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Jonti-Craft Makes a Unique COVID-19 Pandemic Contribution

What can an educational furniture manufacturer do to supply much-needed healthcare equipment during the current COVID-19 crisis? The team at Jonti-Craft has turned on a way to help. Located in the small town of Wabasso, MN, Jonti-Craft has been in business for more than 40 years and during that time the company's focus has been mainly on schools and daycare facilities. But they produce more than just storage units, desk and lockers for educational environments. They also produce a line of portable sinks called the Clean Hands Helper which are designed to deliver hot, running water without the use of plumbing. And that innovative solution has already started to make an impact during the current national challenge.

Nick Schwarz, Jonti-Craft's COO explained, "While most in our industry know us as the leading provider of children's furniture for schools and daycares, we're seeing rapidly growing demand from the healthcare sector for our Clean Hands Helper portable sinks and other products. We added portable sink solutions to our product line in 2010, in response to a growing demand for hand washing in rooms without plumbing. Running water and sewer lines through existing structures was not always possible, and this product helped many of those schools and daycares meet standards and achieve certification requirements associated with sanitation and hand washing."

The Centers for Disease Control strongly recommends frequent and thorough handwashing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. With rapid virus spread, many large buildings have been converted to temporary triage centers. These facilities are grappling with the exact same obstacles noted by Jonti-Craft COO, Nick Schwarz. Convention centers, shuttered prisons, and even Naval ships were never designed to accommodate the plumbing requirements for multiple handwashing stations. That's where Jonti-Craft's line of portable sinks can play a significant role.

Jonti-Craft Clean Hands Helper Portable Sinks go wherever frequent hand washing is a priority, and without any plumbing required. They are available in two heights—one for children and one for adults—and in two sink options, a one-piece molded plastic sink or a stainless-steel sink insert. These mobile sinks meet licensing requirements and give users the flexibility of moving them quickly to areas of need. Plus, the on-demand water heater warms water to a safe 40°F above room temperature. More importantly, these sinks arrive needing only the faucets and handles attached and water filled. Then users simply plug them in and flip the switch. That's an important factor as hospitals and triage centers are opening quickly and need to be ready almost immediately.

Jonti-Craft's Director of Sales, Matt Hinkle, states, "At the start of March 2020 we anticipated an increase of 2-3 times our average sales of portable sinks. By the end of the month, the demand was 10 times greater. Adding to the urgency, customers are asking for immediate shipment." Hinkle notes that historically the company has never been asked to provide products related to a disaster or crisis, saying, "We needed to look outside of the box to scale quickly while maintaining manufacturing best-practices. We worked even more closely and collaboratively with customers to evaluate every possible solution. For example, our production team worked with customers to develop a re-configured shipping schedule so that we could build and ship smaller batches of sinks versus waiting until the entire order was ready. This method allowed us to ship partial orders faster so facilities could start using them right away."

During the week of March 30th, Jonti-Craft shipped over 20 sinks to New York City's Javits Center to help the state's critical fight against COVID-19. The Javits Center was initially intended to serve only non-coronavirus patients but was repurposed on April 6th to accept COVID-19 patients due to demand. The 2.1-million-square-foot convention center was converted into a makeshift hospital by the US military in just five days. And while New York has become the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, needs are surging in other areas across the country. In recent days, the company has also supplied portable sinks to cities and towns alike including New York



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Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, Children's Minnesota in Minneapolis, McGuire Veterans Hospital in Richmond, VA, Michigan Institute of Neurological Disorders in Kentwood, MI, HOAG Hospital in Newport Beach, CA, VCU Health Systems in Richmond, MN, St. Francis Hospital in Greenville, SC and Pagosa Springs Medical Center in Pagosa Springs, CO. In addition, Jonti-Craft has provided portable sinks to several military bases as well as Illumina Corporation, a biotech company that works with disease control laboratories to support testing and research for COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

COO Nick Schwarz took note of some positive side effects, saying "Our employees take great pride in meeting this challenge – and it gives us an even greater sense of purpose knowing that our products are helping fight the pandemic. We are redoubling our efforts to make sure that we can provide portable sinks to pop-up hospitals anywhere they are needed." Jonti-Craft has rearranged production lines and trained new operators to handle increased demand. Instead of creating a handful of sinks a day, they can now produce hundreds per month.

"It is a great feeling knowing that we are helping out during the COVID-19 crisis to produce a high-quality product for the situation," says Steve Hay, the primary builder of the portable sinks. "Our employees are stepping up and are ready and willing to take on the challenge we face. People from all areas of Jonti-Craft are pitching in during this challenging time."

Not only is Jonti-Craft working to help areas impacted COVID-19, but the company is taking many precautions to make sure their employees stay healthy and its facilities are kept clean and safe. While Minnesota is currently under a Stay-Home Governor's Executive Order, Jonti-Craft is an essential business and is continuing to stay in production during this challenging time. The company is following guidelines set by the State of MN and the CDC and has initiated several health and safety operational changes. Some of these changes include having employees who can work from home to do so, holding virtual meetings instead of in-person meetings, staggering break and lunch times to reduce the number people in a shared space, as well as continuing to use healthy hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Along with taking these precautions, the company is recognizing the hard work of employees with an extra dose of understanding. Because many of the company's staff have family members who are unable to work during this difficult time, Jonti-Craft has increased workers' pay during the Governor's Executive Order.

To find out more about the Jonti-Craft Clean Hands Helper Portable sinks visit www.jonti-craft.com/sinks or call 507.342.5169.



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Image Caption: A Jonti-Craft employee, Steve Hay, shown assembling a Jonti-Craft® Clean Hands Helper Portable Sink to fulfill an order.



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Image Caption: Jonti-Craft® Clean Hands Helper portable sink provides hand-washing access, even in rooms or settings where no plumbing is available – such as in this local daycare.



Image Caption: Handwashing access is on the way as Jonti-Craft ships portable sinks across the nation.



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Image Caption: A Jonti-Craft employee preparing a Jonti-Craft® Clean Hands Helper Portable Sink for delivery.