



Mural detail, Elm & MLK Blvd., Greensboro

## Companies pivot, reposition, adapt to conducting business in pandemic



**Matthews Specialty Vehicles:** Cheyne Rauber, vice president and general manager of Matthews Specialty Vehicles, and Eddie Gafford, general manager of Matthews Mobile Media, with a COVID-19 Rapid Testing Vehicle. The customized vans are in demand by rural healthcare organizations.

**Apple Rock Displays:** Owner Eric Burg holds acrylic material that is part of a protective barrier made and sold by the company. The clear acrylic material is covered with a protective blue film. Story, page 6.



The COVID-19 pandemic has left no business unaffected. Every enterprise has been challenged, and the detrimental effects have been widespread and even fatal. Some businesses, however, have responded creatively to persevere in this once-in-a-lifetime economic crisis. Here's a look at three GMA member companies that acted quickly for good results.

### Matthews Specialty Vehicles

Matthews Specialty Vehicles (MSV) for years has produced custom-outfitted vans and buses for a variety of applications, including healthcare. The company has expertise in building vehicles that serve as bloodmobiles, mobile dental clinics, mammography units, and behavioral therapy clinics.

The arrival of COVID-19 prompted MSV to consider how it might adapt its experience to help address the pandemic, says Cheyne Rauber, vice president and general manager. Testing for the disease is a huge need, especially in areas without access to large healthcare organizations.

MSV, working on a hunch instead of market research, outfitted a 24-foot Mercedes-

Benz Sprinter van (one of the company's standard platforms) as a COVID-19 testing vehicle. The van provides technicians with space to collect, organize and preserve testing samples as well as patient data. But a patient never enters the vehicle.

MSV devised a hatch that opens to allow interaction between the health professional and an individual. A touchless thermal monitor takes the person's temperature. The hatch allows for swabs or other testing procedures to be conducted.

Rauber says he and a colleague took the prototype on the road in May to show to existing customers. The reception was strong. A five-county healthcare organiza-

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*Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.*



### Salute to firefighters

Mark Podolle of Wireless Ventures (right) was among GMA volunteers who delivered meals to firefighters throughout Greensboro and High Point on September 11. These firefighters are at Greensboro Station 59 on Reedy Fork Parkway. The annual event commemorates sacrifices made by firefighters and others on Sept. 11, 2001. More photos, page 2.

# GMA serves up meals for firefighter appreciation on September 11



GMA staffer Sharon Smith poses with firefighters at High Point Station 2. Assistant Chief Brian Evans is at right.



GMA volunteers Tori Baker of BB&T (now Truist) and Ken Melton of Practical HR Solutions.



GMA volunteers Alison Huber of T-Mobile (right) and Scott Elkins of M7 Technology Solutions (second from left) at Greensboro Fire Station 2.



GMA volunteer Tori Baker at Greensboro Station 53 on Willow Road.



GMA provided Chick-fil-A meals to all High Point firefighters.



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The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.

## Here's lookin' at you, Greensboro

A new mural at the corner of South Elm Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard celebrates, naturally, much about the city's downtown. Greensboro artist Gina Franco created the mural in early September. Her murals can be found throughout the city as well as throughout the Southeastern United States. The mural measures about 14 by 30 feet. Funding was provided by Downtown Greensboro, Inc., with additional support from the Retail Alliance of Downtown.



# Tools for your toolbox: Grow sales during the pandemic

BY ADRIENNE CREGAR JANDLER

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and shelter-in-place have been with us for a half year now; what were anticipated to be short-term business changes clearly are not.

Customer behavior has changed significantly, and it is predicted that the changes are here to stay. For many industries, this has driven business toward the internet, e-commerce, and shifting to provide services online.

That people are home working, and online for major parts of the day and night, impacts their expectations for doing business, need for immediacy, and level (and availability) of customer service. Here are



Jandler

six ways to better engage and sell to prospects during the pandemic.

### Expand options

When times are tight, providing more options for payment and rewards make a difference. Companies like Affirm and PayBright enable you to offer monthly payment options while receiving your funds up front, along with options for loyalty and gift programs. Services like these can be easily integrated into your e-commerce checkout process.

### Provide on-demand access

For many – especially those with children at home – the business day extends well into the night. Adjust the availability of your pre-sales content and processes to provide as much on-demand access as possible.

