

Clemson Sertoma Club making masks for hearing impaired students, teachers

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, “quarantine” and “social distancing” were introduced into our daily vocabulary.

Mask wearing was also introduced as a way to reduce the spread of the virus.

But the fact that virtually every business and restaurant now require patrons to wear buildings has made things more difficult for the hearing impaired and the ability to read lips and expressions. As a result, the Clemson Sertoma Club recently undertook a project in which members made specially designed masks for hearing impaired students at Pickens High School, as well as their teachers, in order to alleviate that problem.

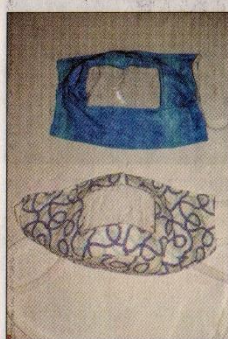
“Sertoma’s mission is to help hearing and speech impaired, and we were approached a month or so ago by Kay Henson at the school district (of Pickens County), who coordinates all the hearing and speech programs,” club member Laura Shick said. “She wanted us to help her with masks and clear panels for lip readers and we said, ‘Of course.’”

But Shick admitted that was “easier said than done.” Original plans to buy the special masks proved problematic since companies were not taking orders due to the large volume of requests. But Shick found a pattern, and fellow club member Kay Carraway recruited friends who did the sewing.

“The problem with patterns are that they’re big — they’re basically for adults,” she said. “In trying to adjust them to smaller sizes, some have been more successful than others.”

Shick and six others are making the masks, which each take about an hour. Presently, the group has sewed more than 50 masks, with designs including pink flamingos, tie-dye and polka dots.

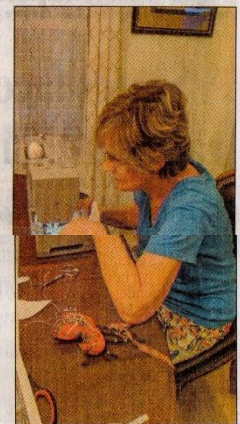
“They’re challenging to make because vinyl isn’t as flexible as fabric,” Shick said, adding that clear plastic and elastic, along with fabric, are among the items needed to make the masks. “So, there’s been a bit of



Two of the masks made by Clemson Sertoma Club members for hearing impaired students and their teachers.



Duane Woolbright and his daughter Emma wear masks recently made by the Clemson Sertoma Club. Duane’s wife, Nona, was one of the seamstresses.



Clemson Sertoma Club member Laura Shick sews one of the more than 50 masks made for hearing impaired students and their teachers at Pickens High School, a number of whom have been summer participants at Camp Sertoma through the years.

‘We’re excited about it because it’s a way to show that Sertoma does something besides camp. Everybody knows us for camp, but the mission is to help hearing and speech impaired. Getting out in the community is what it’s all about.’

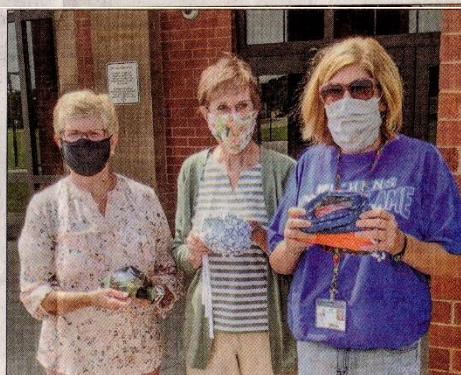
Laura Shick
Clemson Sertoma Club member

a learning curve. It has to come over the top of the nose down to about the middle of the chin because it has to be big enough to where they open their mouth for an expression.”

Carraway, a retired Pickens County teacher, said the group donated 200 N95 masks to Pickens High School but found that masks with a clear space were most needed. Eventually, masks with clear inserts were found, made and set for delivery at the school Tuesday.

“I just felt, as did others in the Sertoma Club, that this was a service we could provide for the hearing-impaired students in Pickens County,” Carraway said. “We hope they will increase the ability of teachers to communicate with kids during this time. We’re just thankful and happy to support the children of Pickens County, especially those that have this challenge.”

“That’s our mission, to support the hearing impaired. We’re trying to help and support as much as we can. A lot



Clemson Sertoma Club members, from left, Kaye Carraway, Laura Shick and Kay Henson, coordinator of the hearing and speech programs for the School District of Pickens County, are pictured following the presentation of masks Tuesday at Pickens High School.

of the children we’re providing masks for attend Camp Sertoma in the summer, so this

is definitely allowing us to support them. This is just one more way that we can support