

Volunteers nationwide sew masks for health workers

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO (AP) — Bill Purdue waterproofs basements for a living, but he has spent the past few days in his buddy's Washington, Indiana, auto trim and upholstery shop cutting rectangles of cotton fabric that his friend sews into face masks.

Fashion designer Briana Danyele left Italy last month to return to her mother's Greer, South Carolina, home, where she has turned the living room into a mini sewing factory, making masks that she embroiders with the words, "We Got This!"

They're among scores of people answering pleas from hospitals, doctors and nurses so desperate for personal protective equipment amid the viral pandemic that they've turned to the public, saying do-it-yourself face masks are better than nothing.

And for those sitting at home worrying as the virus strains hospitals and the economy teeters,



Volunteers sew cloth face masks that say "We Got This!" in Greer, S.C., which will be sent to health care workers. Legions of everyday Americans are sewing masks for desperate hospitals, nursing homes and homeless shelters amid the expanding coronavirus pandemic. (Christina Hunter via AP)

sewing masks makes them feel less helpless.

"Whatever it takes to get the job done, that's what I want to do," said Purdue, 57, whose daughter works at the women's hospital in Evansville, Indiana. He and his friend Mike Rice responded to a Facebook post last week from Deacon-

ess Health System in Evansville asking the public for help.

The efforts mirror those in other countries, including Spain, where mask-making volunteers include a group of nuns and members of the Spanish Air Force. Around 500 masks a day are coming off sewing machines at the Paratroop School

in Murcia, in the country's south-east, according to the Air Force's Twitter account.

In Belgium, what began as a one-woman operation about a week ago grew to a small army of home-sewing mask-makers within days. In Kosovo, inmates in a women's prison volunteered to make masks.

For most people, the new virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority recover.

But the virus is spreading rapidly and starting to max out the health care system in several cities.

Last week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quietly updated its guidance, saying hospitals that run low on surgical masks should consider ways to reuse them or to use them through an entire shift. And if hospitals run out out, the CDC said, scarfs

or bandanas could be used "as a last resort," though some health officials warned cloth masks might not work.

Mary Dale Peterson, president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists and chief operating officer at a Corpus Christi, Texas, children's hospital, said she declined volunteers' offers to make masks. She said construction and manufacturing industries instead should donate or sell the high-grade masks they have to hospitals.

At the Missouri Quilt Museum in Hamilton, Missouri, board members asked local hospitals if masks were needed and "they emphatically said yes," said director Dakota Redford. Soon other health care providers, including ambulance crews and nursing homes, were requesting masks.

"This has been a true grassroots effort that has exploded across the country in the quilting world," she said.



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