Consider adding ebooks, PDF versions of product and service brochures, and frequently asked questions



to your website so that prospects don't have to call with a request or speak with a rep. While generating a phone call may have previously been your intent, accommodating the immediate information needs of the client outside of business hours now is key.

Write blog posts that detail how your products or services compare with those of the competition. Any information you can provide helps the buyer better consider your services and understand key differentiators that should factor in decision-making.

Set up online booking for pre-sales consultations.

Online booking isn't just for appointment-based businesses like medical groups and salons; consultants and

any B2B company that begins the sales process with an initial meeting can benefit.

### Automate what you can

From chatbots to automated email marketing and confirmations, there are a wide range of automated services available to streamline your marketing and customer service efforts.

### Leverage video

Businesses that offer high-ticket items, complex products, or provide a personalized product or service, can host consultations, virtual showrooms, and demos over video. Whether streamed live or pre-recorded, clips are effective and easy to share.

Video email is great for reaching out in a way that captures attention and generally has a higher response rate.

Service-based businesses that depend on close contact with clients can effectively

use video conferencing (like Zoom) to service their clients' needs and keep business running.

### Utilize retargeting

Retargeting enables you to remind prospects about your products and services when they leave your website without a purchase by showing them relevant ads when they visit other sites. It's a great and inexpensive way to re-engage previous website visitors and close sales.

### Use your CRM and email

Email marketing is one of the lowest-cost and highest-return digital channels. Use it to re-engage existing customers and to reach out to prior prospects who may not have used your services to date.

Adrienne Cregar Jandler is president of Atlantic Webworks.

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## FirstPoint's Noel to lead Association Executives



Jerel Noel

**J**erel Noel, a senior account manager with FirstPoint Management Resources in Raleigh, is the new president of Association Executives of North Carolina. He will serve a one-year term ending next August.

AENC promotes professional development and networking among association management professionals.

He is a graduate of the University of Alabama and a Certified Association Executive.

Noel joined FirstPoint in 2000 and has served in several association management capacities during his tenure. He currently serves as execu-

tive director of Cardiovascular Credentialing International, one of FirstPoint's longtime client organizations.

Mark Prince, CEO of FirstPoint, Inc., praises Noel's service and leadership.

"Mr. Noel is a very talented and seasoned professional association executive," Prince says.

"I am confident Association Executives of North Carolina will benefit greatly under his leadership as president."

Noel resides in Raleigh with his wife, Deborah, and daughter, Maliah.

## Tech firm focuses on continued growth

**T**ech Authority, says sales manager Richie City, is a Piedmont Triad company with a global presence.

Based in Reidsville, Tech Authority calls itself "a business intelligence company." The firm provides information technology services to clients small and large. They include customers in education, manufacturing, health-care, logistics, and finance, as well as non-profits.

"We are global in our footprint," says Chris Matthews, vice president and CIO. He and President Peter McKinnon started the business in 2011.

The firm has served customers with operations in Europe, Central and South America, as well as in Hong Kong, China, and Singapore.

Tech Authority has grown



Chris Matthews and Richie City of Tech Authority.

50 percent a year or more each year since its founding,

Matthews says. One reason for its success is an emphasis on tailored technology solutions with ongoing service, he says. This approach involves first getting to know the client's needs and business technology goals. Tech Authority then creates a plan designed to keep systems operating at peak performance.

"Our goal is to make the technology work, so the client can do their work and be

### NEW MEMBER PROFILE

successful," Matthews says.

As the firm's new

sales manager, City will focus on broadening the company's client base in the Piedmont Triad.

Matthews, who was familiar with GMA from a previous position in Greensboro, says membership will be a good resource for growth as the company looks to expand locally.

Tech Authority  
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Schiffman's Jewelers donated the clock for the carousel.

## On A Carousel

### Rotary's gift to community opens

**T**he Rotary Club of Greensboro's carousel project, years in the making, is complete. The \$3.8 million carousel, the largest ever built by Ohio-based Carousel Works, now belongs to the Greensboro Science Center and is open for fun.

The carousel features 56

brightly painted sculpted animal figures. Around the top of the carousel are illustrations that depict major events, people, and industries in Greensboro history.

More than 300 donors contributed to the project. The GMA/FirstPoint Foundation Fund donated \$10,000.



Riders are socially distanced on the carousel, which is sanitized after every spin.

Greensboro Science Center Executive Director Glenn Dobrogosz calls the carousel "the crown jewel" of the Battleground Parks District Project.

