

Lee instructor sews, donates 300 masks

In a sun-filled craft room surrounded by towering stacks of broadcloth and color-coded bobbins, the whirr of a sewing machine fills the air as Tammy Gross quietly works to help fight a pandemic the best way she knows how. Since March 2020, Tammy has been sewing and donating protective face masks for people who need them to help combat the spread of COVID-19. So far, she has crafted over 1,300 masks.

“I like to make quilts, so I already had a good amount of material,” said Tammy. “Then, a friend asked me to make a few masks for local healthcare workers and people in need. I realized that in a pandemic, everyone is in need. So it just expanded from there.”

Before retiring in December 2019, Tammy was the lead instructor for CAD and process pipe design at Lee College, where she still teaches part-time as an adjunct instructor. Tammy recently donated 300 masks to the College for any student, instructor or staff member who needs them in preparation for the fall semester, calling it a “labor of love.”

“I love Lee College as my alma mater and my family of coworkers and students,” said Tammy. “Since summer classes have started and we are looking forward to the fall semester, I am more than happy to make these masks for those who need them on campus.”

Since several paused Spring 2020 classes resumed on May 18, Lee College has implemented a number of safety and health regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on campus. All campus visitors, including students and instructors, are required to wear face coverings as defined by the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

“Tammy is a picture of the caring and dedicated community we have here at Lee College,” said Dr. Veronique Tran, Lee College vice president of Instruction. “Education is about nurturing the whole person, and Tammy’s generous donation will help make that possible for many people on our campus.”

Each of Tammy’s homemade masks uses three layers of high thread count cotton material and elastic and takes about 20 minutes to assemble from start to finish. Tammy never charges people for her masks but says she has received donations from several people to help cover the cost of materials.

While she has donated masks to everyone from friends, to nursing home residents, to grocery store employees, Tammy says her most memorable donations were to the Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the psychiatric hospital.

“I want to do what I can to help keep people safe,” said Tammy. “Not everyone can sew, and I saw a real need there. I just felt driven to help.” Tammy lives in Crosby, Texas, with her husband.