

Washington, DC, gets its first coronavirus pop-up shop

March 6 2020, by Ashraf Khalil



Adilisha Patrom, owner of a co-working and event space next to Gallaudet University, organizes face masks, hand sanitizer and other supplies inside her pop up shop on Thursday, March 5, 2020, in Washington. Inside her storefront, she displays different face mask models and hand sanitizer bottles alongside information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (AP Photo/Nathan Ellgren)

The nation's capital has pop up shops for food and drink, even marijuana. And now, coronavirus prevention supplies.

As local stores sell out of masks and hand [sanitizer](#), Adilisha Patrom, owner of a co-working and event space next to Gallaudet University, saw an opportunity and jumped on it.

Inside, her storefront, different models of face masks and [hand sanitizer](#) bottles in various sizes are displayed along a stack of information sheets from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. On Thursday, one man stopped by, asked how much the masks cost and then left.

A Florida native who came to Washington to attend Howard University, Patrom, 29, sells her masks for between \$5 and \$20, depending on the model. She also puts together prevention kits with masks, surgical gloves and sanitizer, which sell for \$20 to \$30.

The high-end N95 masks are priced at about twice what they sell for on Amazon. But Patrom says her goal isn't to get rich. Rather, she sees the shop as a service to the community and says discounts are available to those in need and to senior citizens, who are most vulnerable to the virus.

"I just feel so blessed to HAVE, just to have the ability," to stock up on supplies, she said.

The idea started with a health crisis in her own family; Patrom's father was diagnosed with a blood cancer in November. With her father's [immune system](#) weakened by ongoing chemotherapy treatments, Patrom bought boxes of N95 facemasks, which are considered superior to the basic surgical masks.

Both she and her father wear the [masks](#) routinely when going to [grocery store](#) or elsewhere around town.

As the global coronavirus death toll increased and the virus began making inroads in the U.S., Patrom decided to stock up on hand sanitizers and open her shop. So far, business has been slow. Patrom said she has only made three sales since opening early this week. The majority of her visitors, she says, are just seeking basic information and walking away with a CDC fact sheet.

"I think people haven't started freaking out yet," she said. "A lot of people are just waiting for that first (local case)."

Asked what she thought would happen the day after the first coronavirus case is identified in the nation's capital, Patrom shuddered and said, "There will be a line down the block."

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