



BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Franco-American News and Culture



C'est urgent maintenant! Friends From Northern Maine personal protective masks.

🕒 April 3, 2020 📁 Franco-American News and Culture ✍ Cathie Pelletier, Northern Mainers, nurses

By Juliana L'Heureux

NORTHERN MAINE– “Do what you can!”, is the title of the lyrics by Jon Bon Jovi, the award winning song writer and philanthropist who was inspired to write about helping others during the 2020, coronavirus pandemic.

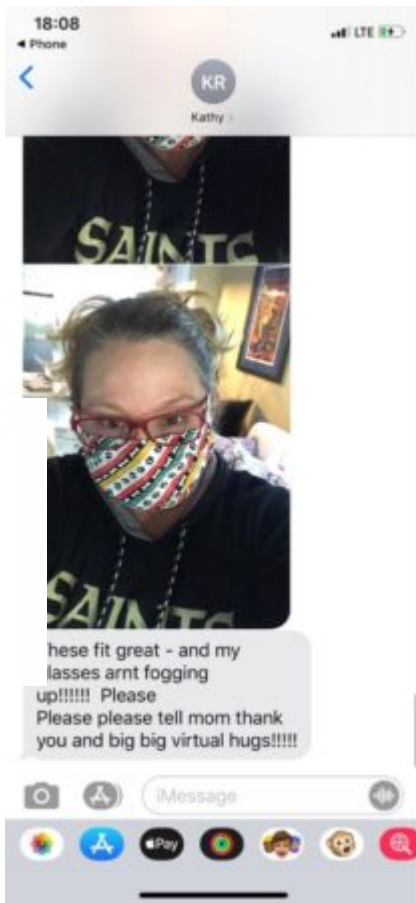


Photo courtesy of Susan Plourde Corriveau from Eagle Lake.

This is exactly the spirit of urgency embraced by Friends [From Northern Maine](#), a large and growing number of people who are sewing protective (PPE) face masks for health care workers, and others, in their homes. I caught wind about this important project through social media networks and immediately connected with the coordinator, [Cathie Pelletier](#).

"We filled an emergency request from Portland, and 80 masks were mailed the next day. Messages from the nurses are heart-warming," she said. "When we started just about a week ago there were not many local needs. All that has changed now. We are sending to nursing homes, too. The masks do not stop the virus, but they help stop the spread of germs. Some health workers wear them under and over their own masks to help extend the shelf-life."

In fact, they are worn over the surgical masks used by hospital personnel, police, fire, first responders and care givers to help protect them from being directly exposed to aerosols. More and more people are wearing the masks in public.



Response from nurses has been heartwarming.

Among those who have responded to the request to sew masks are Connor Pelletier age 15, who lives in St. Francis, Maine, who said he has made about 550 masks! Susan Plourde Corriveau from Eagle Lake is among the group. So are Nathalie Dubois, an 83 year old retired secretary and her husband Gilbert Dubois, who is 92 years old and was the owner of the Western Auto Store in Fort Kent. This project is relying on community volunteers and funds raised on a Go Fund Me page.

Check out Friends From Northern Maine and the [Go Fund Me page](#).

Masks are being sent out as soon as they are sewn. In fact, they are being mailed via costly overnight deliveries.

This is the urgency posted in messages on the Friends From Northern Maine social media page:

Other urgent requests:

April 2: Maine Veterans Home in Bangor is in need of 2000 masks. We will just do what we can and help other groups fill that number.

UPDATE APRIL 2/URGENT REQUEST: From Kathy Magee Post, Anesthesia Care Unit, Maine General Medical Center in Augusta: 60 masks desperately needed.

"We were filling requests for 30 to 200 handmade face masks around the country and we are asked to provide for help in Maine. These Friends members who are sewing masks are REMARKABLE. Others are doing any task they can. Skim the Facebook link to see what they are doing," wrote Pelletier on the Friends From Northern Maine social media page.

In fact, an order is pending for a Maine hospital that may mean a need for over 1,000 masks. Thank yous are pouring in from the health-care world. Firefighters, policemen, grocery clerks, mailmen, truck drivers. "We have so much HOPE because of you. We will beat this. We just got a request for 1,000 masks for Maine veterans."

