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On a mission

Gateway resident trying to keep the Harry Chapin staff and volunteers safe

Mary Wozniak
Special to The Fort Myers News-Press

Lisa Petriccione has always carried on the family tradition of helping feed the hungry. Now she is on a mission to help keep those who distribute food for Harry Chapin Food Bank and those who receive it safe from getting the coronavirus sweeping through the country.

Lisa, a retired physician who lives in the Gateway community in Fort Myers, has been making hand-sewn masks for Harry Chapin Food Bank staff who interact with the public and for the volunteers who give out kits of nonperishable food and fresh produce at our drive-thru distributions.

She has donated to food banks since 2003, following her late father's example of helping donate time and dollars to "basically anything having to do with feeding people," she said.

When she practiced medicine as an internist and geriatric physician in Toms River, New Jersey, Lisa would cook large meals for some of her elderly patients and others who were alone at the holidays. She borrowed the Salvation Army kitchen there and prepared food for about 200 people at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and maybe a couple of other holidays in between.

For a spaghetti meal, she cooked 600 meatballs ahead of time and froze them. The same for cakes and other items on the meal menu. Her office staff, their kids and her daughter served the meal. Some of her patients who played instruments provided music.

"I like to cook. It was a pleasure," she said. "Feeding people was always my dad's thing and then my thing."

Lisa retired in 2014 and moved to Southwest Florida in 2015. She remembers going to the beach one day and heard something about Harry Chapin Food Bank on WGCU radio while driving.

Ironically, the first record album she purchased years ago with her baby-sitting money was a Harry Chapin album, she said.

"I played it over and over again."

One of her favorite songs is "Cat's in the Cradle."

Lisa became a member of the Sower Society, a society of donors who make monthly gifts to Harry Chapin Food Bank. She likens it to giving the money she used to spend on spe-

Helping the community

Harry Chapin Food Bank is grateful to all those sewing enthusiasts in Southwest Florida who came forward to make and contribute face masks to help keep our staff and volunteers safe.

There are too many to mention here, but we would like to provide a sampling of those who devoted their skills and creativity to the task of helping others.



Mary Ryan and the Southwest Florida Face Mask Crew have made and donated about 50 masks. SUBMITTED

|| Duska Hepner: 40 masks

|| Mary Ryan and the Southwest Florida Face Mask Crew: About 50

|| Jo Anna Bradshaw, former food bank board chairwoman: 22 masks

|| Maxine Golding and the Weavers of Char-Lee: 93 masks

|| Pam Sanford, nursing professor: About 75 masks

|| Linda Kropp: About 50 masks

|| Suncoast Furniture: Donated 100 hand-

made masks

|| Our hand-made masks are being supplemented with a supply of disposable masks donated by Naples Community Hospital.

Many other packages of hand-made masks came in large envelopes or boxes in the mail, some with thank-you notes or encouraging words. They all help to move Harry Chapin Food Bank's mission to lead our community in the fight to end hunger forward, especially as we face the impact of the coronavirus crisis. We are thankful for their support.

To give to Harry Chapin Food Bank's effort, visit harrychapinfoodbank.org.

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Masks

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cialty coffees to get her going in the morning to a good cause instead. She also contributes special gifts on special occasions, like her father's birthday or the anniversary of his death.

As the coronavirus pandemic began to explode, she became concerned about how contagious the illness was and how people could protect themselves. At first she just began making masks for friends and neighbors who were nurses or worked in service jobs.

Lisa uses a pattern and tutorial from the website of Deaconess Hospital in Evansville, Indiana. She and a group of other women in her community who get together to sew started making masks for Lee Memorial and Lisa also began mak-

ing some for Harry Chapin Food Bank.

"We all have fabric stashes," she said.

The inside of the mask is made of flannel to provide two microns of protection. The outside is made of cotton. However, keeping a supply of elastic to use for fastening the masks has proved an issue. Lisa began ordering white elastic shoelaces on Amazon to use instead, but now those are scarce and she's resorted to ordering black ones.

She's even cut the elastic waistbands off of pantyhose and used the elastic from the waistband of a pair of her husband's jogging pants (he calls them "relaxing pants") to repurpose for the masks.

It takes 15-20 minutes to create one mask. Lisa has already made 48 masks for the food bank, and about 130 masks in total.

"It is chaos around the sewing machine," she joked.



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