

Face Masks for Craven

Craven County Disaster Recovery Alliance (CCDRA)

June 10, 2020

THREE UNFORGETTABLE MONTHS: SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

By Helen Robinson

Since I will be leaving *Face Masks for Craven* in a few days, I asked my boss for permission to share some personal reflections related to my experience over the past three months. So today I will claim that privilege—and share some thoughts about **principles, predictions, and pleas.**

In mid-March, we were feeling frightened, confused, and overwhelmed. At first, several of us were spending many hours trying to get a focus, trying to understand what the unmet needs might be.

I'd like to mention the underlying principles that have directed our work, as we sorted through that messy mix of emotions and tried to find our way.

Principles

Apply the Serenity Prayer: We needed to accept those pieces of reality that were beyond our control—or just inscrutable. As we accepted those things over which we were powerless, we could see more clearly what we *might* do to contribute to the wellbeing of our community.

Consider the insight of MLK, that if we “cannot do great things, perhaps we can *do small things in a great way.*” Finding a simple design to produce safe face masks seemed like a pretty small thing. The “*great way*” part was a bit more challenging. For me, this entailed a commitment to look longer and harder around our county to find our more vulnerable brothers and sisters. As most of us realize, we tend to live in our comfortable silos, disconnected from many of our neighbors. One of the biggest rewards of this project for me was being introduced to many more groups and organizations in the county—and doing some elemental relationship-building with lots of new individuals.

Appreciate the power of people coming together for the common good. All of us are smarter together than any one of us; indeed it does take a village! Part of the pleasure for me in being involved with this project has been identifying the passions and skills that each of our 147 volunteers has brought to the table, and working to value those gifts.

So what does the future hold for us? I want to describe a wonderful possibility I see.

Predictions about the Future

I don't really know much about what will happen with COVID-19, though I suspect we have more to learn—and more suffering on the way. I don't really know much about what will happen with this mask-making project, though I trust Kristy and John Robinson and all of you volunteers to figure that out in the months ahead.

What I do see is that we have formed some new connections and begun to build some new relationships. What I believe is that—if we desire it—we can build on this foundation. New Bern can be more connected to Harlowe and Vanceboro. Blacks and Whites can be more connected. Christians can be more connected to non-Christians. Older people can be more connected to younger people—if we want. We can work in some bigger ways to help support, protect, and honor one another. We have opportunities before with lots of new individuals that are more apparent than they were three months ago.

Pleas for Your Consideration

I beg you to allow this experience we have shared over the past three months to wash over you and change you. Here are three specific asks:

When trouble comes, look out for your family—and think of that now as the *human* family, not just your biological relatives.

Build on the connections you have made in our time together. Find new ways to listen together more deeply, share more authentically, and work together more collaboratively.

Help Kristy and John and the other leaders by continuing to use your talents, your time, and your good humor to cut fabric, sew masks, and serve your neighbors.

Thanks to each of you for the time we have shared! I will miss you as I move on to other volunteer commitments.

WORK AT THE VILLAGE

Since our last newsletter, things have been buzzing at the Village. We have re-located our work to the other hall. Work that has been done on dining room tables of several volunteers is moving to the Village. Polly and Roxann are now taking over as our community agency liaisons. V and Dan are stepping up into expanded roles as host leaders at the Village. Kristy and Helen have been talking endlessly about how to take this project into the next phase.



On top on all that—we have delivered 370 masks in the past 10 days to CCDRA staff and volunteers, Reflections In-Home Care, Carolina East CAP Case Management, Beaufort District of the AME Zion Church, and West New Bern Presbyterian Church. Through the Beaufort District, we provided face masks to 13 small congregations in the outlying parts of Craven County.

Beaufort District Secretary, and member of Mt. Olive AME Zion Church in New Bern, picking up masks from Polly Frank on June 8

KRISTY KULBERG TAKES LEAD AS MASK-MAKING COORDINATOR

Kristy came on board with ***Face Masks for Craven*** two weeks ago and has been working hard to learn about the project and its operation.

Originally from Indiana, Kristy was introduced to disaster work when her house flooded in River Bend during Florence. Since then, Kristy has been pursuing a degree in disaster management and has been active as a volunteer in disaster response, both locally and around the country.

In the spring, Kristy went to work part-time with CCDRA as assistant recovery director. Then she was hired to work part-time at New Hope Village as volunteer coordinator! Because of the impact of the pandemic on reducing volunteer work teams at the Village, Kristy is available now to coordinate volunteers and lead the work with ***Face Masks for Craven***.

Kristy is a people person and also an organizer who likes to “get ‘er done”. She will be a great fit with the volunteer mask-making team!



