



## Greenwood group sews nearly 1,000 face masks for community

By Ryan Trares - 4/27/20 2:54 AM

Cloth of all colors and patterns spread out across the dining room table.

The sewing machine, thread, scissors and other sewing tools were arranged around the cloth. For the past few weeks, JoAn Nichols has turned her home into a production line, making cloth masks for neighbors, friends, health care workers and others throughout the community.

"My dining room table looks like a factory," said Nichols, a member of the Mary Bryan Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, based in Greenwood.

Nichols is not alone. She and her fellow Mary Bryan DAR members have been sewing the face masks daily to distribute to groups such as Community Hospital South, Franciscan Health Network, Dialysis Center of Indianapolis and other Johnson County facilities.

So far, more than 900 masks have been sewn and donated to the community.

"It means a lot, because there are so many people in need who don't sew. You can't order them online, or if you can, chances are you won't get them for a month or more. It's rewarding to be able to make these and give them out to anyone who needs them," said Carolyn Ferraro, a member of the Mary Bryan Chapter. "It's something we can do, especially since we have all of this spare time."

The mask-sewing project is part of a national DAR initiative, challenging members to do Service to America from Home. The goal was to help ease the burden of personal protective equipment shortages, as medical facilities as well as many individuals are trying to protect themselves and others from the COVID-19 pandemic, said Vicki Kurtz, regent of the Mary Bryan Chapter of the DAR.

The National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution is a nonprofit, non-political volunteer women's service organization which aims to promote patriotism, preserve American history and educate the community. Locally, the Mary Bryan Chapter of the DAR has been serving the Johnson County community since 1979.

DAR hosts monthly meetings, takes part in state and national activities and does volunteer work throughout the region. Sewing and donating face masks fell in line with its core values, Kurtz said.

From the start, a core group of Mary Bryan Chapter members have taken the lead on the project. They had material available, and a number of them already had the elastic bands that people could use to strap the masks to their heads.

Member Carolyn Ferraro had heard that different health care facilities were in need, and wanted to help. She had some extra fabric at home, found patterns online and has been making masks in different sizes. Some have been adapted with straps or ties, to make wearing them more comfortable. Adaptations to the design has allowed for a pocket in the masks where people can put filters or other added protection.

As she made more and more, Ferraro also put a message out to her neighbors, asking if anyone needed masks. She got a massive response.

"So, I've been delivering masks, or they've been picking them up from my house this whole time. I have friends who saw I was making them, so they asked if I could send them to them. I've been sending them to Ohio and Michigan and Florida and Missouri, and lots of towns in Indiana, because I have family everywhere," she said.

Nichols has been churning out the masks as quickly as she can. The 90 year old was able to get enough fabric from a neighbor that she figures she can make 500 masks.

At first, she had made masks one at a time. But Nichols discovered that she could get more done by working in stages — cutting large amounts of fabric, then sewing that into masks, adding elastic and finishing them.

"It gives me something to do. I'm pretty healthy, so I just started out making a few," she said.

Besides Nichols and Ferraro, masks have been made by members Candy Close, Jill Werner, Cathy Pollachek, Laura Manning and Molly Chizum. Kurtz has been buying and delivering supplies as needed, and taking finished masks to the facilities who request them.

Since they started making them, different organizations have been requesting the masks. Besides Community Health, Franciscan Health and Dialysis Center of Indianapolis, the DAR has made masks for American Senior Communities. The Gray Goat Bicycle Company asked for masks for employees at all four of its locations, Kurtz said.

The U.S. Post Office in Greenwood also needed masks, and the DAR delivered.

The members continue to make new masks, though difficulty getting elastic has slowed the process some. Nichols has a whole table filled with measured and sewn masks, and is just waiting for a shipment of elastic to get to her house. Ferraro had to resort to taking apart old costumes that had the stretchy material to use.

But the DAR members are anxious to keep doing the work for the community.

"It's rewarding. We've had people thank us for getting them. They wouldn't be able to get them otherwise, and wouldn't be able to go out," Ferraro said. "It makes me feel good that I'm able to do something to help out as much as possible."