

Camdenton robotics team seeking public's help in producing protective equipment

By MICHAEL LOSCH, mlosch@lakesunonline.com

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The team previously donated 125 face shields to the staff at Lake Regional and another 25 face shields to dentist offices around the Lake area and other places in need. But one piece of critical material that is needed to make the mask is in short supply and the FIRST LASER robotics team is having a hard time finding it as companies like Amazon are currently sold out.

The group is in need of 3/4-inch or 1-inch elastic bands that are needed for the headbands of the Prusa RC3 face shields that hold the protective face shields firmly in place on the heads of those who wear them. If anyone has 3/4-inch or 1-inch elastic in stock, the group is looking for donations, and it is also seeking the help of anyone with 3-D printers to print the headbands. The organization has the capacity to print 40 a day, but is struggling to keep up with demand and provide the critical face shields that are needed.

“A lot of people have 3-D printers around the Lake area and if we could get those people printing, it would help provide full shields quicker,” said Camdenton R-III Afterschool Services Director Sherry Comer, who helped start the FIRST LASER robotics team at Camdenton in 2009, and noted the printing is a slow process that takes about four hours. “EMTs are asking for them, dental offices- no longer just the hospital that needs them.”

Comer noted that Lake Regional has recently asked for another 50 face shields, EMTs have asked for 20 and there have been several personal requests from the family members of nurses and doctors who are on the front lines of the pandemic. Even a local soldier who is a deployed medic in Afghanistan has requested 30 to the intensive care unit at Fort Leonard Wood.

Supporting the community is nothing new for Comer and her husband Mitch, a technology teacher and robotics coach at Camdenton High School. Through community outreach programs the FIRST LASER team has taken part in, the group has helped provide life jackets to kindergartners and helped firefighters supply smoke detectors to Osage Beach residents.

“If they are willing to get it to us, we certainly appreciate it,” Comer stated, also thanking the Potters House of Camdenton for their efforts in supplying materials to help keep the production of face shields going.

“So appreciative of everyone who has helped and donated items. We appreciate the community’s help in supporting health care professionals.”

Comer said there will be a box outside Camdenton High School where people can donate the needed material and the team will take care of the rest. To reach Comer and the team, call (573) 346-5651 extension 3309 or email laser3284@camdentonschools.org.

And if the Lake area can be taken care of, the mission may not stop there. Comer noted that hospitals in Columbia have requested 7,000 face shields and there is a local 3-D printing group in Columbia currently helping to meet that demand.

“We’ll help with those if we can,” Comer stated.

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