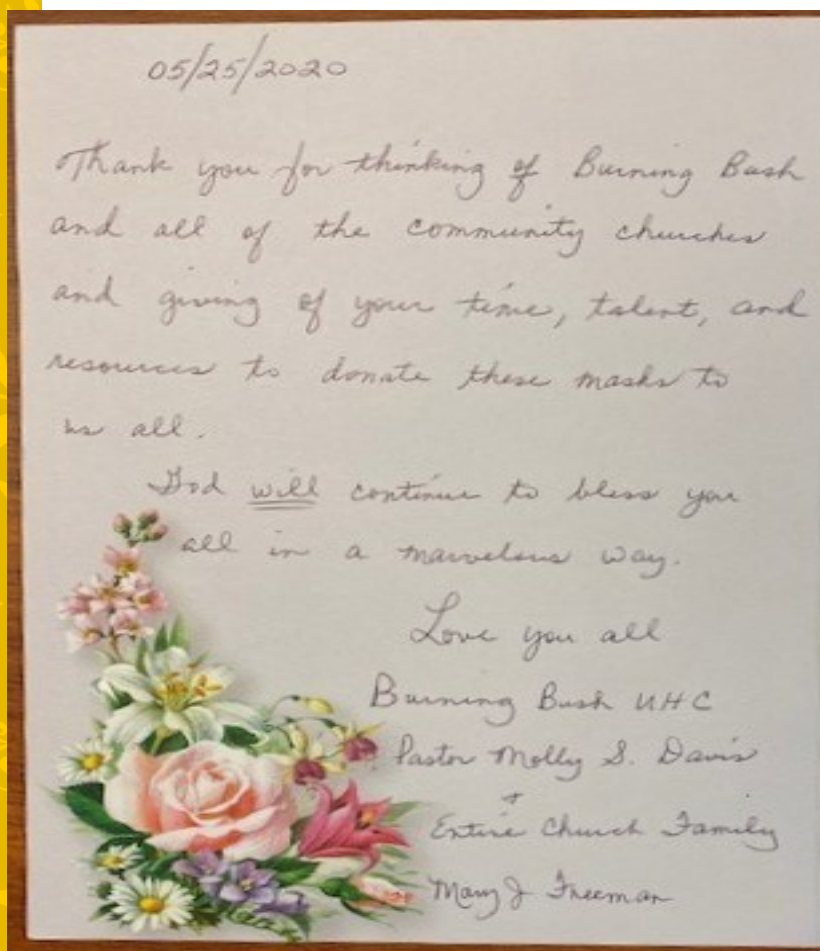
HOW OUR VOLUNTEER NETWORK GROWS: FRIENDS INVITE FRIENDS

Over the past three months, our volunteer network has continued to welcome newcomers. Just in the past week, two new volunteers have joined our ranks! This is essential, because some volunteers have had to return to day jobs or move on to other activities. Today you will meet two volunteers who joined our work when invited by a friend.



Diane Hogan from New Bern is a neighbor and friend of Kirsten Sonstegard. Though she has a demanding day job work in adoption services, she has continued to sew masks for us when she is able. Diane has even invited her daughter Katie to join her. Diane is pleased to be a part of a network that is serving the community.

Donna Wright from Vanceboro is a friend of Casey Moore. Donna has worked with Casey and the Vanceboro Help Center in identifying rural churches that are in contact with vulnerable individuals needing face masks. Donna enjoys helping others in crisis and especially finds satisfying the smiles of gratitude she sees on the faces of individuals when they have received their bag of masks.



BY THE NUMBERS DATA UPDATE:

4170 Masks provided so far

64 Organizations served

126 Volunteers involved

11,500 Volunteer Hours estimated

? Lives protected

June 10, 2020

LOOKING AHEAD

The Village will continue to stay open on

Mondays and Fridays, 11 am—1 pm

With the departure of both Helen Robinson and Lana Brunk (chief of kit assembly operation), more work will now be done at the Village.

Additional Volunteers (2-3 more each Monday and Friday) are *urgently* needed at the Village to take over sorting and assembly work.

The current plan is to continue for 3-6 months producing 100-200 face masks each week to share with our more vulnerable neighbors



Carolina East donated filter material for our use in the masks. Mary delivers to Dan.

The distribution center, based in New Hope Village at Neuse Forest Presbyterian Church, 2011 Old Cherry Point Rd. in New Bern will be open in June on Mondays and Fridays from

11:00 am until 1:00 pm

Volunteers are encouraged to continue bringing donations and completed work to the center, then picking up more kits and work projects to do at home.

CCDRA: Face Masks For Craven

New Hope Volunteer Village

At Neuse Forest Presbyterian Church

2011 Old Cherry Point Rd

New Bern, NC 28560

Ccdra.ltrg@gmail.com or

252-571-2976

Donations may be mailed to:

CCDRA, c/o United Way,

601 Broad St.,

New Bern, NC 28560