

Coronavirus can't mask teacher's pride in graduates at Hilliard Davidson High School

Submitted by Ohio Department of Education

Kelly Hummel teaches Algebra II and III at Hilliard Davidson High School in Hilliard, Ohio. She's been a teacher for 29 years, but this is the first pandemic she's experienced with her students. "So many of the seniors said they missed being at school," said Hummel. "They were all hoping for a few weeks to at least say good-bye." Since that didn't happen, Hummel started thinking of things she could do to help the 68 seniors enrolled in her algebra classes celebrate their accomplishments and mark the end of their high school careers.

Hummel drew on her love of sewing and quilting to come up with a way to help the students stay safe while celebrating their graduation milestones. The inspiration came to her while waiting in a long, socially distant line at a fabric store.

"I got this idea to make Davidson blue masks for my seniors," she said. "Students were being encouraged to have a mask on when they picked up their cap and gown and I just wanted to help out."

Hummel sent a message to the students and their parents letting them know she had made boxes full of masks in sizes small, medium, large, and extra large. The masks would be available on her front porch for any student who wanted to come and get one. In addition, she promised to attend the cap and gown pickup at the high school to give masks to students who hadn't already received them.

"I didn't want students scrambling to try to find a mask, and I thought these might make unique photo opportunities for the graduates," said Hummel. In fact, students began sending her photos of themselves wearing her masks along with their graduation garb. Hummel said it was a pleasant side effect of the project that she got to see and connect with so many students.

"I set the masks on my front porch while I was grading papers at my desk on the second floor," she said. "Every time I heard a car door, I would look out the

window, so I actually got to talk to so many students and their parents from a safe distance."

To date, Hummel estimates she has made and distributed more than 200 masks. She's even taught two of her friends how to make them as well. But mostly, she's happy to be a part of helping students in the Class of 2020 celebrate their accomplishments despite the unusual circumstances.

"I think the parents are looking for any way to make these graduates feel special. They want to have parties; they want to celebrate these kids. So, the parents had a strong reaction to the masks," she said. "It's a really simple way to make people happy. It's kind of silly how fun it is."