Those who are unable to sew are doing any task they can. "Our group is sewing face masks which are greatly needed. I can barely sew on a button. But my respect for these people who are sewing, and others who are helping the project, is beyond measure. We are being asked to make these masks from other states, not just Maine. They aren't expensive to make, but we need supplies and they are running out. Take a look, please, at our fund. Twenty dollars goes a long way."

FUND:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-friends-from-northern-maine...>

FRIENDS FROM NORTHERN MAINE:

<https://www.facebook.com/.../2226802954281.../2234902453471192/...>

[Susan Plourde Corriveau](#) wrote "Just delivered 8 face masks to Ashland Ambulance as requested by them 30 to Eva Bard and 4 more to Eagle Lake. I'll have to put Reno to work too! — with [Cathie Pelletier](#)."

[Jill Daigle](#) posted a response. As a nurse working on the front line, I see all the work there is in preparing for something like this. Knowing that we have talented people in our area of Maine who are willing to sew these masks has enabled us to take a deep breath. Now instead of throwing away a n95 (PPE) mask every time we use it, by using a cloth mask as a cover up we greatly extend the amount of time we can use one single n95 mask. Thank you all on behalf of the staff at NMMC. You all have a heart of gold!

C'est urgent maintenant! Following are some of the social media messages posted from Pelletier and others:

Many requests are coming to us from former Northern Mainers in healthcare and in other states. We're also getting masks out to local communities. And we're stockpiling for local healthcare needs. (We are soon to add new sewing members, too.) A group in ISLAND FALLS is in touch with us, so we can assist each other if needed.

MASKS NEEDED:

1. Local nursing home is in great need. We are finding masks now. FORT KENT AREA if you have some ready, let us know. Post in COMMENTS.
2. Orono nursing home needs 10. (They supplied us with materials.)

3. Hospital in Augusta in great need of masks. Number to come.
4. The Veteran's Hospital in Togus Maine needs masks. Number to come.

NEW PLAN: For now, please let us know in COMMENTS how many masks you have ready, or private message.

5. Connor has a request for 48 masks to local teachers who deliver meals.
6. A request for a Florida hospice, from a former northern Mainer and fund donor.

IS COMPLETED:

1. DONE: Emergency situation at a rehab hospital in Portland. Shipped today. (This came in last night—nurses desperate for masks. 70 shipped today!
2. DONE: 100 masks going to local hospital today.
3. DONE: 170 masks to New Orleans for nurses at Tulane. (Member Eva Therriault Bard, mother of one nurse, sewed many herself and other members contributed!)
4. DONE: Martha mailed 30 to Maine Medical Center/Portland.
5. DONE: There are too many small jobs to mention, shipped to many states.

MAP: We will soon have a map to post, showing where they have gone. Some recipients donated to our fund. We are getting organized into two "sub-groups!" One will have Fort Kent as its hub, the other Presque Isle.

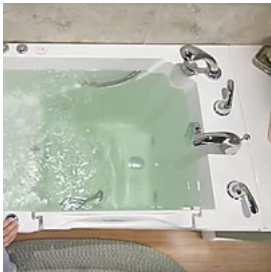
"We are getting orders from all over and have shipped to many states, an emergency order going out today to nurses in Portland. The Fund still needs to buy a LOT of cotton twill for the ties. We have about 30 people sewing and I am organizing us into two groups, one with Fort Kent as the hub, and one with Presque Isle as the hub."

P.S. Dear Cathie and Friends From Northern Maine, as a nurse myself, I want to extend to you and all of your dedicated colleagues our heartfelt "Merci Beaucoup!". Your worthy efforts have brought me to tears as I express this project to others. I hope those reading this blog will help you so that we can, together, "Do What We Can".

About Juliana L'Heureux

Juliana L'Heureux is a free lance writer who publishes news, blogs and articles about Franco-Americans and the French culture. She has written about the culture in weekly and bi-weekly articles, for the past 27 years.

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