

Local resident continuing with 'Homemade Masks for Hometown Heroes' venture

Written By ROBERT BELARDI

Carole Williams was enjoying the sunshine in Florida much to the dismay of all Canadian's who were enjoying the slush, the snow and the rain north of the border.

The Aurora native was there with her mom Sylvia Salmon in March; who was down there all Winter and when the news continued to emerge that a virus had been spreading like wildfire, it was time to hop in the car and drive back home.

When she returned, she saw the lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available for front-line workers going head to head to COVID-19.

Williams, a former teacher for the blind with the Peel District School board for 17 years and worker for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for eight years, couldn't simply stand back and hope something would happen. In her eyes, it was indispensable she got involved to make a difference.

'My daughter and I decided to start making masks for frontline workers,' Williams said.

'We created a Facebook page, in order to see if any of our family or friends might be interested in helping. The answer was a resounding yes!'

Williams and her daughter entitled their initiative 'Homemade Masks for Hometown Heroes.'

Over 3,000 volunteers joined in to help. Country Concessions Quilt Shop in Cookstown and The Quilt Shop in Newmarket donated fabric to support the cause as every volunteer stitched and sewed masks together to donate free of charge.

'We provided masks and scrub caps primarily to hospitals, nursing homes and masks to essential workers (grocery stores, vet clinics, day care centre's etc.) who continued to work during the crisis.'

Sunrise of Aurora, Chartwell, Kingsway Place Retirement in Aurora benefitted from this work. King City Lodge, King Township Foodbank and Headwaters Health Centre in Orangeville are some other local institutions that have benefitted from this effort.

The Facebook page was archived due to a decrease in requests from the community and volunteers had to head back to work. But most recently, last week, Williams has reopened the page under a different name and some volunteers continued making masks since face coverings have become mandatory in the province.

You can follow the new page 'Homemade Masks for York Region.'

'This pandemic has been a global tragedy and there has been so much suffering. All I can say is that I am so grateful to all our volunteers who stepped up during the crisis. I've been told by many that our group was a life saver, not only for those who received donations of masks and caps, but also for the volunteers themselves!'

Williams is humbled by the kindness, generosity and love from many people. She and her daughter, pulled together a dedicated group of compassionate citizens that have vehemently worked in support for frontline health care workers.

An act, that should go down in community history books when remembering COVID-19.

As of three weeks ago, Williams has officially moved out to British Columbia with her husband to join her daughter Jessica Mitchell

and her two lovely grandchildren.