for different types of business."

CONTINUES ...

# Grocery Stores Hold Seniors-Only Hours During Coronavirus Pandemic

**Some help for some of the most vulnerable.**

By Sherina Harris

Empty produce displays. No more pasta, canned soup, or bags of rice. And we all know about the toilet-paper hoarding.

As shoppers stock up supplies despite warnings there is no need to stockpile, a few Canadian grocery stores are reserving their morning hours for seniors to ensure they have access to food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kyle's No Frills store in Kitimat, B.C. received its deliveries on Sunday night, cleaned and sanitized the store overnight, and then opened early at 8 a.m. Monday for seniors only.

Older people are more at risk of becoming more seriously ill from COVID-19.

Store owner Kyle MacGillivray said he got the idea from reading about elderly people's increased risk of contracting COVID-19, combined with public concerns over shortages at grocery stores.

"I thought it'd be kind for the seniors to be able to come in," he told HuffPost Canada in a phone interview. "I thought I'd give the most vulnerable the first opportunity to get what they needed."



Photo: Martin Baudoin, Unsplash

Around 100 seniors showed up to shop, said MacGillivray, and there were a lot of thank-yous. Some seniors told him the event was exactly what they needed.

Older people are more at risk of becoming more seriously ill from COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, according to the World Health Organization.

"There's a certain demographic out there that is pretty scared," MacGillivray said. "So, I think it was a little bit of relief that they could come in and get the supplies they needed — and we had toilet paper."

MacGillivray said he will consider holding the event again, depending on community need as the virus continues to spread.

Sobeys High River in Alberta is also taking part in a similar initiative. The store will be open Tuesday from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. for seniors or people with immune deficiencies.

Shoppers Drug Mart and Loblaws stores are planning to open some stores early with dedicated hours for seniors and people living with disabilities to shop before the crowds, according to a note to customers by CEO Galen Weston on Monday.

CONTINUES ...

# Coronavirus Kindness: Canadians Are Stepping Up To Help Their Neighbours

**Community groups are springing up around the country to help.**

By Maija Kappler

**Mr. Rogers was right:** In any situation, no matter how dire, people will try to help.

As the rates of coronavirus continue to surge, many Canadians are gripped with panic. But across the country, there are people who are jumping into action to help wherever they can.

For Mohamed Tarrabin, who manages a jewelry store in Fort McMurray, Alta., the choice to help came last week, when local food banks made the announcement that they were almost out of supplies. People had already started panic-shopping, taking up most of the local supply of non-perishables and toilet paper, leaving little for the community's most vulnerable, who rely on food banks.

So Tarrabin's store, Prestige Jewellery, started offering a promotion, offering free earrings to anyone who dropped off a food donation. It didn't take long for the idea to take off.

"My office, the back room, the shelves of my jewelry store are all filled with food now," he told HuffPost Canada. As of this past weekend, the jewelry store is operating as something of an ad-hoc emergency response centre, where people are dropping off supplies or picking up what they need. The same is true of the store's Edmonton location, he said.

"Showcases are all full with food," he said. "It's unreal."



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# Free Little Libraries Transform Into Mini Food Banks To Combat COVID-19

Members are leaving goods for strangers as the coronavirus makes in-demand items scarce.

By Brian Trinh



Members of the Free Little Library program are no stranger to the goodwill of others. The program is designed around a community of people donating books for others to take and return as they see fit.

Now, given the scarcity of some in-demand items due to the COVID-10 pandemic, members are now converting the pop-up bookstores into pantries to help others.



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# Seneca donates urgently needed supplies to local hospitals

A few departments at Seneca have rounded up ventilators and unused surgical gowns, N95 respirator masks, hand sanitizers, wipes and other cleaning supplies for local hospitals in Toronto and York Region.

The equipment, normally used by students and professors in the Faculty of Applied Arts & Health Sciences, Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering Technology and Faculty of Continuing Education & Training, is much needed for front-line health-care workers treating and testing for COVID-19.



*From left: Custodial staff Sophie Huang and security guards Ilya Slobodkin and Sonali Sonali at King Campus help move boxes of personal protective equipment and disinfection supplies donated to Southlake Regional Health Centre. (Photo: submitted)*

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I have never been prouder to be a professor at Seneca College, to be a Canadian and equally and most importantly to be a small part of the charitable organization.

Together, we'll get through this.

Stay safe,

Billy Sharma

## **Video of the month: The Long Wait (John Lewis, 2011)**



Here's an oldie, but a goodie.

The year that made John Lewis' name as the best in Christmas advertising, 2011, was the first time that the retailer used its ad spot to tell a story.

Set to a slow moving song called "Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want" by The Smiths, the ad does not even overtly feature any John Lewis products.

**Enjoy:**

Here's the link: [https://youtu.be/iET\\_eI438Fc](https://youtu.be/iET_eI438Fc)

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