

# News Release



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For immediate release:  
April 21, 2020

## **Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage Employees Organize Face Mask Drive for Co-workers**

In a show of support for their colleagues on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic, employees in the New Jersey Judiciary's Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage sewed more than 250 face masks within a matter of days before distributing them on Monday.

Karen Michael, an administrative specialist in the court user resource center, had been sewing masks for frontline workers at a local hospital when she proposed the idea of a vicinage-wide face mask drive for Judiciary employees who continue to interact directly with members of the public.

Judges, staff, and their friends and family volunteered materials and their sewing skills to produce washable cloth masks for probation officers supervising clients in the community and employees reporting to the courthouses to facilitate case processing.

“The creative, altruistic idea of one person has resulted in good will and safety for many,” said Trial Court Administrator Howard Berchtold Jr. “This mask-making drive, inspired by a desire to assist the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage family, yielded more than 250 cloth masks to enable employees to continue to leave their homes to serve the public.”

The initiative began with a material donation drop-off at the three courthouses in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Michael put the call out for cloth, elastic, thread, large rubber bands, blue shop paper towels and zip-up plastic bags.

Within four days, she received enough material to cut out the 250 masks by hand and assembled the kits that were distributed to the 15 sewing volunteers. The kits also contained “Made by” cards, which contained personal messages from the sewing volunteers, to build a connection between the maker and the recipient.

Sharnett Clark, vicinage chief probation officer. said the masks will help the officers maintain contact with their clients while staying safe.

“As essential employees in probation, we are forever grateful for such acts of kindness,” Clark said.

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Probation Officer Andrew Harrigan and his son Logan volunteered to make face masks for the Atlantic/Cape May Vicinage employees working on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic. (New Jersey Judiciary)

