



# MSI Leverages Import Connections to Aid Community

## Provides Support, Funds To Health, Frontline Workers

■ By KARI HAMANAKA

Knowing how to source and import materials from all around the world is a good skill to have in the middle of a pandemic.

Just ask Orange-based building materials distributor **M S International Inc.**, which used its resources to help bring masks and other medical supplies to first responders and frontline workers.

That included more than 300,000 face masks and shields worth about \$90,000 for **Providence St. Joseph Hospital** in Orange at the height of the pandemic. The company also worked with nonprofits to administer the vaccine.

“We leveraged our position as one of the largest importers of goods into the U.S. to import medical supplies, specifically masks, which in 2020 they were difficult to get,” said MSI Vice President of HR **Chris Courneen**.

Giving continued into 2021; MSI reported cash donations within OC totaling more than \$400,000, with the company focused on initiatives where it could provide assistance with shelter, food, education and technology.

Nearly that amount was also provided via way of in-kind donations during the course of the year.

While the company helped with medical supplies and feeding first responders, it’s also provided Chromebooks and iPads to more than 500 employees in OC, 100 iPads to the **Boys & Girls Club** and, beginning in April, there have been scholarships for high school seniors at **Tustin Public Schools Foundation**.

### Employee Involvement

The company’s employee matching program during the pandemic led to a major push to raise funds across the communities MSI employees reside to help get a number of students online.

“That was another instance where MSI as a



**MSI partnered with Orange Senior Center to donate 100 refurbished iPads to adults 50 and older during the pandemic**

company and the employees came together, with a focus on tech and education. The CEO and founder inspired the employees to come together,” said **Bhavik Muni**, portfolio manager of grantmaking at the company.

Muni works with the company’s founders, **Manu Shah** and **Rika Shah**, along with Courneen, on identifying various initiatives for MSI to get involved.

Courneen said where MSI chooses to donate goes back to the story of the company’s founders, who came to the U.S. in the 1970s from India for their education.

“Having that experience moving to the U.S., [and] education allowed Manu and Rika to become entrepreneurs and start a successful business. Creating jobs and opportunities became their life’s mission,” Courneen said.

MSI is one of OC’s largest private companies with over \$2 billion in annual revenue; it imports natural stones from dozens of countries to serve a customer base of thousands of retailers, distributors and fabricators that use its building materials.

### Community Support

Another element of giving back to the community “is inherently caring for the communities that have cared for them and supporting the communities that have supported MSI,” Courneen said.

“It’s just the morally right thing to do and that runs strong through the core veins of who



**MSI’s Charitable Trust ‘aims to improve and strengthen the health, education, and wellness of communities we live and work in,’ company says**

the organization is at its foundational level. I think there is also this idea of not just incremental, small change, but seeking out opportunities to help with very large change and looking for opportunities to make very big impacts.”

Including and encouraging employees is a part of that, and done through a number of internal programs.

MSI will match dollar for dollar any monies donated by employees to a non-profit. More recently, employees who receive bonuses can elect to funnel some of that money to a charitable organization, with the company also offering a match. That idea in particular came from an MSI worker. There’s also an annual toy drive. An internal intranet site helps keep employees across the offices engaged and informed.

“We encourage employees to get involved and how we do that is either by offering financial support from the company, or letting them do this on company time,” Courneen said. ■

### M S International Inc. MSI

- **BUSINESS:** flooring, wall, countertop distributor
- **HEADQUARTERS:** Orange
- **FOUNDED:** 1975
- **CO-FOUNDER/CEO:** Manu Shah
- **OC/COMPANYWIDE EMPLOYEES:** 550/2,800
- **REVENUE:** \$2B+
- **NOTABLE:** donated more than \$700K this year to various groups within OC