



PROCLAMATION HONORING AND COMMENDING SOMA SEWING VOLUNTEERS AS "VILLAGER OF THE MONTH" FOR SEPTEMBER 2020 FOR THEIR WORK IN THE TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE

Whereas, Christopher Reeve once said, “A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles”; and

Whereas, on February 29, 2020, the United States announced its first reported Coronavirus (COVID-19) death near Seattle, Washington; this pandemic had already begun ravaging countries worldwide; and

Whereas, by mid-March, the United States began taking a cautious approach to this relatively unknown disease when the number of confirmed cases rose to 7,000 with 97 deaths nationwide with 427 confirmed cases and 6 deaths within the state of NJ, and 2 of those deaths being in Essex County; and

Whereas, seeing the intense growth of COVID-19 in the tri-state area, the State of New Jersey began to take action on March 16, 2020, to close its schools, non-essential businesses which included but were not limited to retail, recreation, theaters, and gyms; and

Whereas, the State of New Jersey also established a curfew and limited restaurants to move from dine-in services to take out only; and limiting essential businesses to remain open which included anything related to public health, safety, and welfare; and

Whereas, the United States and its populace had never experienced this type of epidemic in our lifetime which quickly created turmoil for millions of Americans which included many Americans to be unemployed, have severe food insecurity, concerns over housing, created emotional distress, brought uncertainty to our businesses and overwhelmed our hospitals; and

Whereas, many individual people and organizations stepped up to become heroes within our community for frontline workers and residents and to which the Community Relations Committee has selected several of those organizations as our COVID Heroes; and

Whereas, many Americans and especially those in the tristate area heard about severe shortages of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for our local hospitals which included face masks, Alba Hochman, Jean Ng-Gilio, and Maria Sensenich formed a group called the SOMA Sewing Volunteers and was joined by Tina Kelley; and

Whereas, members of the SOMA Sewing Volunteers coordinated initially with the Atlantic Health Systems, which encompasses 6 hospitals, to get specifications for making effective face masks; and

Whereas, the SOMA Sewing Volunteers prioritized their donations by organizations within Essex County, smaller organizations that lack the resources to acquire PPE and organizations that are most highly impacted by COVID-19 cases but did not turn anyone down that was in need; and

Whereas, the SOMA Sewing Volunteers reached out to the community and had up to 517 volunteers assisting with different portions of mask creations so that anyone who wanted to take part which included but is not limited cutting fabric and string, lending out sewing machines, sewing the pieces together and delivery; and

Whereas, the SOMA Sewing Volunteers began initially distributing face masks for hospitals while the intense need for them was in place, they then reached out to social organizations to assess their needs and provided face masks for them as well; and

Whereas, the SOMA Sewing Volunteers have donated over 30,000 masks to hospitals and non-profit organizations, including 1,000 to the Navajo Nation; and

Whereas, as of September 13, 2020, the number of COVID-19 cases in the United States surpassed 6.5 million positive cases and 194,000 deaths with 16,072 of those being from the State of New Jersey, it is a great reflection of our community to witness the caring and selfless acts from our residents and businesses. The SOMA Sewing Volunteers saw a need during a time of darkness and did what they could to assist by using the talent and willingness of the community to help. This continues to be a huge example of what our community is capable of when working together.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, SHEENA C. COLLUM, Village President of the Township of South Orange Village, County of Essex, State of New Jersey, on behalf of the residents of the Township of South Orange Village, the Village Board of Trustees, and myself, hereby do recognize and commend the SOMA Sewing Volunteers as "Villager of the Month" for September 2020 for the work they have done, and their wonderful and heroic contributions in the Township of South Orange Village.

Dated this 14th day of September, 2020

HONORABLE SHEENA C. COLLUM
Village President of the
Township of South Orange Village