

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” – Jane Goodall

Making a difference at home and across the world

by ANNETTE JOYCE

OAK RIDGE – When schools and extracurricular activities shut down last March in response to the pandemic, many students were left with extra time on their hands. Rather than waste those hours, Jana Yan, a 17-year-old senior at Northwest Guilford High School, decided she wanted to help deal with the deadly virus.

With that in mind, she founded Guilford Mask Project, a 501(c) corporation focused on providing local and global communities with free reusable masks to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

An accomplished seamstress, Yan had set up an Etsy storefront in 2017. Her store, StitchByJ, sold handmade, monogrammed and embroidered items. Yan was making a substantial profit which she was funneling back into her business and putting into savings.

After realizing people were having such a difficult time getting masks, Yan decided to put her skills and business profits to good use and help others.

“My parents are friends with several health care professionals, and they were concerned that they weren’t able to get masks,” Yan said. “I had a sewing machine, so I offered to make masks for them.”

Soon a group of doctors from Duke University Hospital in Durham asked her to make masks for them. From that point, the requests grew exponentially and extended beyond the health care community.

In the past few months, the organization has made and sent over 9,000 masks to places as close to home as Guilford and Forsyth county schools and as far away as Zambia in Africa. Masks have been shipped to Native American nations around the country, homeless people at various locations and a Samos refugee camp in Greece, an area devastated by an earthquake and fire.

“I’m still in shock that I’ve been able to help so many people and see people around the world wearing one of my masks,” Yan said.

Yan founded Guilford Mask Project with the philosophy of donating masks to those in need while bringing awareness to why masks are important. The organization’s primary goal is to



Photo courtesy of Jana Yan

Since April, Northwest Guilford High School senior Jana Yan has supplied over 9,000 free reusable masks to people around the world.

supply masks to those who need them the most.

“I think there’s too much of a gap between those who are wealthy and those who are poor,” Yan said. “You should be bigger than yourself. There are so many people who have much less than I do.”

Yan, who lives with her parents, Kelvin and Elaine Yan, in Oak Ridge, hopes to attend either Duke University or the University of Pennsylvania and double major in social work and environmental science.

For more information, visit
www.guilfordmaskproject.org
or the organization’s Facebook page.



Stokesdale

Located at Kings Crossing
7705 Highway 68 N
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Summerfield

4420 US Highway 220N
(336) 793-5391

NEWEST LOCATION

High Point
619 Greensboro Road
(336) 885-4321

High Point

2410 Eastchester Dr
(336) 841-6553

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