The Operation COVID-19 Defense Fund can be called a success.

Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital would heartily agree. The Greenport hospital received donated proceeds from the fund July 1. SBELIH said the donated funds will be used to acquire additional resources to support institution-wide infection prevention efforts, including COVID-19 testing equipment and ultraviolet cleaning equipment.

A GoFundMe campaign began earlier this year when a collaboration of several local businessmen spearheaded a project to produce face shields for hospitals, first responders and community outreach volunteers. “We were hoping to just raise enough money to cover the cost of materials,” Jamie Mills, president of William J. Mills & Co. in Greenport, recalled in a phone interview Tuesday.

Well, things went beyond that. An original goal of $10,000 was surpassed in a single day. A Phase II goal of $25,000 was set. That was surpassed as well.

“We raised $28,000 in three days,” Richard Vandenburgh, co-founder of Greenport Harbor Brewing Company along with John Leigey, said in April, according to an SBELIH press release. “We’ve raised what we anticipated we would need to fund approximately 5,000 units; any excess funds will be turned over to the hospital to purchase equipment, beds, or whatever is needed.”

The defense fund organizers created a total of 8,050 face shields for local essential workers and over $47,000 from 280-plus donors has been raised to date, according to the hospital. Mr. Mills said the defense fund donated $25,000 to the hospital.

“We were extremely gratified at the level of participation of donors and appreciation for some local companies trying to fight this insidious disease,” Mr. Mills said. “My heart is glowing.”

Among those involved in the defense fund’s work are Bob and William Mills of William J. Mills & Co., the sailmaking firm that developed and produced the face shields; Mark Miller, former owner of Miller Environmental; and Bob Gammon, co-owner of Woodside Orchards in Jamesport and co-lead advisor for the Southold/Greenport robotics team.

Jamie Mills said a small army of volunteers “were the ones that really made it happen. Without them, we would never have been able to accomplish what we did.”

A full-page ad in The Suffolk Times in April listed the names of 79 volunteers.

“The original plan was we were going to make 3,000 masks, and the demand just kept growing and by the time we hit 3,000, we were on a roll,” Jamie Mills said. He added, “By the time we put together the last thousand masks, excluding the cutting time of the glass and the Velcro, we were building one mask every eight seconds.”

“We are so grateful for our community’s extraordinary efforts to help us sustain our hospital’s mission to serve the North Fork and Shelter Island,” Paul Romanelli, chairman of the ELIH Foundation Board, said in a statement. “To the Brewery, the Mills family, Mr. Miller, Mr. Gammon, and the donors who have generously supported this initiative: thank you for standing with us.”

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Thank you to University, Stony Brook, Brook Eastern Long, Stony Brook, Aldo’s Coffee, Company, Ammirati’s Love Lane, Andy’s Restaurant, At Home Services, Independent Living, Bach Grazina, End Orthodontics, Beds & Borders, Bianchi Davis Greenhouses, Brightview Landscape, CJ Van Bourgondien Greenhouses, Coalition of Students Against Coronavirus, Control Solutions Inc, Duggal Visual Solutions, East End Group, Essex Financial, Flavour Fields, The Baby J’s, Heron Suites, Alex and Chris Grover from 12M, The Giving Room, Goldberg’s Bagels, Greenport High School, Jay W. Guild Greenhouse, Jernick Moving and Storage, Kate’s Cheese Company, La Capricciosa, Riverhead Lowe’s, Matchbox Distilling Company, Mattituck Lions Club, Oyster Ponds Faculty Association, Oysterponds School District, North Fork Quilters Guild, Rotary Club of Southold, Rotary Club of Riverhead, Solado USA, Schumacher Fabrics, Southold Pharmacy, Sterlington Deli, TC Diamond Arts, Wendy’s Deli and everyone who has continuously supported us during this time.

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