



## Gloucester Department of Community Engagement and Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### County Embarks on Masks Project During COVID-19

Several Gloucester County staff members have been using their special skills and expertise to make and distribute over 300 cloth masks to be used by others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The masks are being utilized by County employees who are having regular contact with the public or are in office buildings with other personnel and are also being distributed to volunteers and clients of the Gloucester United Emergency Shelter Team (GUEST) program. Masks have also been distributed to workers in the Court System, Social Services, and school cafeteria workers and bus drivers assisting in distributing free meals.

The idea came about when Krista Gustafson, of the Virginia Cooperative Extension informed staff that as a part of her telework assignment, Jackie Jefferies was sewing masks for volunteers delivering meals for Bay Aging. Jefferies, having taught the sewing class at 4-H for 25 years, is a skilled seamstress, and was using materials she had on hand or donated for this project. As the COVID-19 situation continued to develop, it became apparent that the need for PPE (personal protective equipment) for County staff and community partners was continuing to grow.

At the same time, County administration had asked all departments to ensure that staff were 100 percent productive during the times County office buildings are closed, and with some innovation and cooperation, it turned out that many employees were skilled on the sewing machine, and were already making masks for family and friends in their spare time.

Cindy Thomas, Community Engagement Coordinator at Petsworth Elementary School, took on organizing the project. She said by the end of the first two days, there were 13 people who responded from all departments more than willing to assist with the project and willing to donate their own supplies.

Thomas got busy distributing instructions and links on how to make the masks in accordance to Centers for Disease Control recommendations.

She said the first request came with needing 64 masks, which was filled in less than three days. Once the masks were completed, they were individually washed, ironed and placed in Ziploc bags and delivered to department supervisors.

Thomas said that those who have been participating in the masks project have found it rewarding feeling that they were helping others in the situation. "For myself, I enjoyed seeing all the beautiful and many different fabrics as well as the creative ways the masks were assembled," Thomas said.

Brent Fedors, Gloucester County Administrator indicated that, "In light of the extreme shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the marketplace, and with a strong desire to support continuity of services to our citizenry to the best of our ability, I endorsed this project." He went on to say that, "While certainly not part of our typical day-to-day duties in service to the taxpayer, we are grateful for the willingness of our employees to put their talents to work to help keep those serving our community healthy, and ready to serve again tomorrow."

For more information about the masks project, contact Gloucester's Community Engagement and Public Information Department at 804-693-5730 or [gsheppard@gloucesterva.info](mailto:gsheppard@gloucesterva.info).

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