

AU's new gadget helps you wash your hands, but with a smile

[Brady Trapnell](#)

AUGUSTA, Ga. (WRDW/WAGT) - As cases continue to rise, Augusta University is working on ways to encourage and remind people to stay safe. And it's coming through new innovation and some smiling faces.

Our local health officials are fighting the battle against COVID-19 inside the hospital. But now they are fighting a battle against perception with everyone outside.

Life behind a mask isn't always easy, but a smile sure is contagious.

"It's so important right now no matter where you are, what building, what you are doing, that we all spread this positive reinforcement," Lynsey Ekema, medical illustrator at AU, said.

For Ekema and a team at AU, Happy Hands is the smile that could change our community. It's a 3D-printed device that shows a sad face when you don't wash your hands and smiling face when you do.



As cases continue to rise, Augusta University is working on ways to encourage and remind people to stay safe. ((Source: Augusta University Health))

“Within the first day, I could hear inside my office the hand pump going five times. I just was laughing because it works,” Ekema said.

It's a potentially life-saving device that only costs about \$20 to create, so they plan to put them throughout the hospital and even across campus for

the fall semester.

But washing your hands is only one part of slowing down COVID-19, as social distancing and mask-wearing is a harder sell.

"I think we have to combat the ignorance on this issue overall and just keep informing people. Tell them what the science says regardless of what the politics are," Dr. Phillip Coule, chief medical officer at AU Health, said.

Coule says convincing people to do reasonable measures is the challenge. But Andy Hauger imagines a similar device could help with mask-wearing.

"Where it would take an image of people walking by, and you could easily tell by looking at an image if someone has a face mask on or not," Hauger said.

They'll let a smile change the world first.

"If it's one person who is benefitting from this device being implemented on a wall inside the university or the hospital, that's one more person for the better," Hauger said.

AU says Happy Hands is an idea that's been in the works for about a year and they'll have the second prototype done in the next few days.

And experts say we all need to continue washing our hands more frequently, keep each other accountable to mask-wearing and social distancing.

Maybe a smile would help with that too.

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