

New Bedford doctor calls on volunteers to help sew 500 cloth masks

by Bonnie Boerl, MD

In this time of great uncertainty and fear, many of us wonder how we can help. Our healthcare providers are facing a critical shortage of Personal Protective Equipment, PPE. While the average person may not have N95 masks, face shields, or gowns to donate, they may have a skill that can help our healthcare providers and folks who are working to keep the necessities of modern life going, such as drivers for Meals on Wheels.

I am the medical liaison for #NBStrong, a group formed by local residents to help local residents. As part of this role, I am coordinating the production, collection, and distribution of cloth masks. While a cloth mask is not the gold standard and will not provide 100% protection from COVID-19, the coronavirus responsible for the current pandemic, it does serve many roles. Healthcare providers are using cloth masks to supplement our nation's current shortage of N95 masks. Cloth masks can also be washed and safely reused. Patients who are coughing or sneezing are likewise using cloth masks in order to reduce the spread of infectious secretions, thereby protecting our brave healthcare professionals, as well as the most vulnerable members of society.

We are looking for volunteers to help sew cloth masks. We have set a goal of 500 masks to be distributed in the next six weeks. We have supplies we can provide if needed and we will provide instructions on how to make them. Finished masks will be picked up and distributed in accordance to social distancing best practices.

If you are able to help us, please join our dedicated **Facebook group, NB Masks, or contact me at BonnieBoerl@gmail.com or (774) 444-0303.**

As always, remember to cover your cough or sneeze, wash your hands well and often, and observe the critical social distancing guidelines.

Bonnie Boerl, MD has been a New Bedford resident since 2014. She specializes in Physician-Patient Communication and works as a patient and family advocate. Dr. Boerl lives with her husband, Chris, and two sons.