



May 8, 2020

These are still unsettled times which have created instability for much of the community. But Habitat of Greater Charlottesville has a proven track record of scaling up work for the common good into systems that have a community-wide impact. Whether it's building an entire neighborhood of homes or supplying thousands of people with protective masks as part of our [interim plan](#), our staff, partner families and volunteers always run [toward the fire](#), and do it in an organized and impactful way.

In today's newsletter you'll read about how our mask-making partnership has scaled up to deliver more than 3,500 masks to people in need. Our construction crews are completing tasks in new ways while social distancing. And volunteers in Louisa and Greene Counties have continued to minister to the needs of those communities.



Habitat Volunteer Gloria receiving one of over 3,500 masks distributed to individuals and groups in the last two weeks

Mask Partnership a Success



Habitat Staff Garrett Trent and Amy Allamong washing fabric before it is made into kits for volunteer sewers to make into masks. Special thanks to Express Laundry Center and The Mother Load for the use of their facilities.

When COVID-19 made protective face masks a basic necessity and the community faced a shortage, Habitat added to our usual housing-focused mission and entered a partnership with Cville Craft Aid to help make and distribute free masks to vulnerable members of the community. As of today, the partnership has distributed more than 3,500 masks in two weeks.

This frontline work is part of [Habitat's Interim Plan](#) to meet new community needs during the pandemic. And its success is largely a product of the incredible ingenuity and hard work of our Partner Families themselves.

Ashley James, a Habitat homeowner, volunteer and former member of the Habitat Homeowner Council, works as an office manager at the Rosewood Village Assisted Living facility. She says that Rosewood has not yet had a single COVID-19 case during a time when many senior living facilities have been riddled with the disease. She chalks that up to Rosewood's rapid lockdown and use of personal protective equipment.

"We closed early [in the crisis] for visitors," Ashley says. "We meet every day to discuss CDC recommendations... We started taking the temperature of every person who comes to the building, even the postman." They wanted every employee wearing a mask, and masks for residents to wear in certain situations. "But for the first few weeks we didn't have the supplies we needed. Everything was on backorder."

So Ashley stepped up.

"I heard that Habitat was cutting fabric, looking for volunteers to help the Craft Aid mission, so I talked to Garrett Trent [Habitat's Associate Director of Community

Partnerships]," Ashley says. "Within three days I received 182 masks, 94 ear savers, and the design was perfect for our residents!"

Cville Craft Aid is a volunteer-run group of people with sewing skills. Habitat has provided them with a full-time staff person to coordinate volunteers and distribution, a vehicle and staffer for delivery of masks and materials, as well as allocated 5,000 square feet of the Habitat Store's sales floor for staging materials, assembling kits and sewing masks.

Thirty different groups have received mask deliveries so far through Habitat, including the International Rescue Committee, the Department of Health, and the Virginia Institute of Autism. One hundred and twelve volunteers have already signed up to sew masks.

For details about Habitat's mask partnership with Cville Craft Aid, click [here](#). Potential volunteers should fill out an interest form by clicking [here](#). To request masks for an organization, click [here](#). The program is not presently providing masks to individuals.

If you wish to support the effort financially, please consider [donating to Habitat today](#). In normal times, the Habitat Store contributes \$40K per month in net revenue to our homebuilding operations. During the Governor's shelter in place period, we've closed the Store to retail operations and instead utilized it as a hub for frontline needs like masks. Every dollar helps support today's emergency mask making operations and helps pave the way for future community heroes like Ashley to achieve simple, decent, affordable housing.

Ramping Up in Greene and Louisa Counties



During the COVID-19 crisis, Habitat has remained hard at work addressing the unique housing needs in Greene and Louisa Counties. We've continued building houses and wheelchair ramps despite the challenges posed by the virus.

"Greene County's population is roughly 19,500 and the median age is 59," points out Penny Harrison-Latham, Director of Habitat for Humanity operations in Greene County. "We have a lot of retirees living in Greene County. A large number of trailer homes. We build ramps for handicapped and elderly citizens."

Given the aging population in Greene and the unique challenges to health during the crisis, we are planning to scale up ramp building, increasing from six ramps last year to a minimum of forty more over the next four to five years.

The most recent ramp project was for an 88 year old US Army veteran and father of seven children who uses a walker for mobility. Recently returned from a hospital stay, the ramp is allowing him to age in place.

"Without a ramp, he would often miss doctor's appointments," Harrison-Latham says. "He has diabetes and cannot go up and down steps."

Meanwhile, the focus in Louisa County is on completing two almost finished homes on Blueberry Lane. Work has slowed due to social distancing requirements but, using a skeleton crew, Louisa chapter volunteers have recently installed drywall with the goal of helping partner families move in during the summer.

Erin Swinson, a single mother, is excited to move into her new home. Working on her sweat equity has given her a sense of pride in her efforts and new skills. "Whenever I complete something [on the construction site], I have a lot of pride knowing that I did this," Swinson says.

Habitat established chapters in Louisa and Greene two decades ago to extend safe, decent and affordable housing into those communities. The COVID crisis has expedited plans to better unify and integrate operations regionally to increase efficiency and expand opportunities for low wealth community members throughout the planning district.

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Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville | 434-293-9066