



Medina County Auditor

HOMETOWN HEROES

A stitch in time saves many lives

Wadsworth Sewing Seniors use their skills to help the community stay safe during the pandemic

By Melissa Martin

WADSWORTH – When your grandchildren ask you how you spent your days during the COVID-19 pandemic, how are you going to respond?

This is the question, originally posed by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, that got more than a dozen Wadsworth women, known as the Sewing Seniors, thinking about the legacy they wanted to leave behind in their community.

For this group, who meet the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Wadsworth Soprema Senior Center, the answer was simple.

“A week after the governor issued the stay-at-home order, we all got in touch on our email list and that’s when we found out that almost 95 percent of us were already making masks for our families and friends,” Cathy Hall, a retired teacher who serves as the group’s leader, said noting that the senior center was forced to close its doors to the community March 11. “That’s when we put our heads together and started thinking of who would benefit most from having a mask and that’s when we thought of the nursing homes, church leaders, the lunch ladies in the schools who were still making lunches for the students, the children’s’ hospitals, the Amish community, the Salvation Army, the list went on and on.”



While the favorite pastime of the Sewing Seniors isn't any secret, what many in the community don't know is that at least twice a year they take on a community service project.



“We look around the local community and see what charities could benefit from our assistance,” Hall said, adding that the Sewing Seniors have been known to make more than 100 hats for children in under two hours. “These women are pretty easy to motivate. But beyond that, each and every one of us wants to wake up with a purpose and for us, this was that purpose.”

After putting their heads together, members of the Sewing Seniors headed to their fabric stashes and sat down at their sewing machines and got busy. And by the 14-week mark of the state quarantine, together they had assembled and delivered more than 1,500 masks.

“Some were given away to people in the community or to nearby communities including Akron. Others were sent out of state to New York and Dallas, but the most exceptional part of all of this is that every single mask we made was given away for free,” she said.

“And these are older, retired women who do not have an unlimited amount of resources. They just wanted to do their part to help.”

Because access to materials, especially the elastic needed for the masks, was limited during the quarantine, Hall said it forced many of the women to think outside the box.

“We ran ideas past each other and started thinking of new, more inventive ideas for ways to make the masks without elastic during the shortage,” she added. “You would be surprised at what these women came up with.”



Hall said each and every one of the women are glad to have contributed during the nation's crisis. While it gave them the opportunity to utilize the fabric scraps they had lying around, it also gave them a chance to give back to the community they call home.

"It makes us feel wonderful to know that people are getting so much use out of the masks we made for them," she said. "And I can't tell you how many people have thanked us for helping them stay safe during the pandemic. I'm so grateful we had the chance to do this."