



Ventura Girl Scout Creates Reusable Face Masks for Families in Need

*Cecilie Rasmussen earns her Girl Scout Gold Award with the project,
"Covid-19 Eco-Friendly Face Masks and Virtual Class"*

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Now more than ever, it's important to wear face masks to protect ourselves and those around us. But when those masks aren't disposed of properly, they can do serious damage to our environment and the animals that inhabit it. On the other hand, not everyone can afford to buy pricey new reusable face masks. Cecilie Rasmussen (18) from Santa Rosa Valley wanted to develop a sustainable, affordable solution that would keep her neighbors safe and healthy. For her Gold Award project, she began creating reusable face masks out of recycled materials to distribute to low-income families in her community.

"The prevalence of Covid-19 has led to a shortage of face masks for health care professionals as well as the public," said Cecilie. "Creating reusable face masks out of recycled materials not only helps with this shortage but creates a more sustainable and environmentally friendly option. Recently it has become required to wear face masks in many establishments; these masks will allow people who don't have access to face masks to shop easily.

"Cheap disposable face masks have become a burden for the environment because of the number of masks being used. Due to the fact they can't be recycled, they end up in landfills. Reusable fabric masks have become quite popular, but they can be pricey. I want to help low-income families by providing them with good masks they can use for a long time to come, especially since our area will start opening up more venues and there will continuously be a need for face masks."

In July, Cecilie began researching what kinds of fabrics were best to use and the pros and cons of different mask patterns. She collected materials like old t-shirts and created three different size templates out of cardboard before creating her mask prototype. Cecilie used a sewing machine to create the masks herself for the whole month. When



she ran out of beads and threads, she fundraised for new supplies by collecting rocks from her backyard creek, painting them, and selling them in front of her home.

As August rolled around, Cecilie began enlisting the help of volunteers with sewing machines to expand her project. She recruited through social media and family friends and scheduled a virtual instructional class to tackle the task. Each participant received a “kit” with precut fabric, beads, and patterns; enough materials to make ten masks each. The class, which seven volunteers participated in, was three hours long over Zoom.

After collecting the masks from the volunteers, she added them to her collection and washed, labeled by size, and placed them in individual Ziplocs. Cecilie made donations to Adelante Comunidad Conejo, RAIN, and Casa Pacifica, which are all nonprofit organizations serving families in Ventura County. All masks came with an informational flyer about the importance of wearing reusable face masks to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus while protecting the environment. Additionally, she created an educational [YouTube video](#) to share the same message. In total, 217 were donated to families in need, surpassing her original goal of 150.

Cecilie inspired others in her community to take action as well, with one family friend accepting donations for the masks she sewed and resulting in nearly \$2,000 to local nonprofits. “By making masks and educating people about the importance of using reusable and not disposable masks, we can all help by polluting less,” Cecilie said.

“My Gold Award project helped fight the national and global conflict that Covid-19 has created on a small scale. My project helps prevent the spread of Covid-19 and helps keep our planet sustainable. Although 200 masks might not seem like a lot in the grand scheme of things, if 217 people used 20 disposable masks per month for six months, they would throw away 26,040 disposable masks. My masks have prevented thousands of disposable masks from ending up in landfills.”

On what she learned throughout her experience, Cecile said, “Leading the Zoom meeting and coordinating with the organizations pushed me outside of my comfort zone and forced me to act assertively and professionally in a way I had not faced before. It was one of my first experiences where I felt I had the responsibility of an adult. I felt I became a lot more confident in myself and my leadership abilities during this project.”

Gold Award Girl Scouts take the issues they are passionate about and create real, long-lasting solutions for their immediate communities and the world beyond. Learn more about the [Gold Award](#) take action to make the world a better place today!

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Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast serves over 8,800 girls across six counties and is committed to making the Girl Scout Leadership Experience available to girls in ways that impact their lives both in the moment and into the future. Girls participate in troops, individual projects, council events, day camps, resident camps and more. A variety of leadership, outdoor skills, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) based programs and events provide girls with opportunities to learn and explore in fun and informative ways. To join or volunteer in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara or Ventura County, visit: <http://www.girlscoutscoc.org>.