

Local art school creates PPE, other items for medical community

By **David Specht** - April 27, 2020



A local nonprofit's efforts to help the medical community and first responders is scaling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sanctuary Arts School (SGS), a 501c3 organization in Shreveport has been coordinating a statewide initiative to provide hospitals with glass splitters for ventilators, face shields and fabric masks. The effort has been so successful, the company is adding staff to handle the additional business.

"We are working with adding two sales people to handle orders outside of Shreveport/Bossier and several individuals for processing," said said Eric Hess, co-founder of Sanctuary Arts School and Glass Studio. "We have also hired sales people in Texas and Georgia and one person to

handle military orders."

SGS, Sanctuary Arts School and Glass Studio, Ark-La-Tex 3D Technology, and Libbey Glass Manufacturing Company have partnered to produce up to 20,000 shields a day to be made available to Louisiana medical institutions and first responders and any others serving the community.

The response to the effort was so strong, a need for both a nonprofit and for-profit endeavour arose, according to Hess.

"Our goal [in the beginning] was to just cover costs for our product for those companies that are receiving stimulus funds — to help cover the costs of materials and overhead," he said.

"Outside of this area, we are assisting Ark-La-Tex 3D Technologies with developing a for-profit business selling face shields and masks. So, we are a non-profit and our main goal is to get PPE to everyone that needs it in Shreveport/Bossier City. Ark-La-Tex 3D Technologies is the for-profit business I am assisting with developing a company based in Shreveport that will sell shields, masks, etc during this pandemic. "

LSUS, BPC Technology Labs and the Northwest Makerspace are assisting with this effort by utilizing their 3D printers to produce the band part of the shields.

The glass splitters that are produced, allow doctors to use a ventilator for up to 4 patients.

"With limited ventilators there is the possibility that more lives can be saved using this method," Hess said.

Face shields are being produced as basic protective wear for the medical community. They guard the face from viruses, bacteria and bodily fluids.

"Supplies have been limited throughout the U.S. and this is why we began producing them to meet our state's needs," Hess said. "We have already produced thousands and have had wonderful feedback on these National Institute of Health approved shields."

The effort has been a labor of love for those involved. "All artists are donating their time for free to produce the ones for first responders." Hess said. "In Shreveport and Bossier City, Louisiana we have donated shields and masks for first responders and have provided them for many medical institutions and those on the front line."

Hess said it is important for the community to rally together to combat the spread of COVID-19, something that SAS has made a priority.

"Our goal at SAS is to make whatever items available to the medical community and first responders to help combat this virus and keep people safe," he said. "With limited resources from our government it is vital that our local communities come together to fight this epidemic."

