

GIRL SCOUTS AND WOMEN SEW MASKS FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE SURVIVORS

The Ocean is Female makes waves during outbreak



Amelie and Sawyer Becht show off completed masks destined for use by 180 Turning Lives Around, a Monmouth County nonprofit empowering survivors and families affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.



Brielle Girl Scout Avery Height was an Ocean is Female crewmember responsible for tie-dying facemask fabric.

BY SCOTT YUNKER
THE COAST STAR

Girl Scouts, mothers and teachers in the Borough of Brielle have sewn masks for distribution amongst the clients and staff of 180 Turning Lives Around, a Hazlet-based nonprofit organization offering services and support those affected by domestic abuse and sexual assault in Monmouth County.

The group of girls and women was organized by Brielle resident Allison Scaduto, a franchise lawyer who founded The Ocean is Female, a Brielle-based group celebrating “the female spirit and [expressing] the brilliance and strength that resides within all women.”

“We wanted to do something to help with what’s going on, to redirect some of the negative, uncertain, nervous energy that we have,” Ms. Scaduto told The Coast Star. “180 is a really worthy organization and our missions align on a number of levels.”

“We’ve worked alongside them in the past. I think they’re a tremendous organization ... we just figured that would be a good place to direct our efforts.”

Ms. Scaduto’s daughters Amelie and Sawyer enlisted their fellow borough Daisies, Brownies and Girl Scouts to participate in the project. Brielle Elementary School teacher Jean Lohmann and educators in Wall Township also joined in, according to Ms. Scaduto, who drove throughout Brielle to collect and deliver supplies to participating households.

One set of volunteers tie-dyed white bandanas in shades of ocean blue. Another group sat down and began to sew, using patterns that included a pocket for the insertion of a coffee cup filter — just one more layer of added protection between the wearer and their surroundings.

“My two daughters had never sewed before. I had never sewed before, but we figured it out,” Ms. Scaduto said.

Ms. Scaduto officially launched The Ocean is Female last summer, after laying the groundwork “for a long time.” The 501(c)(3) nonprofit



Charlotte DeCresce of Brielle Brownie Troop 61523 was among those hard at work sewing facemasks for residents of an emergency shelter for abuse survivors.

operates a pop-up shop selling apparel and accessories that fund causes and organizations like 180 Turning Lives Around.

“The Ocean is Female came about from my own experiences ... growing up in this area, living on the ocean. I am a survivor of abuse. I have suffered a lot of trauma in my days, and the greatest therapy that I’ve ever found has been the ocean,” Ms. Scaduto said. “I learned how to surf. I am not a good surfer by any means, but just being out there, I find it extremely healing.”

“My mission was to create something that would be able to share that with girls and women and help them recognize the healing energy of the ocean, to help them

build courage and face their life’s challenges, whatever they may be.”

Ms. Scaduto intended to coordinate a series of surf-therapy workshops with local surf businesses this summer, but the novel coronavirus outbreak forced a change of plan, leading to the manufacture of facemasks — “something that can have some influence right now.”

180 Turning Lives Around is The Ocean is Female’s most frequent collaborative partner. Ms. Scaduto is deeply fulfilled by their shared work.

“What this has enabled me to do is start talking to people about abuse, and as a survivor of abuse, I find it amazing to watch people ... come out of the woodwork and start sharing their experiences,”

she said. “The silence and the shame: We have to talk about it ... I have two young daughters and I want them to grow up and know how strong they are.”

TURNING LIVES AROUND

180 has distributed the masks donated by The Ocean is Female to staff and 12 families residing at an emergency shelter in an undisclosed location, which houses families escaping abusive and violent home environments.

“[The masks] were amazing,” 180’s director of development, Lynn Lucarelli, told The Coast Star. “You can tell they were made with love. Just beautiful fabric woven together in the hope of protecting these young children from this ter-

rible virus. It was really a beautiful thing.”

“The fact that this group of children wanted to help another group of children with this mask project, it was really something special. It just goes to show everyone can do something and everybody should,” she said. “We love them. They were really a great example of a community of coming together for a great cause.”

In addition to operating a safe house, 180 offers therapeutic and counseling services for children and adults and three hotlines, including the statewide 2NDFLOOR Youth Help Line. Its 50 staff members are aided by over 200 volunteers offering assistance to survivors 24/7.

Crises like the novel coronavirus outbreak compound domestic violence, according to Ms. Lucarelli.

“Because of the stay-at-home orders, many are quarantined with their abusers at home,” she said. “... Domestic violence only gets worse during times of stress.”

While the pandemic inflames domestic violence, it also silences now-isolated victims who would otherwise seek help.

“The eerie quietness on the hotline is concerning. We understand why, so we are trying to figure out ways, different mechanisms, to reach families,” Ms. Lucarelli said.

“We do anticipate an uptick [of phonecalls] once the stay-at-home order is released and people start coming out of quarantine,” she continued. “... We are ready for that, we’re preparing for it, it’s what we’ve been doing for 40 years.”

180 Turning Lives Around may be found online at www.180nj.org. Domestic Violence Hotline: 888-843-9262

Sexual Violence Hotline: 888-264-7273

2NDFLOOR Youth: 888-222-2228

180 Turning Lives Around is soliciting Mother’s Day donations to support mothers and children spending the holiday in domestic violence shelters. Text “180MOMS” to 41444 to contribute.

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