

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tri-State Entertainment Leaders Retool Production Industry to Combat COVID-19

03/23/20, New York City, NY -- In response to emergency demand for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), entertainment industry leaders are collectively organizing to retool their infrastructure and labor force to meet the demand. IATSE Local 600 cinematographer and commercials producer Nicco Quinto is taking charge to facilitate communications with established local leaders as well as emerging leadership from all verticals of the tri-state entertainment industry.

At the heart of the response is a newly formed organization: Film & Entertainment Emergency Logistics or FEEL (www.feelusa.org, site may not be up yet). FEEL's mission is to establish and coordinate a supply chain of materials, labor, and logistics using existing relationships and retooling infrastructure of the film and entertainment industries for emergency relief and fabrication.

"Entertainment workers are highly skilled laborers, fabricators, and creative professionals used to working 12-14 hour days, under stress and in all conditions." Nicco Quinto said. "Our greatest asset is our supply of entertainment leaders such as producers and production managers, the women and men who regularly coordinate productions of 50-500 people with only a handful of personnel. They routinely respond to last-minute changes, as well as sourcing/fabrication with amazing speed and efficiency.", he continued.

Nicco's epiphony to start the organization happened late Friday, when he saw his wife Christa Brunks, a freelance production designer, in their Astoria apartment fabricating "surgical shields", a needed expendable PPE.

"I had a flashback of my mother sitting at our kitchen table coordinating dump trucks for the 9/11 emergency cleanup. It suddenly clicked what was happening and what I needed to do."

He quickly penned an open letter pleading for other film industry leaders and workers to unify their efforts. Late into the night, he recorded his message and broadcast it on social media (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCSxsinJsPM>). Within hours, leaders and newly forming organizations reached out. He was right; independent leaders were emerging, but needed a central command for logistics and communications.

One such leader, "The Lions Share NYC" (www.thelionssharenyc.com), a newly formed organization in response to COVID-19 outbreak, headed by Anastasia Page, an NYU Graduate student at the Silver School of Social work; is working to create partnerships between medical personnel in need and volunteer/local organizations looking to fulfill those needs. How is the organization doing this: by crafting an advisory board of qualified specialists in the areas of medicine and science, to oversee guidelines and safety standards output by The Lions Share NYC; and putting a team of researchers and project managers together, focusing efforts to reduce transmission/risk for frontline medical personnel as well as the individuals, locals, and organizations interested in donating.

One of the large aims of the organization is tracking regulatory compliance, which is difficult for things such as "surgical shields" which don't fall under one master specification. The CDC and FDA do not have a universally approved specification and each hospital has their own individual specification/preference. Anastasia and her organization are working to tirelessly to respond to the growing needs related to safety, connections being

linked to the proper sites, and provide project management support to organizations like FEEL, the Skilled Laborers Brigade, and emergency response organizations from any industry that should arise in the wake of the pandemic.

Another partner is “The Skilled Laborers Brigade”, co-chaired by Alexandra Engelson (IATSE USA 829 Member), Shannon O’Hara (IATSE 764 Member), and Rachel Kibbe (Director of Fashion Partnerships at Retrievr), is a collective of over 400 entertainment, fashion, and garment industry tailors and fabricators with the ability to retool their shops and equipment for emergency production of medical garments.”

“While there are so many people struggling to put food on their table, it truly shows how generous and caring these creators are; who are willing to put their limited resources and time to help those on the front lines. The outpour of volunteers has been remarkable!” said Alexandra.

In New York Governor Andrew Cuomo’s morning address Monday, he stated that he is trying to “close the valve”, referring to restricting commerce, but cautioned against leaving the valve closed for too long as it would “starve our economy”.

Nicco finished with - “Our secondary goal is to convert entertainment workers, who are now almost universally unemployed as they are both “non-essential” and work in large groups, back into the labor force as “essential workers” to help stimulate the Tri-States’ starving economy and provide our workers on the front lines with much needed support. While the need today is manufacturing PPE, we don’t know what the responders will need tomorrow and we want to have this organization at the ready for all emergency responses for COVID-19 and beyond.”

CONTACT INFORMATION

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