The carousel is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except for four major holidays. Rides are \$2, or \$1 for science center members.



Artwork atop the carousel depicts significant events and themes in Greensboro history. This 'rounding board' celebrates suffragettes campaigning for the right to vote and the Greensboro Four.

## Law practice built on referrals begins transition to new era

After 44 years of practicing law and specializing in estate planning, David Spangler has just about perfected the way he likes to approach his law practice.

It's worked so well for him that now, as he plans to slip into semi-retirement, he's grooming the next generation of lawyers in his firm to carry on in the same vein.

His motivation, he says, is to ensure continuity of service to the many individuals and families that he's assisted over the years.

"I want to be able to continue helping folks that I've helped over the decades with the same law firm they've grown to trust," he says.

Spangler conducted a solo law practice for most

of his career. Attorney Jonathan Parisi joined Spangler Estate Planning earlier this year, and Spangler has plans to add another lawyer to the firm in the coming months.

The additional staff will allow Spangler to step back a bit, he says, as the new attorneys continue serving existing clients and bring in new ones.

"Mr. Spangler and I share a lot of goals," Parisi says, which include "really getting involved in the community."

Spangler is a long-time GMA member. Parisi has incorporated GMA activities into his professional life, shifting to virtual events as the pandemic restricted in-person meetings. "We're heavily involved in a lot of things that GMA has to offer," says Parisi, an Elon

**LOYAL  
MEMBER**



Attorneys David Spangler and Jonathan Parisi of Spangler Estate Planning.

Law graduate who was active in GMA through his previous practice.

Networking and word-of-mouth referrals are crucial to a small law practice, Spangler says, and GMA always has been essential in that regard. Just as important, he explains, are the connections that allow him to help his clients in areas other than the law.

"I keep a huge list of

referral sources," Spangler explains. It's a directory of people in a wide range of trades and professional services, and Spangler constantly keeps it updated. It's handy when a client asks for help finding an accountant or a mechanic or you name it.

Spangler often vets people for the list by inviting them to lunch and finding out how he might assist

them. He wants to know people he recommends.

Why does he invest so much in his referral list? Because, he says, "It will come back around. If everybody thought that way," he explains, "you would never have to tell the other person what you want from them."

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## Staffing exec is always networking to match people with positions

I am a relationship builder," says Kristy Cardwell, clerical account manager for The Resource, a staffing company with seven locations throughout the Piedmont Triad and beyond.

"So I do a lot of networking," she explains. "I love meeting the people and being out there."

Cardwell has been in the staffing industry for 25 years and with The Resource for the last two. The company's corporate headquarters is in Winston-Salem. Cardwell, based in Greensboro, is the company's primary representative in GMA. She had prior experience with GMA through other employers.

"GMA has always been a

better resource for me," she says.

About a year ago Cardwell was able to join BIZ-Links, one of GMA's organized networking groups. Members meet weekly to share business tips and leads and enjoy one another's company.

"It's a great group," Cardwell says, with many long-time members. "I'm still a newbie," she says.

Cardwell is constantly on the lookout for people searching for jobs as well as for companies with positions to fill. Going into September, The Resource had 70 to 90 jobs open on any given day. Some were part-time, some were full-time.

**PARTICIPATION  
= SUCCESS**



Kristy Cardwell is a veteran of the staffing industry.

"We have the jobs," Cardwell says, noting that during the first months of the pandemic, "it was a struggle" to place people in open positions. Now, however, "People are starting to

come back around."

Cardwell says she's remained engaged with GMA activities even though almost all functions have moved online.

"I've really enjoyed the

webinars that we can do via Zoom," she says. She's especially grateful for the seminars that are delivered with humor. "Right now, she says, "we all need to laugh a bit."

Participating in GMA has brought some business to The Resource, she says, and Cardwell says she's looking forward to more as her GMA networks grow. At a BIZ-Links meeting she recently picked up the name of a person looking for a new job.

With so many jobs open through The Resource, that lead was solid gold.

"We're always looking for good people," she says.  
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## Member companies respond to COVID-19 challenges



Cheyne Rauber describes interior of COVID-19 testing vehicle.

### Matthews Specialty Vehicles *From page 1*

tion serving rural South Carolina ordered five units. COVID-19 units have been shipped as far as the Missouri.

Two interior layouts are available, Rauber says. Limited choices speed pro-

duction. The company is able to complete about one COVID-19 unit a week in addition to its regular production.

