



The Stoughton Courier Hub

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The ‘Stoughton Mask Makers’

Grassroots effort helps prevent COVID-19 infection, transmission

EMILIE HEIDEMANN
Unified Newspaper Group

Two weeks ago, Angie Whitken had an idea — helping the Stoughton community gain access to free masks to prevent COVID-19 infection. Now, with 25 people on board taking orders, cutting and sewing fabric and distributing completed products, around 400 people have received those masks. They call themselves the Stoughton Mask Makers. Whitken said if someone wants a mask, all they have to do is send a request to stoughtonmaskmakers@gmail.com.

Whitken advises people to rate themselves on a 1-5 scale. If they mark themselves as a “1,” she said they will be top priority for receiving a mask, and so on. Whitken organizes when people will receive orders based on the system, she said, and there’s no need to explain the reasoning for your rating. She encourages people at the highest risk of contracting the COVID-19 infection to reach out, in addition to local organizations serving vulnerable populations. Once a mask is completed, Whitken said it becomes available for pickup on her porch. She sets it outside to help practice physical distancing. She said delivery is an available option for people who can’t drive. Whitken saw a post

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Craig Furseth looks out towards his dairy farm which his parents ran before him on Friday, April 17.

Photo by Mackenzie Krumme

Down the drain

Low milk prices, reduced production hurting local dairy farmers

MACKENZIE KRUMME
Unified Newspaper Group

Craig Furseth never thought he’d see fresh milk dumped into the same space he disposes manure. The third-generation dairy farmer from Stoughton expected this year to be a rebound year for dairy farmers after five years of low milk prices resulted in 800 Wisconsin dairy farms closing in 2019. But COVID-19 shattered that hope. Two of the largest markets for fluid milk and cheese are school districts and restaurants, which have either closed or been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This surplus of milk has resulted in some

dairy cooperatives, which oversee milk marketing for their members and handle shipping logistics, asking farmers to produce less milk. Because cows still have to be milked, that results in farmers dumping excess. And the milk they sell is at a lower price. Milk prices had begun to increase in November 2019 and were up to \$21.30 per hundredweight (100 pounds) in December. That was up \$5.10 from the previous year — a salvation for dairy farmers. Then, at the end of March 2020, prices plummeted \$4 in a week, Furseth said. Furseth, who owns 197 cows and produces 17,000 pounds or roughly 1,900 gallons of milk per day, was asked by his co-op, Dairy Farmers of America, to produce 10% less milk from May 1 to July 31. The experience has been different for John Alme, another Stoughton

farmer. A month after schools closed, Alme still hadn’t had to dump any milk or been asked to reduce production. He believes that’s because of the diversity of processors that work with the co-op he’s a member of, Foremost Farms co-op out of Baraboo. Alme, who has been a dairy farmer his entire life, said his co-op sells to a variety of plants that produce cheese, butter and dried milk products and has a contract with Kwik Trip to provide milk in its stores. “They are in a position where they can ship milk to different plants if things like this happen,” Alme said. Several organizations that represent dairy farmers have asked the USDA and local entities to help by buying the excess dairy products from farmers and give them to food pantries, nutritional assistant programs and other sources. And on Friday,

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Photo submitted

The Stoughton Mask Makers have already produced around 400 masks for the community.

ConnectStoughton.com website subscriptions begin April 30

Print subscribers will get full access

JIM FEROLIE
Hub editor

Two months ago, the Stoughton Courier Hub announced it would

begin to restrict most content on our website to its paid subscribers. That transition begins April 30. All three websites for Unified Newspaper Group’s weekly newspapers — the Hub, the Oregon Observer and the Verona Press — will offer both newspaper and

web-only subscriptions. Web-only subscriptions are \$5 per month, payable by credit card directly on our website. All subscribers to any of our newspapers will get full website access to all three sites, and connecting your subscription is as simple as entering your email

address and password at tinyurl.com/MyStoughton or clicking Your Account on the top of any of the websites. Subscribers who have trouble with this process or questions can call our office at 845-9559 or email ungcirculation@wcinet.com. Over the past several weeks,

our newsroom has put extra effort into ensuring these websites are as reader-friendly as possible and worth the price. This change has come with improvements to our coverage on the Internet, most notably the

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Courier Hub



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