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## **South Alabama manufacturing industry rallies to support local health care amid COVID-19 pandemic**

**For Immediate Release  
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**Mobile, Ala.** – A team of South Alabama’s largest industrial employers have adjusted manufacturing efforts from delivering global goods to producing local medical supplies amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global manufacturing companies Austal USA, Airbus, and AM/NS Calvert, all with operations in Mobile, Ala., diverted part of their core manufacturing operations to produce medical supplies for local hospitals, health care centers, and first responders.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce leadership pulled the area's largest manufacturing employers together, along with the University of South Alabama, on a weekly conference call where they could check in and share best practices – a move that established the industry consortium.

The University of South Alabama's Assistant Vice President for Research Mathew Reichert, Ph.D. was the technical mastermind behind the effort to use three dimensional printers to create personal protective equipment (PPE) aimed at helping avoid a shortage of medical equipment as the state prepared for the wave of cases.

Austal USA, the fifth largest shipbuilder in the U.S., builds the Independence-variant Littoral Combat Ship and Expeditionary Fast Transport ship for the U.S. Navy. The company turned their 3D printers into manufacturing centers to produce hundreds of surgical mask tension relief straps and re-usable medical masks for local hospitals, including the University of South Alabama Health centers.

Airbus, the world’s largest aerospace manufacturer, assembles the popular A320 and A220 aircraft in Mobile, Ala. The company shifted 3D printing efforts, and increased its ability by partnering with the University of South Alabama, Coastal Community College, community volunteers, and Flight Works Alabama, to produce more than 500 re-usable face masks and hundreds of tension relief straps.

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AM/NS Calvert, recognized as one of the most advanced steel finishing facilities in the world and highly complementary to ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel Corporation's existing portfolio of world-class assets, provided 500 face shields and 3D printed tension relief straps for local doctors, nurses and other medical professionals.

Wendy Bedsole, executive director of the Medical Society of Mobile County, spearheads community efforts that support the regional health care community and made a call out to industry in the early stages of the pandemic.

"It was clear our local health care facilities and professionals were about to encounter an unprecedented medical event," Bedsole said. "As the hospitals and health care centers were taking inventory and preparing their facilities, a primary need was face masks and shields. We reached out to our business community to ask for any excess equipment. The response was overwhelming.

"Through the efforts of companies like Austal, Airbus, AM/NS Calvert, the Mobile Area Chamber, and more, we were able to address the needs of not only our local hospitals, but hundreds of other local health care providers desperately in need of supplies," Bedsole said.

Vice President of Economic Development at the Mobile Area Chamber, David Rodgers, said the support and response of our business community "has been terrific, from our largest manufacturers down to small business. As the economy continues to reopen, we will continue to be in tune with what our health care workers tell us they need."

On its website, the Chamber continues to update its list of member businesses that are providing personal protective equipment, face coverings and products to help keep things clean and area employees healthy. They encourage additional businesses that would like to help to email [SBAinfo@MobileChamber.com](mailto:SBAinfo@MobileChamber.com).

Bedsole gives sound advice to the community going forward. "We encourage the citizens of Mobile to remain vigilant as our medical care system continues to provide excellent care; companies can continue to operate; and we can all contribute to the full recovery of our great city."

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CONTACTS:

Wendy Bedsole  
Executive Director, Medical Society of Mobile County  
(251) 476-9494 | [WBedsole@MSOMC.org](mailto:WBedsole@MSOMC.org)

Craig Savage  
Director, Communications & External Affairs | Austal USA  
(251) 445-5185 | [Craig.Savage@AustalUSA.com](mailto:Craig.Savage@AustalUSA.com)

Kristi Tucker  
Director, Communications | Airbus  
(251) 434-7456 | [Kristi.Tucker@Airbus.com](mailto:Kristi.Tucker@Airbus.com)

Brooke Dolbare  
Communications Manager | AM/NS Calvert  
(251) 289-4185 | [Brooke.Dolbare@ArcelorMittal.com](mailto:Brooke.Dolbare@ArcelorMittal.com)

Susan Rak-Blanchard  
Director, Communications & Marketing | Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce  
(251) 431-8641 | [Susan@MobileChamber.com](mailto:Susan@MobileChamber.com)

Lance Crawford  
Director of Media Relations | University of South Alabama  
(251) 460-7682 | [Lance.Crawford@SouthAlabama.edu](mailto:Lance.Crawford@SouthAlabama.edu)