

Printer displays a new skill

Sheahan now making face shields too **BY MARY MACDONALD** | MacDonald@PBN.com

FOR THREE GENERATIONS, Sheahan Printing Corp. has focused on the commercial printing needs of its business and nonprofit customers, everything from rack cards and direct mail to brochures and newsletters.

In March, the business was disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, but it realigned. Now Sheahan Printing is as likely to be manufacturing face shields for health care workers, as it is playbills and marketing products for its core customers.

Kevin Sheahan, the company's vice president, said in March that the safety and security director of Woonsocket-based Landmark Medical Center approached him with a sample of a plastic face shield. The medical center had had a disruption in its supply chain for the critical shields, which are worn over the faces of health care employees who work directly with COVID-19 patients.

"We're not a manufacturer of products like this. We're a printing facility," Sheahan said. "But they approached us with a sample, and we thought that was something we could produce."

In fact, a month later, the printing company has since produced more than 13,000 shields. It now has orders for 36,000, from Landmark, as well as another hospital group that includes Roger Williams Medical Center in Providence and Our Lady of Fatima Hospital in North Providence, Sheahan said.

To make the face shields, Sheahan Printing has ordered a thin and flexible plastic acetate in sheets, then is

die-cutting it into the necessary shape. Employees then attach a foam pad that rests against the wearer's forehead and secure it with a strap that goes around the head. To do all of this required the stitching and die-cutting machines that Sheahan already had, but the company has also purchased more stitching machines.

In addition to making the face shields at a pace of about 1,000 a day, Sheahan continues to prepare printing work for its core customers. At any point, the company's employees can be working on either of the divisions.

Initially, when the printing company's customers canceled events and facilities, and the work stopped on tra-

ditional printing, Sheahan had to lay off several workers. The work on the health care product has allowed the business to recall everyone.

No longer solely a printing company, the adaptation has required Kevin Sheahan and his brother, David, who is company president, to plan and communicate multiple times a day.

"Our initial intent was to supply Landmark with what they needed," Kevin Sheahan said. "It grew into a larger need [that] we want to make sure we can support. I also need to make sure I'm able to fulfill my core customers' printing needs. There's a balance."

His employees are adapting as well to the custom work required of printing and design, as well as the manufacturing needs. Everyone wants to be working, whatever the end product.

"They are flexible and awesome to work with," Kevin Sheahan said. "My staff doesn't want to be at home. They'd rather be here, working." ■



DIVERSIFIED: Kevin Sheahan, left, and David Sheahan are the owners of Sheahan Printing in Woonsocket, a multigenerational, family-owned printing company that has transitioned to making face shields. PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

OWNERS: Kevin and David Sheahan

TYPE OF BUSINESS: Commercial printing company

LOCATION: 1 Front St., Woonsocket

EMPLOYEES: Seven

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 1923

ANNUAL SALES: WND