

# CLIFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## NEWS RELEASE

April 14, 2020 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Clifton Public School 9 Student Makes Over 200 Masks to Combat COVID19**

Erica Schimpf, a mother of two students in Clifton Public Schools, has fond memories of learning to sew with her grandmother. But as times have changed, and kids seem to be more interested in devices than face-to-face activities, Mrs. Schimpf never seemed to have the opportunity to teach her kids fundamental skills, such as sewing, that she learned as a child. But with the onset of COVID19 and a state-mandated shelter in place, Schimpf jumped on the opportunity to teach her daughter, Elsa, a 4th grader at School 9, to sew.

"She caught on quickly with the sewing machine with some straight practice runs and being able to lock a stitch. She was determined to make a mask for herself, and if all went well, for her brother Harry too," explained Schimpf.

Elsa and her mom had a conversation about the shortage of masks around the country. The crisis is particularly close to the Schimpf family as Elsa's father, Thomas Schimpf, works at a psychiatric hospital, where patients are testing positive for coronavirus.

"We posted pictures on FB, and people immediately started to ask for masks. It spread like wildfire."

Elsa was elated and up for the challenge when people started asking her to make face masks for them. When she ran out of fabric, her grandma, Barbara Bonovitch, gave her three huge bins of cotton fabric. "We reached out on Facebook for elastic and boom the community wanted to help," continued Schimpf. "People were asking how they could donate, and Elsa's Aunt Susie stepped in and organized a GoFundMe page. 200 masks in 10 days, and she still has a long list to fill; orders are constantly coming in."

Their first batch of masks was mailed out all over the United States.

Elsa's face mask production has now turned into a family affair. Her older brother, Harry, a CHS Freshman and member of the Mustang Band organizes requests in an Excel spreadsheet. Thomas

Schimpf, Elsa's father, is the label maker. Elsa and her mom work on assembling and sewing the masks.

"We decided, as a family, not to charge any money because masks were impossible to find, family and friends were losing their jobs, and we had the ability and resources to produce them."

When asked what motivated Elsa to begin this project, she said, "I thought it would be nice to help people and to keep them safe. I feel happy if it's helping people and if they aren't getting sick."

When Dr. Danny A. Robertozzi, Clifton Public Schools Superintendent, heard about Elsa's project, he was eager to place his order. "Wow! That is fantastic! It doesn't surprise me that such a compassionate gesture came from a Clifton student. We are a community with a heart," said Dr. Robertozzi. "Can I place an order? I was just wondering where I could find a mask, and Elsa saved the day!"

Erica Schimpf said that Elsa is honored and excited to make Mr. Robertozzi a mask.

Elsa's GoFundMe for cost production and supplies such as thread, pins, elastic, fabric, shipping, etc. had a goal of \$500 and is now up to over \$1100. The GoFundMe page is at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-elsa-make-masks-to-protect-us-from-covid19>

Elsa, an animal lover, hopes to be a zookeeper and a soccer player when she grows up. According to the GoFundMe Page, once the COVID-19 crisis is over leftover money will be donated to The Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange, NJ and to purchase supplies for Clifton Friends of the Shelter, Clifton, NJ

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