

Local quilting group continues to provide masks

By **ANDREW CUTLER**
EAST OREGONIAN EDITOR

At a time when many family-owned small businesses have temporarily closed, one niche business in Stanfield has found itself busier than ever.

Mama Bear Quilt Shop, a quilting shop owned by Kristi Ray and her husband, Chad, is making face masks for first responders, hospitals and others who risk exposure to COVID-19 every day. Since ramping up production of the masks about five weeks ago — give or take — the group has made and donated about 4,000 masks, including 400 to Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston, 370 to St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton and 300 each to Astria Toppenish Hospital and the Washington State Penitentiary.

Needless to say, the group, which is made up of sewers from Stanfield, Hermiston, Echo and Pendleton, has been busy.

“They come in here every day; they’re exhausted,” Kristi Ray said. “They’ve been working nonstop, but they keep coming. It’s amazing.”

Ray, who’s been in business in Stanfield since Oct. 2019, said the group is currently working on an order of masks for the U.S. Coast Guard.



Linda Miller stitches masks at Mama Bear's Quilt Shop in Stanfield on April 15. Miller said that she is usually able to sew 50 to 60 masks a day.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

“They’re going all over,” Ray said of the masks.

One local agency that benefited from an order of masks is the Horizon Project, with headquarters in Milton-Freewater and additional offices in Pendleton and Hermiston.

The Horizon Project recently received 300 masks from the Mama Bear Quilt Shop group.

“We are so grateful for this donation,” said Cheryl Davis, a registered nurse with Horizon Project. “It has relieved a lot of our need and a lot of stress of being able to protect our staff and our clients.”

The Horizon Project,

which has been around since the late 1970s, provides residential, employment and social support to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Dr. Terri H. Silvis, the chief executive officer for Horizon Project, said they have 20 group homes throughout the county and employees called “direct support professionals” who are in the homes every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“They truly are home health care workers on the front lines doing everything from medication management and administration, to helping people attend doctor visits, helping them pre-

pare food, making sure that they’re eating safely, because some people have special food preparations,” she said.

Davis said she came across a post on social media about Mama Bear Quilt Shop and the donation of masks. Knowing her organization was in need of masks — an order for them placed in January finally arrived in mid-April — she reached out to the group to explain the need. Davis said she ended up speaking with Chad Ray, who was familiar with the Horizon Project from his time as a pharmacist in the area and doing flu shots for Horizon Project clients.

“I told them how many clients we have, how many direct support staff we had, and he said, ‘Well, how about I give you 300 now, and when we get caught up, we could talk about giving you more,’ so that we could have a second set for our staff. A ‘one to wear and one to wash’ kind of thing.”

Davis said some Horizon Project employees are working on making masks from kits to return the 300 masks to the sewing group and help replenish its supply.

“We’re supplying the people, but (Mama Bear Quilt Shop) supplied all of the materials, all of the kits and all of that,” she said. “We’re going to give them back the 300, or replenish them with 300 masks that they gave us.”

Silvis said some employees had started to make masks several weeks ago in anticipation of the growing need. She said Rosie Riggin, the office specialist in the Hermiston office, had made quite a few and exemplified the type of can-do

spirit that permeates through Horizon Project.

“We are very blessed with some incredible team members,” she said.

Horizon Project has clients who work at a number of businesses, including Walmart, Safeway, Target and Subway, Silvis said, escalating the need for masks, something that wasn’t always the case in years past.

“Well, in our industry, it’s not historically common that we need masks,” Silvis said. “If a client is ill, they will get a mask from the doctor, or are supplied a mask from their physicians, typically, and Cheryl would keep a supply on hand for any staff members who would be directly supporting that person. But it didn’t come up that much really.”

For their part, Kristi Ray said the response of the sewers is seemingly par for the course in Eastern Oregon.

“If you ever needed anything and you were in Eastern Oregon and you put it out there, you know people will come through,” she said.

Irrigon senior gets a prom night

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Prom is a night to remember for many high school seniors, but a global pandemic made Kaylee Seelye’s prom especially memorable.

Oregon’s seniors saw their school career come to an abrupt and unceremonious end when the state announced schools would not be reopening this year, and seniors on track to graduate would automatically be given a passing grade without needing to complete any more schoolwork.

Kaylee said she had been feeling sad about missing out on milestones like prom and a graduation ceremony.

“To be honest, I was a little depressed because I didn’t get those last few days with my friends, and I didn’t get to say goodbye to my teachers,” she said. “It’s just a lot of little missed things.”

She talked with her mother, Rebecca Seelye, about how she was struggling, and it inspired Rebecca to hatch a plan — she would throw a surprise prom for her daughter.

Rebecca called Tyler Lowry, Kaylee’s boyfriend, and looped him in on the plan. She rented out a conference room at Oxford Suites in Hermiston and she and other family members decorated the room.

On Saturday night, she told Kaylee they were going



Kaylee Seelye and Tyler Lowry at their private prom in Hermiston on Saturday.

Contributed photo by Rebecca Seelye

to go get some family pictures taken, and asked her to do her hair and makeup and wear her long red dress.

The family drove to the hotel and walked into the room, where Lowry then made a surprise entrance. After taking a few photos, the rest of the family left, leaving the two teens alone for a couple of hours to enjoy a barbecue dinner, sparkling cider and a romantic playlist of songs.

“They had a candlelight dinner, they played music,”

Rebecca said. “They had the whole experience, but it was just for them.”

Kaylee said it was an

“amazing” night she would never forget.

“If I could describe it, it’s probably cliché to say, but it was extremely dreamy,” she said.

She said she hadn’t expected to get to experience prom, and she was grateful to her family for making it happen.

Lowry said he was happy to help when Rebecca called him, although it was hard not to say anything about the surprise when Kaylee wanted to talk about how sad it was they would be missing prom.

“It was really hard keeping it all a secret and not being able to tell her,” he said. “I wanted to tell her so bad.”

Rebecca said she hoped that other families would consider ways they might help their children enjoy substitutes for activities that they are missing out on right now.

“Right now is not normal, but I wanted to let parents out there know that even though life has changed, you can still adapt,” she said.



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We missed the opportunity to see you this spring at the Annual Meeting and appreciate those who took time to cast their ballot in the District election. UEC Board of Directors approved a random drawing for \$100 bill credits for those who participated in our vote-by-mail elections for Board Districts 5, 6 and 7.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Ramos Bros Ranchers LLC
Ronald N. Anderson
Douglas & Patricia Wagner
Emily Bergstrom
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Jeffrey Scott Hardcastle
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Democratic, local control is a hallmark of rural electric cooperatives, and we appreciate the member involvement that occurs in our board elections.

Your vote is your voice in shaping UEC. Thank you for helping us be the best member-owned cooperative possible.

The bill credits will be applied to the winning accounts; no need to contact us.

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