MSV is looking to hire additional employees because of the demand, he says.

### CSM Flooring stays the course

**M**ark Watson, owner of CSM Flooring (formerly Carpet Super Mart), resolved early in the pandemic to keep a cool head.

“As a business person,” he says, “I’ve learned that leading from fear is not a good move.”

Watson holds a daily meeting for the entire CSM team. In March he told his colleagues that “We’re going to show up every day and we’re going to work it out.”

Watson asked for everyone’s input, especially suggestions “that would tighten our belt.”

CSM reduced its staff by one. “That was hard,” Watson acknowledges.

The company treated the spring “like the off-season,” Watson says, like the winter holidays when remodeling work slows to a crawl. “So we started focusing on our infrastructure and

internal things, and we never backed off of our marketing.”

As spring became summer, conditions improved. “Construction is a strong space now,” he says. “Maybe it’s because interest rates are low. Or maybe people, stuck at home, finally decide to remodel.

“We were the beneficiary of that,” he says. Inertia rules, he explains. The company remained “forward-learning” and focused “on what matters.” Today CSM finds itself in a good place, Watson says, “because we didn’t stop.”



Mark Watson, owner of CSM Flooring.

### Apple Rock pivots to new markets, products

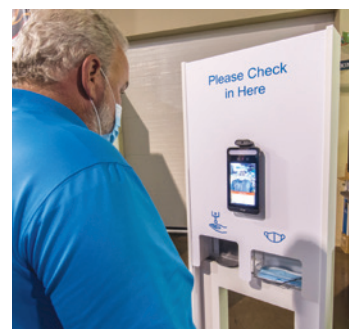
**T**he cancellation of trade shows and conventions nationwide because of COVID-19 was like a dependable well suddenly running dry for Apple Rock Displays. Until trade shows resume, there’s virtually no demand for custom displays, booths, banners, and graphics.

Eric Burg, owner of the company he helped start in 1988, found himself staring into the abyss.

“All of a sudden, revenue goes down to zero, and you’re trying to figure it out,” he says. “It’s a pretty big revelation.”

His wife, he says, gave him more of her usually excellent advice. “Your best bet is to consider that there’s not going to be another trade show for the rest of the year,” she told him.

Burg looked at his company’s product lines and materials. He considered the talents and skills of Apple Rock’s employees.



Eric Burg demonstrates a product developed by Apple Rock for the pandemic. The kiosk contains a thermal scanner, facemasks, and hand sanitizer.

Every day, Apple Rock seamstresses created custom items from lightweight fabrics. Skilled technicians fashioned products from wood, metal, and acrylic.

The nation’s healthcare professionals desperately needed face masks and other personal protective equipment, including gowns and face shields. Businesses and school systems needed acrylic barriers to shield people from one another.

Apple Rock, Burg reasoned, had the know-how to help provide those things and more.

Facemasks were in production by the third week of March, Burg says.

He found a source for hand sanitizer. Apple Rock designed

a dispenser stand suitable for installation in public environments. “We sold 6,000 stands with sanitizer in the first couple of months,” he says.

Apple Rock produced adhesive floor graphics for social distancing. “I bet we’ve done 100,000,” Burg says.

The company’s history of always doing custom work positioned it to work with customers with unique needs, such as school systems. Off-the-shelf solutions don’t always work with classrooms and buildings of varying sizes and ages. Burg often made the first call to school superintendents himself. With thousands of school systems nationwide, he knew they needed help.

“COVID, in a way, has been a blessing,” Burg says, “even though it deferred our core business. It has created a lot of opportunities, and our staff has really been empowered to help people. If you prevent one person from getting COVID, it’s a good thing.”

After 32 years with Apple Rock, after weathering the Great Recession and numerous other challenges, Burg knew what to do.

“When you get a business interruption,” he says, “you can’t let it rock you.”



Production of acrylic barriers at Apple Rock.



Apple Rock seamstresses sew protective gowns for medical personnel.



Niki Ross, a server at Village Tavern, sanitizes a table.



Ray Essa, owner of Cafe Pasta.



Theresa Martin, design project manager for Quaintance-Weaver Restaurants and Hotels.

## MEMBER SALUTE

### Restaurants & Hospitality



Tracy Griggs, front desk supervisor at Embassy Suites.



Cindy Essa, owner of Pastabilities.



The kitchen team at Ghassan's Fresh Mediterranean Eats on Battleground Avenue.

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