



**Charleston County School of
the Arts**

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Karolyn Belcher
Chief Academic Officer

Sharon Randall
Interim Executive Director of
Secondary Learning Community

Shannon Cook, Ed.D.
Principal

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Contact:
Dr. Shannon Cook, 843-529-4990

Media Release

SOA Costume & Fashion Design students using their skills to support health workers

North Charleston, SC – The students in Caroline Baker’s Costume & Fashion Design classes at Charleston County School of the Arts (SOA) received some tough news this week. Since the closure of schools in South Carolina is now extended through the end of April due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, SOA’s annual Fashion Show is postponed indefinitely. However, from adversity comes opportunity - an opportunity to serve and support the health care community.

The 42 Costume & Fashion Design majors at SOA are now making (designing and sewing) covers for different types of masks worn by doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals, as well as masks for patients. The covers provide an extra layer of protection, help prevent the spread of illnesses, and can extend the life of the masks.

Baker usually has her students work on a community service project in May, but the timing was right to respond to a need, so she introduced this project in March when students would typically have been preparing to present collections of garments in a fashion show.

“There is a little bit of disappointment because we are switching gears from something we were preparing for six months,” said Baker. “On the other hand, this gives them something positive to focus on, and I think they really needed that. A lot of them have parents who are nurses and doctors, so I am hoping it empowers them and makes them feel like there is something they can do help their parents, too.”

Last week, a former client of Baker’s (Baker also designs wedding dresses), who works in the medical field, told her masks were being rationed in hospitals and doctor’s offices, and there was a critical need to keep the masks as clean as possible. So Baker developed a prototype cover for an N-95 mask. From there, she started a Facebook group entitled [Sew. Some. Good.](#) with a handful of invitees. After one day, they had more than 150 members. That number doubled before day three, and there were over 650 volunteers in less than a week. Within a few days, Baker also teamed up with Jessica Boylston and Mackie Moore of [Thrive](#)

[Charleston Mask Force](#) and since then the trio has been hard at work in the community.

The positive impact on the health care community providers has been magnified thanks to support from the community. People from the Facebook group are now providing the covers to individual health care workers based on need. However, there are plans to collect larger amounts in order to donate them to local hospitals.

"The stories that I have heard since we started this are eye-opening," said Baker. "Right now, if you have direct contact [with patients] and you are completely unprotected, you are a priority."

A few of Baker's students actually got involved with the Facebook group last week and started volunteering to design and create the mask covers. Which, in Baker's opinion, proves what this generation is capable of: hard work, dedication, creativity, and compassion.

"You are seeing all of these pictures of irresponsible kids on the beach and being out [in crowds]," Baker commented. "There are also all of these other amazing, wonderful children who are plugged in, looking for ways to help. They do not have parents at home because their parents are in the hospitals working. I just want to show there is another side of teenagers that really is not seen enough, and how unselfish and motivated they can be."

"When I heard about the mask-making project that my teacher organized, I was eager to help medical professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Mia Lassiter, a junior at SOA. "This project has a meaningful purpose, and I am grateful to be involved in it."

The SOA Fashion & Design students will gain valuable insight when it comes to producing these covers and masks. For example, in this case, it makes more sense to create something that is practical; aesthetics are secondary.

"It is important to think about function, engineering, problem-solving, helping, and being a good person in general," Baker stated.

"I am so proud to be associated with teachers and students who use their artistic gifts to positively impact the community, especially during a time of crisis," added SOA's principal, Dr. Shannon Cook.

Baker has seen something else that is vital for students when it comes to being successful in a real-life, real-world experience: handling crisis while still caring for others and being productive.

"These kids come into my class and some can barely sew and some can barely draw," explained Baker. "Then they build these skills so quickly, but forget how

amazing it is that they can do something that helps the community. Not everybody can do it. This reaffirms for the kids how cool and special what they're doing is."

For more information about the work of SOA's Costume & Fashion Design students, or *Sew. Some. Good.*, email Caroline Baker at caroline_baker@charleston.k12.sc.us.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 87 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.