

# A small gesture from South Korea goes a long way

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May 19, 2020



*Port of Portland Executive Director Curtis Robinhold welcomes the captain of the SM Qingdao, SM Line's first vessel to arrive in Portland.*

In April, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo held up a letter and N-95 mask sent to him by a retired Kansas farmer, calling it humanity at its best. The man, Dennis Ruhnke, mailed one of the few masks he had at home from his farming days, hoping it might be helpful for hospital workers in New York City, which had been hit the hardest by the coronavirus pandemic.

I received this letter from a farmer in northeast Kansas. His wife is ill and he is aging.

He sent me 1 of 5 N95 masks he has from farming to pass on to a doctor or nurse in New York.

This is humanity at its best. I share his letter as inspiration. [pic.twitter.com/Fa4h5LH9rL](https://pic.twitter.com/Fa4h5LH9rL)

— Andrew Cuomo (@NYGovCuomo) April 24, 2020

Here at the Port of Portland, we have our own Dennis Ruhnke story in the form of a colleague all the way across the Pacific Ocean.

Shawn Kim is the deputy director of the Port of Portland's Korea Representative Office. Korea is an important trade partner to the state of Oregon, and Shawn helps the Port build and maintain relationships with existing and potential customers – from ocean carriers to airlines and other transportation industries.

Shawn was instrumental in the Port **bringing South Korea-based SM Line to Portland**, returning weekly container service to Terminal 6 for the first time in years.



*The SM Qingdao arrives at Terminal 6, ringing in the return of weekly container service in Portland.*

South Korea has emerged as a leader in addressing coronavirus, but that doesn't mean things have been easy for those living there. Most of the restaurants, hotels and other shops in South Korea have been closed for the last two months. With a rambunctious 2-year-old in the house, Shawn and his family have been stuck inside doing their part to slow the spread of the virus.

However, that didn't stop Shawn from thinking about his colleagues here in Oregon.

He's made it a practice to read Portland-based news online each day to keep on top of key issues and updates in Oregon, and Shawn could see things were getting serious back in March. While he couldn't send masks and hand sanitizers – items prohibited to ship overseas by the Korean government – Shawn found another way to help.

“I heard that Tylenol is good for COVID-19, so I prepared small packages of Tylenol and plastic gloves. I know it is not enough for my colleagues, but I wanted to share my wishes with them,” Shawn told us.

To Shawn, it felt like a small gesture, but his generous and selfless act meant the world to all of us working in Portland. The gloves are being used by our Marine operations team, who have all taken extra steps to stay safe on the job site – from extra cleaning to physical distancing.

As for Shawn, while it has been hard for him and his family, they’re all doing just fine.

“My little son, Lewis, just went back to kindergarten last week. It seems that life is slowly going back to normal, but it is not yet completely settled, so we should be careful,” Shawn said, before once again sending love to his second home in Oregon.



*Shawn, pictured with his wife and son, at the Vista House in Oregon, which they visited last year.*

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Shawn, who calls himself a Koregonian and attended George Fox University in Newberg, brought his family here last year on vacation. “It was such an amazing memory, and I hope we make more good memories in Oregon later!”

